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### ***PHIL WOOD NEA Jazz Master (2007)***

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Marty Nau [MN]: Okay, this is Marty Nau here with the Smithsonian interviewing Phil Woods, a certain dream of mine come true. And Phil for the national record ...

Phil Woods [PW]: Yes, sir.

[MN]: ... for the Smithsonian they'd like to have you state your full name.

[PW]: Gene Quill [laughs]. No, I'm, I'm Phil Woods. I was born in uh 1931. Uh, November second, which means today I'm 78 but I'm very happy to say I have the body of a 77-year-old man.

[MN]: I noticed that immediately.

[PW]: I was born in Springfield, Massachusetts. I have one brother, seven years older. And uh, any other facts you'd like to have?

[MN]: Well, uh could you talk about your parents?

[PW]: My parents. Well, my dad was reported to be a violin player when he was a kid. Um, music was very important in our family. My mom loved music. Uh [mumbles] there were four or five sisters and on my father's side there was an uncle who played saxophone and one of my mother's sister's husbands played saxophone and that's how I, I was given the sax in the will when he died. So music was um an



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integral part of our life in those days, because music of course in those days was everybody was dancing to the same beat. I mean we all knew who Irving Berlin was. I remember rides with my mom and dad. They loved the movies. Uh, when we'd go away on vacations and stuff we would sing songs, you know, we knew, we knew the, the score to The Wizard of Oz and uh you know Over the Rainbow and Blue Skies and what have you, you know?. So it wasn't, it wasn't like, like music has become where you've got the youngest kid is up here with his i... iPod listening to some kind of garbage music you know and grandma's listening to Lawrence Welk and Mom and Dad are listening to you know Dick Powell or uh Bing Crosby or something. Everybody was listening to the same sort of stuff. It was part of the woven fabric of American life was, was the American song writers. You know, that's... Irving Berlin, I mean where would Charlie Parker be without Jerome Kern you know? As the, as the popular music progressed so did so did music you know the from the traditional Irving Berlin kind of basic harmony up to Jerome Kern and Cole Porter became more sophisticated. But that, that was part of, of life, although nobody played an instrument in my family. Mom and dad always nurtured the arts. My mom subscribed to the book of the month club. I remember her reading uh "Seven Pillars of Wisdom" by D. H. Lawrence, and uh I remember she was reading "Mein Kampf," because you know he was very popular in those days.

[MN]: [laughs]

[PW]: I mean others would say "Oh, your mother read "Mein Kampf," and I would say "Yeah!" It was part of, part of history, you know. The culture was important, but not overly. We were uh middle class, lower middle class. Uh my dad was a uh, he was into advertising. He used to sell, he used to buy sides of farms up in New England and put, put uh ads on the side of the barn. I remember he was always into into commercial advertising. You know when television first came out and we'd complain about the commercials you know he'd say "Well that's, that's who's paying for the show god darn it!" [MN chuckles] You know? So he was aware of the fact that you know that the dollar is important. As he got older he'd say "Did you make a buck? Did you make a buck?" He was always concerned about... And my parents were very supportive and the fact that uh my dad and mom said, you know "Do whatever you want," when



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I said I want to be a musician, they said you know “Pursue whatever you want, but just do me a favor: be good at it.” You know. I mean don’t mess, don’t jive, you know what I mean? If you’re serious, be serious. So they never said [with a distasteful tone] “musician” you know, although at times as life went on they were maybe not quite so sure you know with some of my peccadilloes. But always very supportive of uh what I did. So yeah, I loved them very much. And my dad was, after he did the advertising thing he had his own sign company, and then he was a fire commissioner in Springfield for uh 16 years. And he was always helping people, I remember that and um if a fire went beyond 3 alarms, they would call my dad and he’d wake me up so I’ve always had an affinity for firemen. My older brother when he got out of the navy after the Second World War became a fireman. And I used to work very, worked very much for the local volunteer fire department which was, made it ironic when, when my house burned down. [chuckles] you know. But the fire department said, “Oh, not Phil’s house,” you know, [indecipherable mumbling] and I still continue to support the fire, I think those are our heroes, as nine eleven certainly proved. Uh and when I uh when I went away to school, I went to New York in uh let’s see, I went to study with [Lennie] Tristano right after high school. I graduated from high school when I was 15, I skipped a grade and I discovered the saxophone when I was 12 years old. And I gotta talk about my first teacher which was Harvey LaRose. Uh, this uncle, this uncle Norman Cook his name was, and he had there was rumors of nefarious dealings in with Amazon tribes and digging gold in Alaska and the Klondike and prospecting for oil in... I mean he was into all kinds of stuff.

[MN]: Hmmm.

[PW]: But he had a saxophone and at the time he was very sick, in fact he was dying of cancer, and they lived downstairs from where I lived with my mom and dad he lived downstairs with my grandmother and uh my mother’s sister, who he was the husband of my mother’s sister, Phyllis, and uh I discovered underneath my grandmother’s wicker chair in the living room uh this case so I opened up the case and, and man, there was a gold, shiny saxophone, you know? And I said, “Whoa” you know, cuz at the time it was during the Second World War, and I was into making toy soldiers, you know, melting lead and all



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that, and making it painting them and doing all that. I think when I saw the saxophone my, my first instinct was to melt the sucker down, you know, ...

[MN]: [chuckles] Hmm.

[PW]: ... and make, make a golden hoard of warriors. And my nefarious intent was misunderstood to mean I had an interest in music, so when this cat died I was given the saxophone, which I proceeded to put back in the closet and go about melting lead, I couldn't melt the saxophone at that point, you know, my mother would have killed me. And so uh after about 3,4,5,6 weeks my mother said "Well Phillip, what are you going to do with this saxophone?" I said uh, "I don't know, Mom." She said "Well, you know, your uncle went through a great deal of trouble to leave it to you." You know, and even at that tender age of 12 I realized that dying could be construed as a great deal of trouble, which is one of the reasons I'm saving it for last, you know.

[MN]: [chuckles] Yes.

[PW]: So, okay I got the yellow pages, and I go to the drum shop, saxophone lessons, Mr. Harvey Larose. So I called the drum shop, you know, and I said "Can I speak to Mr., can I speak to the saxophone teacher, please? Mr. Larose?" And uh "Yes?" I said, "Hello Mr. Larose, I'm ...", you know, I made an appointment for a lesson. And uh Mr. LaRose says uh, you know, "You got it?" And I said, "Yeah," I said, "Should I bring the saxophone?" And I could hear this, this kind of thing... a sigh... a yawn of disgust, he said "oh, I got a live one here" and he said, "Young man, it would be a good idea to bring the saxophone to your first saxophone lesson."

[MN]: That would be nice.

[PW]: I didn't know. I had no idea. I thought you had to be anointed. I thought you had to learn to read music, I didn't know that you could just start playing it, you know? So I went and started playing it, you know? He would give me the first lesson, the rumanic elementary, but uh I was just pleasing mom and uh ok great, and I put the horn back in the case and went about my business, put it back in the closet, and then I'd go for a lesson a week later and to make a long story short to say as they say, I could play the



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lesson without even trying. You know, I didn't think it was any big deal, and if I had gotten a teacher, one of those straight-laced cats, you know, who would say "Hey, you know, How dare you? You're playing by ear." You know, this is our best friend [points to his ear] this guy right here," and then say 'oops we have two of them.' You know. And he recognized the fact that I must have a fair amount of retention, and I had a good sound, I always had a good tone. I mean I was built, that's what I'm here for, that's what I ... I finally decided that that was my Kismet, that I was meant to be a saxophone player, but at that time I didn't know. But I had a teacher that recognized the fact that I could play without even trying. If I tried I could really be something, and he didn't yell at me, he just kind of. Within a year I was hooked, man. He started giving me the four pop songs of the week, you know, in those days they used to have a little, little three page thing, you would have uh four songs from the hit parade that week, which, you know, now they're all standards. Mostly good tunes. And there'd be an E-flat part, a B-flat part, a concert part, and then a bass clef part, and piano accompaniment, and Harvey, Mr. Larose, played alto and clarinet primarily, no flute, violin, guitar, piano, he arranged, he taught all of those instruments and uh and arranging, and uh played with all the big bands but he was not an improviser. But what a teacher, man. I mean, within I'd say within a year, a year and a half, I'd get these four pop songs of the week and I would play the songs and Harvey would accompany me at the piano and gradually he'd tell me, well, this is a G-seventh here and here's what you can do, here's a scale you can play on that. You don't have to play the melody, he says it's good to play the melody but you can enhance it, you can decorate, you can and eventually I got into improvisation, he the first jazz I ever played were Benny Carter transcribed solos. And he would accompany me. And he would teach me what, you know, the chords of all of Benny Carter's **urban (?)** and I mean they were only transcriptions of his solos but they had piano accompaniment and he wrote out the chords for me again, and this was getting, you know it's a little more complex than just playing a song, you know, these were, these were jazz solos by The King, you know. So I just and one week he gave me a Duke Ellington song called "Mood to be Wooed," by uh and that was Johnny Hodges' feature for that year for that season, you know every year the book would change



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because Duke was always writing new music. So us kids, there were a bunch of us, in Springfield they used to call us the Springfield Rifles because uh well just briefly there was Hal Serra on piano who's still around in New York, I just had lunch with him. Uh Sal Salvadore was on guitar, he later went with Stan Kenton. Joe Morello was our drummer who uh I think everybody knows who Joe Morello was but in case you were asleep he played with Dave Brubeck and did the first drum solo in "Take Five," Paul Desmond's song. Um and Chuck Andrus was on bass. Chuck later played with uh the band with uh Nat [mumbling] uh Nat from Boston, great piano player, and Bill Chase, that band.

[MN]: Oh.

[PW]: Jake Hanna, that was the rhythm section. Why can't I think of Nat...Nat Pierce. Phew, embarrassing.

[MN]: Okay, he had a big band.

[PW]: A mind is a terrible thing ... [Both chuckle] when it betrays you, you know? So that was our kid band, you know? So we were pretty good. And uh, uh, Hal, Hal played piano and he lived right up the street from me, and I used to, I used to look over his shoulder. He kind of turned me on, I was into Kenton and big band stuff, and he taught, he taught me about Artie Shaw Grammercy Five, and the Benny Goodman Sextet, and I got to learn about small group stuff. And then we heard our first Charlie Parker records, and uh, that's all she wrote, pun intended. You know, I mean, that, that really reinforced it, I mean I knew when I heard Bird that there was some stuff happening. And meanwhile Mr. LaRose had give me this solo on "Mood to be Wooed," you know, and we went to hear Duke's band and Johnny Hodges stepped forward and all the lights went down to blue and Johnny came out and he played "Mood to be Wooed" and that, that's, I said, "Ah, that's how it goes" you know. That also reinforced. To see someone play live, there's nothing like that. You know, and then our first Charlie Parker records, of course. We all got hooked on bebop. And then Hal started to take lessons with uh Lennie Tristano, the great guru from Chicago, blind pianist, who's recorded the first free jazz. He did the first completely improvised music, the first cat, as far as I know. In fact I'm pretty sure, historically, that that would bear



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me out, that he played the first free, what they call free jazz. I, I like to play expensive jazz, but that's another story. [MN laughs] Uh, so we'd go to New York from Springfield, Massachusetts, it's about a three hour bus ride, and then we'd take a subway out to Long Island, I couldn't tell you exactly where, and we'd take a bus to Lennie's house, Mr. Tristano's house, he was always Mr. of course in those days, and take a lesson and I it was only for a summer, I took about 6 or 7 lessons and I realized that I had a lot to learn, and you know I, I wasn't quite ready for what Lennie was putting down cuz it was pretty advanced stuff. But I took his lessons to heart, you know, and a lot of it was playing the piano, and I've always played the piano, from watching Hal play, I'd go home and try it out. I think uh any musician worth his salt has to come to terms with a keyboard. And you also have to come to terms with the big city, and going to New York from Springfield to take a lesson with Tristano was a chance to kind of come to terms with the big city and New York was the center of jazz, you know, I mean at that point, still is, as far as I'm concerned. Uh, we would go to, um after the lesson we would go to Romeo's on Broadway for some spaghetti, and you knew it was fresh because it was sitting in a big silver 18 gallon pot in the window. Al dente was not in our vocabulary at that time. And then we'd go to Main Stem Records and buy the latest shellac, latest Bud Powell, Dizzy Gillespie, Modern, no not Modern Jazz Quartet, um there um John Lewis and Ray Brown were recording but it wasn't called the MJQ. But whatever, whatever was hot, we bought it, and then if we still had a dollar left we'd go to 52nd street and you could get a coca-cola for a buck. And we'd sit there all night. And our bus went back to Springfield at 4 o'clock in the morning. We'd be the first ones in line for the Three Deuces or whatever. Uh, Spotlight, or, that whole 52nd street scene was nothing but clubs. And uh at 4 am we'd get on our bus and go back home you know. And that was, when I hear kids at school say 'we're going out on a field trip' I say 'you don't know what a field trip is,' man till you've had a lesson with Tristano, had spaghetti at Romeo's, and went to Main Stem to buy Charlie Parker records and then went to the 52nd street you know I mean wow. At 15 I said "Whoa, this is great." And we went for a lesson one time at Mr. Tristano's house and he said, "Are you kids going down to 52nd street tonight?" And we said "yeah, why do you ask?" And he said, "Well, I'm opening for Charlie



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Parker and I thought maybe you'd like to meet him." And you know, to myself I said "Yeah, I've always wanted to meet God," you know. And sure enough, this time we held back on the records, we held back on the pasta so we'd have two dollars, we could buy two coca-colas and really relish the evening, you know. And Tristano's trio opened up the evening's festivities, and uh I think it was Arnold Fishkin who was a bass player who, because Lennie was blind, somebody had to come and get us. Arnold came and got us and took us behind the curtain. I mean 52nd street they were just speakeasies. They were just like narrow little cellars, uh there was no backstage, no dressing rooms or nothing like that. And we came around the back of the st...the back of the bandstand which was just a little, and there was Bird sitting on the floor, the great Charlie Parker, the man who was changing the planet, and he had a, a big cherry pie, and he said "Hi, kids! Would you like a piece of cherry pie?" And I said, "Oh, Mr. Parker, cherry's my favorite flavor." [Both laugh] And it is! But I didn't know what else to say! And he said, "Well you sit down here, boy, and I'll cut you a big slice" and he took out his switch blade bing boom bang, you know, and handed me a big piece of cherry pie. And I said, "Oh my God, I'm in heaven." I mean he was so kind, I never forgot that. That was one of the most important lessons, I mean along with coming to terms with, with the city and with the new music and getting the latest shellac which I would take home and transcribe all of the heads and analyze the solos. But the kindness, I mean here was one of the greatest musicians in the world, accessibility, there was no presidium, there was no, we're mere mortals and you're... you know want a piece of pie? You know, that was, I always remember that. That's something that I've always ...tried to be kind, even in my curmudgeonly way. I try to share what I know with a young musician, and not , you know, not dissuade him from his, you know, give him a hard time of course, I mean but if he can't get beyond my hard time he'll never make it in the biz, so you know you give him some reality. But I only saw the good part of uh Bird, and, and of course with the journalists the only thing that made the headlines was the bad news, but you never heard about the sharing part, you know. So anyway, that was my modest uh beginning and uh all I did was practice 26 hours a day. I got thoroughly hooked on music, uh, went away to the Thousand Islands on a summer gig with a drummer, his name



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was Ray Chase, and even his watch didn't keep time, you know what I mean? [MN laughs] He had a big, he had a ratchet and gongs, and a big Chinese cymbal, and he had a couple of pops, and he'd want to play "The World is Waiting for a Sunrise" very, what he thought was fast. And it was awful. But it was a summer gig and it paid for my ... that following year I entered Manhattan School of Music as a clarinet major for a summer course.

[MN]: They didn't teach sax, did they at the time?

[PW]: What, clarinet?

[MN]: They didn't teach saxophone at the time, did they?

[PW]: No, no no. Saxophone was not, no, it was the yeomen of the military bands, that's what the saxophone was, according to one of the orchestration books. Yes, the saxophone, a yeomen of the military bands, I never forgot that. Classic.

[MN]: I remember that.

[PW]: And then I transferred to Julliard. I didn't care for the, I didn't care for the uh for Manhattan, I mean for something me and the clarinet teacher didn't hit it off, but I do remember being in the middle of Manhattan going to Manhattan School of Music which was in the, in the, in East Harlem, with that new kind of Latin section, Puerto Rican section. And I went to classes and I loved education, you know, loved just learning about music, man it was all part of the same thing, I didn't want to learn Bebop I just wanted to be a musician, you know. And I remember getting a shaved ice on the street, you know, and they shaved the ice and put some raspberry syrup or something on it. And I'm standing in the middle of Lenox Avenue or something and I just yell "Yay! I'm in New York and I'm having a shaved ice and I'm learning music," I mean and I never forget that, that joyous feeling of music making. And to this day I think that if it's not a joy, if it's not fun I want no part of it. And I really...that's almost 70 years later, 65 at least and I still have, I'm still a very joyful player. I love I love what I do, you know? I love it. I... It gets more precious the older I get.

[MN]: You're a very passionate player, too. And how do you keep that passion?



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[PW]: Well, because it gives me such joy! I mean it's...I love doing what I do. I mean I'm one of, I'm the luckiest man in the world! I do what I love to do, I and I'm a success at it, I, I fly business class all around the world, I eat well, I love good wine, I love women, I love, mean I just love the joy of visiting new countries and getting used to different civilizations, and different ways, and different forms of government and how people live and you know, I just, I just love the exploration that goes with the discovery of, of traveling. You know I always tell young students, if you ain't got the fire in the belly, I mean if you've got a choice between being a brain surgeon and a tenor man I'd go with the brain surgery man, you know? I think music is only for those that don't have a choice. I didn't have a choice. And once I got, found that sax, I was hooked, man, I mean in the bes..., in the good way. I was, that was what I wanted to be virtually instantly. And that's, that depended a lot on your first teacher, that depends a lot on your first teacher, and I had Mr. LaRose who brought me right into the American Songbook. You know, so I was, then I went to, I moved to Julliard and no, there was no saxophone major at Julliard when I went there, I entered in 1949 I believe. Uh, I think Joe Allard came in in 1950 but the, you know, changing majors when you're in a conservatory or a college or university can be a problem, you know. So I always stayed with the clarinet. Because that had access to more music and I went to the library and I started at A and went to Z, with scores and learned about classical music, you know. uh I heard the formation of the Julliard String Quartet, I heard, went to all the rehearsals of Stravinsky's "The Rake's Progress," uh heard the first performance, one of the first performances of John, of uh Charles Ives's "Concord Sonata." Saw John Cage lecture, used to go to the composer's forums at Columbia College, where Osarчевsky demonstrated the first taped, The Music Con-cret, you know the abstract kind of music uh that was prevalent in those days. Because one of the great things about American culture is that the military always carries music with it, you know? In fact the reason the French love jazz so much is because of James Reese Europe and the great New York Infantry Band was a black band and they played marches, they played them with a New Orleans kind of beat, you know and the French fell in love with that. Um, I think the reason why some of the best music in the world comes from Japan and Germany and Italy and



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Venezuela. It's the international aspects of the of American music America's only original inventions are um baseball, Mickey Mouse, and jazz, you know? That's the only really original stuff that we've done. And jazz is uh, we used to have the Voice of America all during the war, and uh the uh our armed forces and we you know we seem to love to make war, we always had a good band with us. You know, we always had a good band to entertain the soldiers and the officers. So a lot of people around the world either got listen to the Voice of America with Willis Conover, which always played the latest jazz, I think from midnight to two o'clock in the morning. I mean I've traveled to Russia, I mean I've traveled all over but Russia especially, iron curtain countries, especially, cuz even after the war there was always a propaganda Voice or America or Radio Liberty and there'd be a lot of jazz cuz even at the seat of government they realized that jazz is an important thing, you know, the only drawback that we never had a Voice of America or Radio Liberty for Americans, you know, we didn't educate our own people about the importance of jazz. That work is still going on.

[MN]: We're kind of paying for that now, aren't we?

[PW]: Yeah, we are, we are. Of course we're paying for it. We always will. Because it's all mixed up with race, you know, uh anything that the blacks did it's got to be inferior, I mean there's still that racism going on and, and you know, that's ...But we're a very young country, you know, other countries have gotten over all that nonsense to a degree. Um. Yeah (chuckles), we're paying for it.

[MN]: Now, if I could, there's a lot to chew on from when you first started talking to now and it seemed to all start from kind of a noninterest in the saxophone until it actually got in your hands and you took that first lesson.

[PW]: No, I was always, no, I , no I would play clarinet all day long and then at night I played the saxophone all night and I'd do my exercises and I'd listen to Charlie Parker. No, I knew that I was, you know, I was basically uh, a saxophone player. But I was at the conservatory level, I'm competing with, I didn't think I was worthy, you know? Because I mean I was twelfth in line for the training orchestra, but that was fine, because I, I mean I found after a couple of years in New York when, you know, I mean I



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was raised a Roman Catholic and all of a sudden I find out there's no God, I mean I was shocked, but I got over it, you know what I mean? Uh the sophistication of, of all my friends in New York, discovering how to drink and smoke and carry on and all that I mean I, you know... But the sax was the primary...I did a lot of gigs that put me through school and after my second year I realized I'm not going to be a clarinet player, no way. Although I was a good one, um but I knew I'd never make a living at it. You know, be a nice double, and it always was. But no, sax was still primary.

[MN]: But at the very beginning , what I meant to say was at the very beginning of when you had that, when the uncle left it, it was something that, that you uh

[PW]: Oh no, I was going to melt down.

[MN]: Going to melt it down?

[PW]: It was just a thing ...

[MN]: Got in your hands?

[PW]: ... just to please mom. No, without Harvey Larose and that first couple of lessons, but it was relatively quick. Within a couple of months, I mean I loved doing it. I couldn't, when I was a kid, 12, 13 years old, I used to, I used to march around the dining room table, doing long tones, and scales, arpeggios, and I'd count 50 laps, then I'd take a break.

[MN]: Is that right?

[PW]: I'd do 50 laps of long tones and I'd do 50 laps of scales and 50 laps of arpeggios and then I'd, then I'd put the records on and I'd transcribe all the, the heads, and analyze the solos and I'd work on those. And I had a piano and I'd go to the piano, figure out what the chords were, and I learned, I taught myself Debussy, "Maid with the Flaxen Hair." I got the Bartok "Micro Cosmos." I mean, I, I, I worked at all, at being a musician, not , I didn't want to be a clone, to, to, I knew I was no Charlie Parker but I,I wanted to be a good musician, and I always wrote, I wrote uh charts for my high school band, I wrote charts for uh, um there was a band called Carmen Ravosa and his Rhythmaires, and we used to rehearse at Carmen's house. His brother later became Mayor of Springfield, I mean they were highly placed, and I remember, I



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remember going to rehearsal when I had the first record, uh “Koko” by Charlie Parker, and I brought it to rehearsal, and I said, “Wait ‘til you guys hear this!” And I put it on and they said, “Oooo that’s terrible, you like that?” And I remember I quit the band [end of CD 1 – track 1] ... [Beginning of CD 1 – track 2] ... and I went home in tears saying “You’re wrong! This is the greatest music in the world!” And I was right, you know, they were wrong, you know? (coughs) But I knew it, I knew it soon as the first notes I heard, I, I knew that Bird was, this was the new music, you know. So I was perched historically at that great period when jazz was still relatively new, you know, came from the dance bands, the big bands, there were plenty of gigs , everybody was dancing to the same beat. But I knew there was more to it, and the exploration and the education, you know, that took a lifetime, and I’m still working on it. But that....that’s the passion I think you hear and I’m still making discoveries about music that ... I don’t think you ever really know music, or know anything about art you know that’s, it’s the voyage, it’s the journey, getting there. There’s always some stuff somebody that found out and it’s up for you to you know pry it out of and get it into your psyche and turn it into your thing, uh, and I’m still discovering a lot of stuff that I didn’t know, you know.

[MN]: So you’re easily inspired, aren’t you?

[PW]: Yeah, I am. I work at it though. I work at inspiration. I think it’s, you know 90% perspiration and a little inspiration. But I mean I do all my writing at the computer, I mean I work at the keyboard, get the ideas and all that, but then I go right to the computer and and orchestrate and I find it great convenience to be able to hear it while I’m writing, orchestrating anyway. I don’t think you can create at the computer but for orchestration it’s great.

[MN]: Did Johnny Hodges instill in that if you don’t have a sound you don’t have anything?

[PW]: Oh yeah, but Benny Carter too. You know, that whole early tradition of the alto saxophone. I mean, if you go to the movies and you hear an alto, somebody’s kissing or somebody’s dying. [both laugh] It’s a very romantic or perilous instrument, you know what I mean? But it always signifies something very deep. Especially the alto, you know.



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[MN]: Now uh you're in New York City,

[PW]: Yep.

[MN]: Do you have a memory of, of uh a big gig or a big break that maybe started the ball rolling more

[PW]: Well I started to work at, I started to do Monday nights at Birdland, with Jimmy Chapin umm, Jim Chapin has, the son became a very successful pop singer [Harry Chapin] ...

[MN]: Hmm.

[PW]: ... I forget his name.

[MN]: Thomas? That sounds... I don't I don't know.

[PW]: Yeah, but Chapin, I knew ... Anyway, the dad was a drummer, a great drummer, and he had a jazz band. Billy Byers was the trombone player, I was the alto player, Don Stratton was the trumpet player. We used to work Monday nights and I got to I moved to Brooklyn which is where the Goodsteins, the people who owned Birdland, and they kind of took me under their wing. They used to bring me food and stuff like that, you know, as a kid, and tryin' to make my way, and I was hired to do the Birdland All-Stars in 1956. But you know I did my first recording in 1954 actually, with Jimmy Raney. Ira Gitler sort of discovered me. Oh, Jimmy discovered me at a gig in Brooklyn called the Pink Elephant in Brighton Beach. Ah, prior to that I worked at Tony's Bar on Flatbush Avenue with a guy called Chasey Dean, who was in my in Julliard with me. Was always, he would always would get the gig and he'd always use me. He was a good tenor player, good cla..., very good clarinet player. So, I was starting to get a reputation in New York, you know, I played with um, you know Neal Hefti's band. My first band was Charlie Barnet's band, Charlie Barnet had the first mixed band: six alcoholics, six junkies, and six potheads. [Both laugh] And uh I played tenor on that, fourth tenor on the band. We did a tour of tobacco warehouses and then uh the next year a tour and a few months later he toured again and I was put on lead alto, you see, he liked what I did on alto. So from some of that kind of journeyman work uh led to my getting a good reputation in New York so that led to getting the Monday nights at Birdland. uh I remember playing with Neal Hefti on a weekly basis. I remember Pee Wee Marquette coming up to me saying, "Give me a quarter." I said, "Whaddya mean,



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give you a quarter.," He said, I said "Why?" He said, "Because I make you look so pretty on your ballad feature." I said, get out of here, you know. So I go back to work and then I stand up to play my ballad and all the lights go off and the microphone is dead [MN laughs] and I say, "Here's a dollar." [Both laugh] Yeah the you know the reality of the show biz. So, that led to uh Birdland would do a tour every year of the of jazz, the best and the there was always a young band and I played with Kenny Durham and uh uh oh dear dear dear, uh Count, Conte Candoli, Kenny Durham, Al Cohn and myself. We played with Sarah Vaughan's rhythm section. [Phil asks Ken Kimery] What are you doing man? [Kimery: I'm just going to ...] Oh, he's making me nervous here. [Kimery says "Sorry."] Now he fixes the mic. [Both laugh] You been doing' this much, have you? [Laughs] Uh, where was I?

[MN]: Playing with Sarah Vaughan's rhythm section.

[PW]: Yes, with the Birdland All-Stars. It was Count Basie's band, Lester Young, uh the Bud Powell trio, Al Hibbler, Sarah Vaughan and her trio, of course, and I remember showing up in front of Charlie's Tavern. He said, you know, the bus, the bus gonna leave at 9 o'clock for the tour and uh I mean I show up and I say, man, there's all my heroes, my god, you know, what do I do? Where do I sit on the bus? You sit on the wrong seat and somebody from Count Basie's band is going to pull a leg out of your ass. I mean, there was a certain pecking order. And I heard a voice from the back of the bus saying "Back here, Phil!" It was Al Cohn. He had a seat he had a seat over the wheel, the next to the last row, the bank head in the back and then the last two seats. And we sat right behind Lester Young and Bud Powell on that tour. And it's middle of March, I believe, and we get through the tunnel and we're going through Jersey and I don't know where we're going but we're driving for hours it seemed like and I said, "Gee, Al, I got to go to the bathroom, man." He said, "You have to go?" Yeah, I said. I have to go real bad. He said, "Well go up to the driver. I wouldn't, I wouldn't say I have to go the bathroom, that's a little Massachusetts Catholic, you know what I mean? Tell him you have to make a pee stop." I said, "Pee stop? Ok." So I go up to the driver said, "P,P,Pardon me, sir, uh are we going to be making a pee stop?" He said, "You have to go to the bathroom?" I said yeah. So he opens the door, and it's the middle of March, snow and sleet



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are pouring, I'm trying to hold on to my johnson, holding on to the door, and the piss is hitting me in the face and, man. But I got good at it. I got learned how to do that.

[MN]: They don't teach you that in school.

[PW]: They don't teach you that at school, at Julliard, no. Or Berklee, for that matter. Even a jazz school doesn't have that course. But the whole bus had to get, I mean the these cats, Basie's band would get their itinerary and it could be, they were six-week tours, eight- week tours, they'd go out for a while, you know. This tour was a long tour, we went everywhere and they could tell you where they were going to be eating, where they were going to be sleeping, who they were going to be sleeping with, where they're gonna get the best chicken dinner, how much it was going to cost, I mean, every town they had it covered. Talk about an overview I mean the itinerary in their life was clear. They knew exactly where they were gonna be, you know [chuckles] and not only on this continent but when they went to Europe too. I mean for years and years of travelling you get your chops. That amazed me in those days. So that was yeah, that's that was my big break. And from that Quincy Jones heard me on that tour and he hired me for the Dizzy Gillespie band which was gonna be going to the Mideast on a State Department tour. See, the State Department once again, so I was the result of they couldn't send an all black band as a representation of America, I mean even though that was the reality, but they had to get some white faces, so I was, they needed an ofay so I was hired to play alto, you know, as Quincy says, and there was a few of us: Frank Rehak, Marty Flax and myself, the three white guys on the Dizzy band, result of tokenism but, man, it was the chance to play with the world's greatest players, you know. We went from uh we flew from Idlewild to uh Dublin to Rome, we picked up Dizzy in Rome. Quincy rehearsed the band in New York, but Dizzy was on tour with Norman Granz' "Jazz at the Philharmonic" tour so he never met the band. uh So we picked him up in Rome airport, Fiumicino, and I remember we're sitting on the plane and they're refueling and we're smoking and we're off on the tarmac, we're not at the terminal, and we hear a, in the middle of the night the doors were open after they got through refueling and it was hot so they opened the doors and we heard a trumpet [Phil sings] "I just found joy, I'm as happy as a baby ...",



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“Sweet Lorraine,” which was Dizzy’s wife’s name, and here comes Dizzy on a baggage cart. They threw down like a rope ladder and he clambered up and off we went. Our first stop, we stopped in Baghdad for gas and then our first gig was in Abadan, Iran, where they do all the oil, I mean we could hear we could hear in Iran we could hear they were shooting each other in Iraq right across the river, they were, even then back in ‘56, that was going on, ‘57. And uh yeah, that was, we went to we went to Beirut, we went to uh to Damascus, in Syria, we went to East and West Pakistan, before Bangladesh, Karachi and Dakar, we went to Istanbul and Ankara in Turkey, we went to Athens, Greece, uh yeah. Beirut, yeah.

[MN] A lot of hot spots.

[PW] Pretty much all of the trouble, the hot spots, yeah. But, uh, you know, I thought it was great, I mean what a great thing, to send jazz to kind of cool down the hotspots, you know what I mean, and it worked. That’s when I discovered the power of American’ music, that people were listening to the radio, the older people that had radios. Sort of not so much in the Mideast but in Greece and in Turkey and the more enlightened, and Beirut was very, Beirut was the most pristine, beautiful, a duty free port, a wonderful city, great, and they paid so many dues in the past it was incredible. But yeah, the power of the State Department, and then the next the following year we went to uh South America. We went to uh

[MN]: In 1958?

[PW]: ‘57. It was part of the same tour, same year. In ‘58 I had left the band. We went off to Guayaquil, Quito, Equador, where you could buy a shrunken head in the hotel lobby gift shop, I mean, they were not real, but ... [MN laughs] and there we sent uh uh Now, where else did we go? We went to Rio, I remember Rio, I remember Jobim, meeting Jobim, he was in the front row, and Milton Naciamento was just a little kid. And they remember that, because Dizzy was the first cat to kind of get into the Latin crossover thing, with Chano Pozo, you know, and uh, and he was he was the best leader, I mean, everybody knew who was in charge when Dizzy was around. He became a dear friend. I loved him and I think he loved me. I mean, we got along very very well and I’d work with him for years, for years and years, we’d hang out. But I remember the first time in Abadan, Iran. We no sooner landed than Frank



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Rehak who was a pretty wild guy got right to the opium den and he came back with some of the best smoke I've ever, ever, I didn't know that much about it but they say it was good, you know. So it's the first rehearsal, I'd never met Dizzy, and we're rehearsing in Abadan, Iran. And it's outdoors, there's no dressing rooms, it's just a little stage and then under the stage some of us, Frank brought some of the, some of his goodies and we're underneath the stage and a pipe is going being passed around. And all of a sudden everybody disappears and I got and I'm holding the pipe, and here comes Dizzy, and he says "What do you got there?" And I said, "It's not my pipe." Yeah, that's good, that's a good line, Phil. That'll get you off the hook. He says, "Young man, do you realize this is a State Department tour?" I say "Yea,yeah. He says, "You could be jeopardizing my gig, every man, jack on the band, I mean could be the end of detente, the end of world peace." I mean, he had me going. I was like ah, I knew I was going to get sent home. He gave me like about 10 minutes of this tirade, I mean "You gotta be kidding ... jeopardize every man ... blah blah blah. Then he says, "Is it any good?" I said, "Birks, I'm no expert but it's the best grass I ever smoked." And he said, "Then gimme me some before I fire your white ass." [Both laugh] But that's the kind, I mean ...

[MN]: He was fun.

[PW]: ... He was fun. He wasn't a drug addict. I mean, he'd smoke a little bit, but he was you know that was about it. He was just messing with me, man, you know. But I never forgot that, you know. But he liked to laugh too. I said, "You son of a gun, you really got me that time." And he continued to do that.

[MN]: You learned a lot from him, didn't you?

[PW]: Yeah, I learned a lot. School's always open with people like Dizzy. Let's say the plane is late, we're stuck at the airport for an hour, well, we'd all be around the bass and Dizzy'd say, "Do this [Phil taps out a rhythm] and I'd say, "I can't do that I'm a white guy," and he say, "Yeah, you can do it, you can do it," you know. I remember, I remember Dizzy Gillespie and Art Blakey kidnapping me one time a few years later. And I'm playing for strippers, you know, I'm working, working downtown, and I mean I'm not making any progress, I'm playing at weddings, I mean I graduated from Julliard, I mean I didn't get my diploma but I



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did my four years, let me put it that way. I didn't make my final exam but that's a long other story. So uh, ... I lost my thread there ... when I said make my ...

[MN]: Uh, Dizzy and Art Blakey, they kidnapped you.

[PW]: Yeah, they kidnapped me, yeah right, cause I was in a maudlin groove. I was drinking too much, I was not content with my existence, I was not making any progress. And so they threw me in a cab and took me to Dizzy's house. And they said, "What's your problem?" And I said, "Oh man, I'm just I'm not getting anywhere. And they they said, "Well, if you clean up your act a little bit, stop drinking so much, you might be somebody." I said, "You think I can play?" They said, "Yeah you can play, but you've been behaving like an asshole," you know. I said, "Yeah, but I'm a white guy." And Dizzy said, "Time out, big time out here." He said, "Woods, Charlie Parker didn't play this music for black people, or for red people, or for green people, he played it for everybody. If you can hear it, you can have it," you know.

[MN]: That's a great thing.

[PW]: I thought that was a great ... And he said, "You know, you can't steal a gift. Bird gave it to us, you can't steal a gift." I never forgot that night.

[MN]: There's a whole lot in that statement – "If you can hear it, you can have it."

[PW]: A whoooooole lot in that and it changed my life. I stopped drinking in excess, I mean, I didn't become perfect but I made another I went up another notch, you know, as far as, if these guys think I'm pretty good ok, bring it on, you know, let me get into it and stop messing about and I, you know, got back on the track, you know. So I went back to work at I was working at the place called um the Nut Club in the Village, and I'm still not I'm still not all the way there, I'm not happy with the reed and the mouthpiece and the horn, I'm at that stage of of of the saxophone, oh this goddamn horn is kicking my you know I got to get a new horn, new reed, new mouthpiece, new ligature, new strap. And I'm playing for uh strippers, "Harlem Nocturne" and "Night Train" every night, man, three shows. And Nick Stabulus, and Teddy Kotick, and Gil Evans used to come sit in. And uh we played jazz in between shows but during the shows you'd play for the sword swallower and the fire eater and all that and as you walked in the door you were



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given a wooden hammer to beat the crap out of the table for your favorite stripper, you know. And I mean I worked there for six months and its getting to be you know it's really not quite what I had really in mind, you know. I mean I'm playing a little jazz but it's becoming too much like a job, you know. And somebody said, "Hey Phil, Bird's across the street jamming." I said, "Oh, really." So, man, I , I ran across Sheridan, Sheridan Square and there's a joint called Arthur's Tavern, still there, and there was the great Charlie Parker on the band stand about, oh, big as three or four cardboard, as card tables, a little teeny, and there was a piano player playing on a little teeny piano and he was about 90 years old, and his father was on drums and his father had a couple of pie plates and a little snare drum and there, there's Charlie Parker and he's playing on a baritone sax, that I later found out belonged to Larry Rivers, who was a great painter, you know, one of one of the guys, uh not a very good saxophone player, but, I don't know what Bird was doing with it but there he was. And I said, "Mr. Parker, perhaps you'd like to play my uh my horn." And he remembered me from the cherry pie days, I mean you know he knew who I was; he knew who all the young guys were. He said, "That'd be good, Phil, this horn is kicking my butt, man." So I, man, I ran across back to my gig, my "Harlem Nocturne" 10 times a night gig, and my horn that I didn't think was working and my mouthpiece I didn't like and all that. And I grabbed it and I came back to work and I sat right next to Bird. I handed him the horn and he played "Long Ago And Far Away" and I'm I'm listening to him play my horn and it occurs to me there's nothing really wrong with this saxophone, you know. [MN chuckles] It seems to sound pretty darn good, you know. The reed's working, mouthpiece is working, even the strap sounded good, man. [Both laugh] I mean, I mean and he said, "Now you play," and I said, "Oh my god." You know, when I run across young students and I ask them to play something they say, "Oh, I'm too shy." And I say you know I always say, "Shy is the enemy man, you gotta get over it. You've got to get over it. When you get an opportunity, the door knocks, man, you've got to answer it in full regalia and give it your all." I even, I knew that, I mean I was young but I knew that. And when Bird said, "Now you play," I gave it my best shot because, you know, I'd been around the block a little bit. And he leaned over and he said, "Sounds real good, Phil." [Pats his chest] Be still my heart ... be still my heart. I



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mean, that between what Dizzy said to me, you know, about “Get your act together,” “You can’t steal a gift,” and when Bird said, “Sounds real good,” that, you know there they are, two giants that changed the whole planet and they thought I was worthy. So, I mean now I gotta, I gotta really get my act together and that was a great lesson. Those lessons are no longer available. You don’t get that on the college level. I mean, you might meet a great teacher, don’t get me wrong, but not a, not a person of that caliber, you know, a poll winner, and you’re a guy who’s changing the world of music, you know what I mean.

[MN]: Those were two important seeds which were planted in you.

[PW]: Yeah, I mean that’s the yin and the yang of modern music, is Bird and Diz and they were friends, you know, that took time out to nurture my talents, man, you know. I never forgot that, so I think, you know, I think of them a lot. I think of them a lot when I teach or when I play, you know, uh how lucky I am to have known these men, and people like Quincy and I mean I knew everybody, I know everybody and I played with them all, you know.

[MN]: I speak for a lot of saxophone players, we’re quite envious

[PW]: Well, you should be, yeah, no, because I mean that was the critical time. That was a pivotal era in American history, you know, when the music had not quite changed so much. I mean, you still had to be able to play for fire dancers and sword swallows and strippers, and wear a suit and tie and you had to belong to the union and, you know, worked for scale. And I mean, you know, you had to cut a show, be able to read, you had to know something to be a musician to get a gig. It meant something. You know, that cha that all changed with uh I don’t want to put anyone down but with Bill Haley and the Comets or the Beatles who I love. I mean, but there came a period when the guitar became the thing, you know, and it was discovered that by playing three chords badly you can make a million dollars and play in Yankee Stadium. You know, our dream was to maybe make 50 bucks a week playing for strippers six nights a week, you know, and that was fine. But I mean there was no such thing as as the kind of numbers that are now bandied about. And then the corporations jumped on it and you know the small mom and pop not only the mom and pop grocery stores were wiped out by the corporations but the little record companies



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the small that were done with love, you know there was a whole thing that got swallowed up when the numbers got so big and now it's exponentially it's gotten worse I think. You know what I mean and you know, they're aiming at younger and younger audiences and making more and more money, you know, that, that ...

[MN]: Totally market driven.

[PW]: It's all market driven, thank you, yeah, exactly. We all know that and the music goes on, you know.

[MN]: Right.

[PW]: It will survive, I'm not I don't mean to be a downer about it but it does exist...

[MN]: You're a realist.

[PW]: ... and young people have to deal with it. It's something I never had to deal with. There was still a market for what I did.

[MN]: What about another, after Charlie Parker, another important saxophone player in your life whereas a comrade and a friend, Gene Quill ...

[PW]: Oh, Gene Quill, that was my man. Yeah.

[MN]: I love the stuff that you do with him.

[PW]: Yeah, well we were ...

[MN]: You guys sound very similar.

[PW]: We were brothers. We met at uh Teddy Charles, Teddy Cohen his name was. He was from Springfield, Massachusetts and he played drums up there and not a very good drummer. But he was the first guy to leave Springfield and come to New York. And he went with uh next thing we knew he was recording with Chubby Jackson, a tune called "Father Knickerbocker." He played vibes and played the vibe solo on it and he became very well known, he still lives, he's still around, but he used to have jam sessions at his loft on 50th between 50th and uh between Broadway and 7th Avenue right at the bu...the subway stop there at the little, you know, where they cross. And uh I went to one of the jam sessions, I wanted to see what was going on. I was kind of a new kid in town, I couldn't give you the exact year but it



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was early '50s, and I climbed up the stairs and I heard the introduction to "Robin's Nest" and I said, "Hey, I know that," and I sat down. And Teddy knew that I was from Springfield and so he was kind. He said, "Hey, you want to play?" and I said and I said no. I just want to check it out, see what's going on. I listened to everybody playing and started to feel a little more confident, you know, maybe I'll play a little. So I started to take my horn out and then I heard this alto player. And I started I got, he said [in an impatient, clipped cadence], "What do you want to play?" and I said, "Uh, your choice sir." And he said, "~~Cherokee~~ fast, no, 'Indiana,' 'Donna Lee' fast. I said, "Kick it off, bro," you know. [Both laugh] He kicked it off and we hit the head and it sounded like one alto and that was Gene Quill. You know? An immediately we fell in love and played all night and went to the, had breakfast and then went back to the bar. And that's always amazed me about jazz music. I think it's the only industry in the world where somebody who plays better than you do, you nurture them and help them, like when Cannonball came to town. Now here was a guy who was going to, you know, he was messing with me and Jackie McLean's gig, and Gene's, and and you never try to dissuade him, like that's a corporate mentality, you know. Somebody knows more than I do, well then don't let him compete with you, man, that's not good. But in jazz and music and the arts you help somebody if they can really ... if they play better than you do that's not a threat, that's something you can learn from, so help, help them. It helps everybody. So Quill and I were, I mean, he was ... and I always the loved the sense of humor part of jazz, I mean I always ... I loved Venuti and what all those guys did, and I loved uh, well Quill was, Quill was uh ... Quill would always say, "How's *your* career?" That's why I use that line, "How's your career?" you know, it's... [MN]: [Laughs] Okay.

[PW]: It's kind of silly in jazz but that was Quill's thing. Or, he'd be at a bar and there'd be a young guy drinking and uh Gene'd say, "Well, what are you killing yourself over?" [Both laugh] And I remember one time he played with the Johnny Richards band and he just played a blazing solo. I think it was on "Tappan Zee," one of his featured tunes, faster than hell and he played a brilliant solo, Well I heard him play with Art Mooney's band up in Springfield Massachusetts when I was a kid, he had a couple of years on me but



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he was very young then. But he did uh I remember hearing, um, I was, I was starting to play the alto and he played a solo on "Stars and Stripes Forever," like a jazz arrangement ...

[MN]: Oh, okay.

[PW]: ... and I said "Whoa." So, I knew who he I sort of knew who he was but when we became tight. Anyway, he played this blazing solo, he could play fast, man, great clarinet player too. And uh as he came off the bandstand, somebody at the table right in, in the, at the table right near the Birdland bandstand as he went, went by to go back to the dressing room somebody said, "Gene Quill, all you're doing is imitating Charlie Parker." And he whipped around and he handed him his horn, and he said, "Here, *you* imitate Charlie Parker."

[MN]: Not so easy.

[PW]: Huh?

[MN]: Not so easy.

[PW]: Not so easy. That's all you're doing? Here, [chuckles] you want to try it?

[MN]: Especially back then.

[PW]: Yeah, especially back then. Yeah. But he couldn't handle success. He had uh, you know, he burned himself out, went back to Atlantic City and had a lot of health problems and didn't quite make it. But I think of him a lot, we were brothers.

[MN]: Just [indiscernible] ... we have a few minutes before we have to change the tape.

[PW]: Let's take a break

[MN]: Let's do break, yeah. [Shuts off recorder]

[Recording resumes]

[MN]: Hey Phil, just for the record, we didn't get the name of your parents and your brother, just for the record.

[PW]: Oh yes, my mother's name was Clara, Clara, Clara Mary Markley Woods and my father was Stanley Joseph and my brother was Stanley Joseph, Jr. and uh my namesake uncle was Phil Markley,



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who was a representative up in Boston. uh He was a politician, good man. He was he and my dad had a business together, and were very close.

[MN]: Were you lucky enough to have your parents around for a long time?

[PW]: Yeah, ah hum, they both lived well into their eighties and they knew me when I was with Dizzy and they got to know Quincy, and they got to know Dizzy, and they were very proud of ... In fact, they came to see me when I was uh I did when I was with Jimmy Raney, one of my first, the guy that sort of, not sort of, he discovered me, and I made that record for Prestige and Ira Gitler was the producer and Ira Gitler told Bob Weinstein to get Phil Woods, he's really good, you know, because Bird, Charlie Parker, had just died, so everybody, every record label was looking for an alto player, that's how Jackie McLain and I both, we were both very close...

[END CD1, TRACK 2]

[BEGIN CD2, TRACK 1]

[PW]: ... In fact, when I was working at the Nut Club playing for strippers, he was on the scene down there, playing. He was doing the a play called "The Connection." And uh one time he came to my gig and said uh he came and saying "Follow me, and come with me," cause Bird had just died and we figured you know we loved Charlie Parker but Jackie and I were sort of next in you know maybe we thought, you know maybe we'd get some gigs and we can feed our kids, you know. And he took me to the Bohemia, Oscar Pettiford's band, and there was this fat alto player sitting in, you know, and we're at the back of the stage and we're listening to this alto player play, and we looked at each other and without rehearsing, we just said, "Oh shit" [Both laugh] because it was Julian "Cannonball" Adderley, It's another one of those stories where when someone better than you comes along, you nurture them. And we just heard this guy said, "Oh my god, so much for [laughs], looks like we're still in trouble," you know. So yeah, like that there.

[MN]: There seemed to be plenty of work, though, for everybody back then.



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[PW]: Well, yeah, it's everybody; once again everybody was dancing to the same beat. If you knew the songs, you know. I mean Jackie, me, I mean, all the musicians of that era, we're walking "Real Books." We don't use "Real Books," I mean there used to be little index cards. We know all the songs. I mean, Harvey Larose gave me the four, the Hit Parade, the four songs of the week. I mean, those were all Harold Arlen, Duke, I mean I knew every pop song I knew every fake book, I mean very rarely do I find a song that I don't know and when I do, I learn it. That's half the fun, I mean I'm still discovering some nuggets, but you know we're being able to record a Wayne Shorter tune that he recorded once that nobody ever played you know, like "Infant Eyes," just for an example. But uh, yeah.

[MN]: Dovetailing just real quickly on, uh, you were talking about the Gene Quill story, uh ...

[PW]: Yeah.

[MN]: ... "You sound like Charlie Parker" ... do we have to w...as jazz musicians, do we have to worry so much about getting our own voice? Doesn't it just happen if you work hard at it?

[PW]: I think so but I think you have to ... Dizzy used to always say "Steal." Because I asked Dizzy once, I said, "How did you get from ..." you know, he was into Roy Eldridge when he came up. I said, you know, I said "How did you get from that to Dizzy Gillespie?" He said "Steal." You know? He said, "I came from Roy but then I absorbed it." And he said, "One thing is very important in my development," and you know he was really very humble about his contribution, he always used to defer to Yardbird and well, in a way, he was correct. He said, "Yardbird," and he always called him "Yard," "Yard," Charlie Parker. We call him Bird but Dizzy always said "Yard," you know. He said, "Yard gave us the vocabulary." You know, the the way of talking, the vernacular as it was, the rhythmic thing. That's all, that's all Charlie Parker, you know. Bird could turn the beat upside down, you'd think he'd be upside down but he wasn't and the way of phrasing in and [sings] all the chromaticism, because music prior to that was all diatonic, more or less. I mean, there was a (posatura?), there was chromaticism a little bit, only to get from one note to another. But he really got into using all twelve tones, you know, and being able to point out the ones that really were the important ones in the harmony and the ones that were not, the passing tones, but to make them



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part of the phrase, you know, which the French composers and Stravinsky were doing also. Music kind of developed as our ears grew, you know, um, but and to find your own voice I think you have to listen to everybody, you know? I mean I 'm still listening to everybody, what amazes me is how the music travels when I hear like the cats from Venezuela, what a rich country, but they got their music education. You know, they have the best orchestras in the world? I mean the kids; you got to check that out. Venezuelan musical culture is the strongest in the world. The kids are given instruments when they're young and all through school. They have the best players in the world in Venezuela.

[MN]: Wow.

[PW]: You know, and people keep putting them down because of that weird boss they have but, man, their culture is [chuckles] a killer. I mean, I mean whenever we try to cut back on budgets, the arts are the first thing to go. I mean it's just ridiculous.

[MN]: They should be the last things to go.

[PW]: I mean because the jury is back because if the kid learns a little bit about music and art and all that and learns a language, I mean he's going to be better at whatever he decides to do, you know. I mean I don't think that, that everybody that takes up a saxophone is going to change the world but it's going to make you a better citizen. And I've always kind of envied people that don't have to play for a living, that play for the fun of it. That's a pretty nice thing to have as a hobby. That's a great thing, to not have to depend on it. There were times when I was envious of that, I mean that's a nice luxurious thing to really just enjoy the music and not worry about having to make a living doing it, you know? [One of Phil's house cats joins the conversation] Yeah, well, that's the price we pay for having cats but she's a good girl.

[MN]: [Laughs] One of the cats. Well, how about, um ...

[PW]: What else you got.

[MN]: It's the sixties, you somehow you, or you became involved in the studio scene.

[PW]: I got very busy in the studios, yeah, because all the arrangers were still in New York: Quincy was still in New York, Billy Byers, Elliot Lawrence, Al Cohn, uhh Manny Albam, Johnny Richards, ah the list is



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long, you know, the list is long of the writers, I'm leaving half of them out. But Sauter, Finnegan, um Finkle, uh Billy May, well Billy May was in California, but nevertheless most of the writers were in New York and a lot of the soundtracks were down there. But all of the jingles were done there so I would be working all day, all night and you know I got so busy that Jerome Richardson finally said, "Why don't you get a flute, man, you know, you don't have to get very good at it, I mean you already can play the clarinet, you get another double, that another 25 percent. You get three doubles, you're going to get your root pay plus seventy five percent." Twenty five for the first and 50 percent for your, whatever it is, you know. It almost doubles your bread. And by that time I had a couple of kids and uh so I bought I got a flute, I got some cheap, cheap flute I forget what it was, it wasn't a Haynes, that I know. And I took it home I put it together blew a couple of notes and I fell into a dead faint. [MN laughs] You know? Ahh, oh my god. Because that's not what I took up the saxophone for, and I loved playing the clarinet, I generally loved the two instruments. But I detested ... I said this is obviously not for me, man, I was not a natural. You know? So I took the flute and I paid my bar tab and Jim and Andy's with it and Jim Koulavaris gave it to his daughter, and to this day, she's one of the great flute players of the world.

[MN]: No kidding.

[PW]: Yeah, Annie Koulavaris.

[MN]: It was meant to be.

[PW]: Yeah. But I was, nevertheless, I was with one double I was busy, busy, busy, busy. uh And around uh the sixties, yeah I was doing all kinds of stuff. But um jazz, I mean me and Quill never went through the Lincoln Tunnel, we never got out of town. We were just a local band and we were hot, but we never quite made it, never got what uh what Jay and Kai got, you know, as far as recognition. Not bad but more, more after the fact than at the time. But I mean we were headliners at the Village Vanguard, you know we opened for Carmen McRae when she was new in town and Quill and Phil were still pretty hot. But only in the New York area, we didn't travel well. I remember doing a gig in Long Island somewhere, I think the Cork and Bib, and the announcer gets up and he says, "Here he is now, Phil Anquill." [Both laugh]



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[MN]: He put the two names together.

[PW]: Yeah. And um so I was getting a little bored, I mean. And you must remember that in 1959 I went to Europe with the Quincy Jones band. There was a show called "Free and Easy." We were in costume, it was a remake of St. Louis Woman, sound, uh songs by uh Harold Arlen, score by Quincy Jones and Billy Byers. And uh the show only lasted about six weeks, and then Quincy uh said, you know, the flight's going home Saturday if you want to go home with a failed show or you want to stay in Europe I'll try to book it. So to a man we all said, "Yeah, we'll stay." I mean, I'm trying to imagine if that would happen today, I mean the first thing the cats would say is "How much is the pay?"

[MN]: Right.

[PW]: We didn't say that. We had Clark Terry and Budd Johnson, I mean these guys were established family men and all that and they were willing to stay in Europe on a (hummer???) to stay with Quincy Jones because they wanted to play his music, you know? And Quincy took a bath, you know, he lost a lot of money on that tour. People put him down today because he's so rich, you know he's doing so well, but I mean I remember when he was suicidal, lost so much bread. I mean I remember living in Paris, I didn't have enough money to feed my kids and I called Quincy and I said, "I'm busted man. I don't have enough to get my kids' dinner." He said "Come to town, I'll give you half of what I have." He had 300 francs, he gave me 150. I mean, you know, you don't forget that kind of thing, you know. And, and so I got a chance to get familiar with the European thing. That band was very important. Basie, we opened for Basie at the Olympia Theatre in Paris one of the primary venues for music and Jacques Brel, the "Little Sparrow," Edith Piaf, and I mean it was a big music room, you know, famous music room. We opened for Basie's band, and Basie, Basie was kidding, but a little serious, he said, "Quincy, you're not bringing that band home, are you?" [Both laugh] Because these, Basie's band would say, man, these guys are good, man. We were good. We didn't use music stands, we didn't pull out a sheet. That's another thing: with Dizzy's band we never pulled out the music. I remember doing a one nighter up in Boston, at George Wein's club whose name eludes me, ugh, I can't remember, sometimes I have trouble with detail, but it was a famous



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jazz club up in Boston. But for some reason I remember we had um Al Haig was playing piano at that time with Dizzy's band and we were hung up ... we were all on the bus waiting to get up to go to Boston and Al was having union problems, and Dizzy's waiting and we're waiting and waiting and waiting and finally Dizzy sees Winton Kelly walking by and says, "Hey kid ..." He shanghai's him and puts him on the bus where he does the, later for Al Haig, man. You know, we're going to go to Boston. Anyway the driver couldn't find Boston, we ended up in Providence. I mean how the hell I mean here you are with a major act like Dizzy Gillespie's Big Band and you can't find Boston, Massachusetts? You go that way and Boston's up here. So we pull up to the club at 9 o'clock and we were supposed to start at 8:30 or something, we were a half hour late. We just got off the bus, went and sat down, and started playing. You know? [laughs] No, no, what music? We had the book memorized from the Mideast tour and the South American tour, plus, you know, a lot of gigs in between, Berlin and stuff like that. So, that was, you know, that's when you know you have a band. That's when the Real Book and all of that written music, you've got to take that music off the page. It's got to be an intrinsic part of your playing. I mean, you might want to glance at the reminder but you're not really reading it, you know it, you know?

[MN]: Right.

[PW]: I mean, you digest the intent and what the music's all about. That's kind of a lost art because there's not many ensembles that play that much together, you know. So anyway, in the sixties, when I was I was selling beer and cigarettes and doing television, I did a Kraft TV show with Sal Mineo, called "The Drummer Man," and got a contract with um Columbia Records I think it was. uh That's where the "Quill and Phil" with the baritone, with Danny B ... uh, Sol Schlinger, I think, was that ...

[MN]: What, *Altology*?

[PW]: *Altology*.

[MN]: Yeah, we were listening to that on the way up.

[PW]: Yeah. Huh?

[MN]: We were listening to that on the way up in the car. Great record.



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[PW]: Three saxes, right?

[MN]: It sounded like four

[PW]: No....

[MN]: It could have been three, yeah.

[PW]: I think it was just three, two altos and a bari, I think. It was strange. We did a couple of Bill Potts pieces and some ... Anyway, so uh the studio scene was, you know, swinging and TV was swinging, the Steve Allen show, and we'd do jingles and record dates. And every record date, whether it was a jazz date or a pop date, would use a big band. I mean, that was the ideal formation. You might have three or four reeds and just a couple of brass but it was always an ensemble. It wasn't done with three cretins with an EWI [Laughs] You know what I mean? You had players playing instruments, you know. And all too often the singers, the major singers, Ella, and Billy Eckstine and what have you would have an orchestra , a big band and sometimes added strings. So there was a lot of work, a lot of work, man. But it got to be, by '68 it really got to be kind of funny. In the sixties, I also had a school in uh Pennsylvania, New Hope, called Ramblerny. Uh it was a performing arts camp. José Limón was in charge of the music department. Uh, Lambertville [New Jersey] had the Lambertville Music Circus which on Monday nights would have jazz. And New Hope was a pretty hip town, for writers more than musicians, but it was a very cultured town. And uh I was there for about four or five years between '61 and '67, I think. And the best year we had was, um in the sax section was Richie Cole, Mike Brecker and Roger Rosenburg, you know, three of the greatest players ever. And, unfortunately, Mike didn't last, but I mean he was, I remember Mike when he was a kid, you know, and I had a band there and I loved it and my kids got free tuition and Chan was teaching singing, jazz singing and so I loved that. Every summer we'd have a it was a two month course.

[MN]: You were also a quarterback, weren't you, during this time?

[PW]: Yeah, I was a quarterback, yeah, me and Chris Swanson. Well, Manny Album was an arranging teacher one year, and then Chris Swanson came on board and he lived in New Hope, Pennsylvania. So, yeah and we had teams, I used to be able to throw a ball pretty good, I loved, I still love football. It's my ...



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[MN]: You tell a story where you threw a bomb to Michael Brecker.

[PW]: To Michael Brecker, yeah and he caught it and broke his finger.

[MN]: Ugghh.

[PW]: Yeah, one of the most picture perfect pass and it was to win the game and Mike reaches up and misses it. You know, it was like the movies, man.

[MN]: Now, how many people know that story?

[PW]: Not many, but Mike broke his finger but he came to work the next morning for rehearsal. He had a splint on but he still played. Didn't slow him down, man. [laughs] We said, "Oh my god, our ace tenor man is messed up." "Nah, I'm here, Pops, I'm with ya." [laughs]

[MN]: That's great.

[PW]: We did a lot of gigs, we were, we were pretty hot. And, you know, all the ballet dancers loved to hang out at what we called "The Bird's Nest" where we rehearsed, you know. I mean, it was the perfect thing for young jazz musicians being in a performing arts camp. You'd learn that that little girl practicing at the bar her ballet steps and this person doing musical comedy, that they're all just as good as you are, you're not special because you're a musician, you know. And they got used to the allied arts as part of being a well-bred cultured human being, you know. We're all in it together. As a young artist, don't be a snob, you know. All too often we think we're great. And, as I say, there's nothing wrong with having all the chicks hanging out at rehearsals. [both laugh] Guys always play better. So, when that school went belly up, after a few years ... and Joe Roccisano was there. Joe Roccisano was from my hometown of Springfield, Massachusetts. He got the Phil Woods Scholarship, when he was at the same high school I went to, Technical High School, and he was married to Joe Lopes's daughter. And Joe Lopes was the guy, a clarinet player who prepared me for Julliard, because he was a clarinet player, so it's all, Springfield had a lot of good music, and Joe Lopes is one of them. We just lost Joe not too long ago, and then Joe Roccisano died at the 42th Street subway station going on a he had a band called Rock Bop and in New York they used to work at the Blue Note every Sunday afternoon and he dropped, he always



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had a little problem with his heart, man. And he had just fallen in love, was just going to get married and died at the 42nd Street subway station, it was so, just broke everybody's heart. Bill Charlap had to go identify the body and all. It was very sad. It ain't all fun, you know, and it ain't all fair either. But a great alto player, though. I want to make sure people remember him. So anyway, the business was getting weird, you know. Quincy left, everybody was moving to the west coast, 'cuz that was where the gigs were. The record business had changed completely, you know, it was now you know the three cretins with an ewee, a lot of guitars. It changed and the gigs were falling apart. And so I remember I said to Chan, "Let's go to Europe, let's go back," because we spent that year, '59 and '60, in Europe and we loved it being based in Paris. So I said, "I can't make the studio scene anymore. I want to play jazz," you know. So, we packed up our matching luggage, our 24 cardboard cartons [MN chuckles] and uh I, I had a gig I had two weeks at Ronnie Scott's club in London and then I had a couple of German workshops. In those days, they each the radio orchestras would have would bring in a not a big bands but famous players from all the different countries and they put together a special project. I had a couple of those. So, we uh we flew to England and did Ronnie Scott's and then we were actually heading for Amsterdam because we didn't think we could afford Paris. And, in fact, I bought a Fiat 1500 for delivery in Amsterdam, and um when I was working in Ronnie Scott's, a guy by the name of uh Jean Louis Ginibre, who was the editor of *Jazz* magazine in Paris, came to London, heard I was in London, knew who I was, and said, "You know, you've got to come to Paris." And I said, "Well, we're thinking of ..." He said, "Come to Paris." He says, "My wife's going to start booking. Simone Ginibre, who became George Wein's right-hand lady, girl Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday, started booking. But I was her first client. So we went to Paris and drove around the Arch of Triumph with Jean Louis and Simone Ginibre ... Simone was, her maiden name was Simone Chevalier and she used to sing with Bud Powell at the Blue Note in Paris. For seven years, she sang with Bud Powell, and she did the same set for seven years, and she'd have to write it out every night for Bud because he couldn't remember what she was going to sing. [Both laugh] But she was great. And then she, they had kids and she missed the business so she started booking. And Jean Louis came



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and got me and got me and Chan and we went to Paris and he put a band together for me which was Daniel Humaire on drums, Henri Texier on bass and George Gruntz on piano, became the European Rhythm Machine.

[MN]: Later, uh replaced by Gordon beck,

[PW]: Replaced by Gordon Beck and Ron Mathewson replaced Tex. But we always had Daniel on drums. Man, you know, from playing jingles and all that stuff all of a sudden I'm playing every major festival in Europe, you know, because of Jean Louis' influence and Simone booking us. I man, right off the bat we started recording for Pathé the French label, did a thing called "Alive and Well," it was received very well and man I was off and running man five years of you know headlining and stuff, so that was ... I've always been very grateful to the European culture that remembered me from '59 and knew my work, you know, they keep track, and it ain't like uh that you're passé because you're over thirty, you know what I mean? I mean, they don't rip a building down because it's old, you know they they keep, they don't make a parking lot out of it. They're maybe not hipper than Americans but they're certainly more aware of the culture. I don't think the average Frenchman wants his daughter to marry a tenor man or an alto player or a trumpet player, you know. But they realize the importance of these people in within the culture, that the culture needs an alto player and a tenor player and a trumpet, you know. It's not weird, 'cause jazz is loved as an American original art form. It's in Europe. To this day I make more money in Europe than I do in America. America not, at this point in 2010 there's not a lot of gigs there's not a lot of tours. I mean I still do well 'cuz I'm, you know um I mean I'm I am I am who I am and I have a name so I get a gig and stuff but it's not like it used to be. But Europe is still pretty good and, you know, they still pay money and give you respect and give you a room, a suite, and fly you first class, and feed you well, and you know.

[MN]: I heard you say in an interview one time when you went to Europe you felt like you were let out of a cage.

[PW]: Yeah, well at that point after being in the studios for the sixties and all that all of a sudden I'm



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playing with my own jazz quartet. And, you know, we were, you know I had the first the electric sax, I had the baritone, I was using a uh a, a ring modulator at some one point, and you know. I mean the band I had on the west coast also, you know when we came back from Europe, and even in Europe, Gordon was writing a lot of suites and stuff with the band. Yeah, we felt we felt, and Daniel was an exciting drummer. We were taking it up a notch, yeah, yeah.

[MN]: If you asked me that the music you played over there you hadn't really played before or since. In other words, that you really got into an avant-garde thing and it was ... a lot of people who don't know Phil Woods as well as I do are surprised by those years, I think.

[PW]: Yeah, yeah, well I was surprised too. [both laugh]

[MN]: But they're great.

[PW]: Yeah but I mean it was a chance to experiment, you know. And I got it out of my system. I mean, I took it as far as I could at that level and then when I left Europe and, and for some odd reason I moved to L.A. which was... I always wanted to have a house with a pool, I'll never, I'll never want that again, you know spend all day worrying about the pH factor, you know. [Laughs]

[MN]: I was at a clinic of yours and you started the clinic by saying that, that "If you don't learn anything today, don't get a house with a pool."

[PW]: Don't get a house with a pool. And my son just bought a house with a pool, but he's good at it. But I mean even though when I went to L.A. I started a real avant-garde band. I had uh that's when I had the ring modulator with Pete Robinson and we were really out, really out.

[MN]: I have that record

[PW]: Very out, very out. But L.A. got to, that's when I found out that I was not an L.A. guy. I mean, I remember the club, Dontes was the famous jazz club in the valley [telephone rings] Oh, you wanna get that? [Recorder is shut off]

[MN]: We were talking about the ...

[PW]: Yeah, so I remember being in uh, when I was in L.A., uh a local the local, Donte's, the local jazz



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club wanted me, you know. They heard that I was in town so I gave them a pretty stiff price. I mean, I was used to five years in Europe, you know, I wasn't going to work for scale. And I remember the club owner saying, "Stay here long enough, we'll get you to for scale," and I said, "I'm out of here," you know. And by that point my marriage to Chan was kind of on the rocks, and I met Jill, and fell in love with Jill, my present wife, Jill Goodwin, who happens to be my, the sister of my drummer, Bill Goodwin.

[MN]: Who, I think, is one of the great drummers.

[PW]: Yeah, he is. He plays a song.

[MN]: I think he's one of the great drummers.

[PW]: Yeah, I think you're right. I think Steve Gilmore is one of the great bass players. We've been together thirty five years, which is another whole story.

[MN]: Yes.

[PW]: [Phil says to his cat] Stop. [Chuckles] That's my cat. [MN laughs] So, it's all part of the woof and web of [chuckles] Yeah, so I said, "I gotta get out of here," and Jill said, "Well, I want to get out of here too." She was coming off a divorce also. We were both, you know, single and looking to go to the east coast, so. I was actually heading back to Europe since my return to America hadn't worked out. The year I was in L.A. I made three thousand dollars in that year, you know. I used to make more than that in a night in Europe with my own band. So I, I was going back to France, [coughs] I thought. But you know we drove to New York uh I gave her a ride. And she went and stayed with Chuck Israels who was a good friend of hers, and I went on to, I stayed with Jerry Dodgion. uh And he got a call from uh Michel Legrand's manager who said, "Jerry, I got Eddie Daniels for the first week, Michel is doing an album in the second week and we need a good player." And Jerry said, "Well I'm working but Phil Woods is here. You want to talk to him?" He said, "Phil? Oh yeah sure." So I got the gig to play with Michel Legrand the second week at uh Live, we did an album called *Live at Jimmy's*. I played uh "You Must Believe in Spring" and at that time Jill had hepatitis and I didn't know what my divorce was going to happen. I mean, I was, I didn't know where I was going to live and the record won a, led to a forming of a company called Griffin



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Productions which was Michel Legrand, Nat Shapiro and uh and Norman Schwartz. And we did an album, uh Michel Legrand wrote a thing called "Images" for me and that won a Grammy. And, the, and as irony would have it, I was presented with the award by Benny Goodman – who hated me – as I was on his band in Russia in 1962. In fact, somebody asked Zoot, "What's it like to tour Russia with Benny Goodman?" and Zoot said, "Any tour with Benny Goodman is like being in Russia," you know. [both laugh] So, as Benny handed me the Grammy he said, "I wondered what happened to you, kid" and I said, "Sure you did," you know. [both laugh] So, uh ...

[MN]: Now real quick though, back to that, you have talked about that solo that you played, "You Must Believe In Spring" ...

[PW]: Yeah, people ask me what's my favorite solo and I say the most important solo to me was "You Must Believe In Spring." Because I was on the edge of the precipice. I mean, you know, I had five fantastic years in Europe but now my marriage is falling apart, I had a couple of kids, I was very upset about that, I had a new woman [END TRACK 1 DISK 2 BEGIN TRACK 2 DISK 2] who I loved, I didn't know where I was going, what I was going to do. But from that one gig with Michel Legrand, I mean, there I was heading back to France and my career was saved by a Frenchman. I mean the irony of it all never, never, I've always lived with that. I said, "Man, it's weird, but somebody up there loves me, is looking out for me," 'cause it all worked out really well, you know. Chan and I came to terms, the family is okay behind the divorce, and Jill and I are having a wonderful 35 years together, you know. Uh and that's when I started. I did a record for uh Joe Fields. I forget the name of the label but it was for Joe, and it was called "Musique Dubois" with uh Richard Davis and uh Allen Dawson and ...

[MN]: Jackie Byard.

[PW]: Jackie Byard, thank you. And it was a good record. But it didn't, I wasn't, I mean after having my own band for five years, you know I wanted, I was hearing something else. And I ran across Bill Goodwin at the Blue Note, and 'cause I was, you know we were staying at his house in uh, in the Poconos here. That's how I happened to end up in the Poconos. And I said, "I gotta get, we gotta get a band." 'Cause



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we were jamming a little bit in the Poconos with Gilmore, Goodwin and myself, and Mike Melillo was the first piano player, so that became the first quartet. And uh here we are 33 years later. But yeah, from that “let out of a cage” feeling of being in Europe with a sort of an avant-garde thing, I realized that my strength is in playing songs. I mean that’s really what I love to do. I mean, I can go this way and that way and all that but the way I really like to go, I want to write more, write tunes. But I had a certain thing, I had a thing I heard that, I wanted a band that was really a band, you know. Uh, the European Rhythm Machine was kind of an all, full-out, all the stops were out. I wanted to be able to go other ways, too. I wanted to break out the clarinet again and do some exotic stuff because I loved the way Goodwin played the ballads. [It] reminded me of the Ellington kind of sound. I liked playing obscure ballads, uh, adding another horn. Well, I had Harry Leahey on guitar in the beginning and that was good. And we did *Showboat* and *Showboat* won a Grammy also. Both albums, *Images* and *Showboat*, which were back to back on RCA, both won Grammys, and were taken off the market within a year. I mean, you wouldn’t do that to any other music. You wouldn’t do it to Polish music, to Italian music, to French music, but to jazz ‘cause the market is not, doesn’t compete with what Bill Haley and the Comets were selling. I mean, you know, they say your records don’t sell and you win a Grammy for them and then you put the little silver thing on the front of it that says “Grammy Winner.” They just took it off the market. I never, I mean you can buy that record now but you pay \$60 for it as an import from Japan.

[MN]: Exactly. I’ve uh scrolled down Ebay, believe me.

[PW]: Yeah, I know, I know. I had to buy it myself. I said, “That’s more than I made!” [both laugh]

[MN]: Now it’s interesting that you mention *Musique Dubois* because you see that record a lot different than most of your listeners do.

[PW]: No, no. I don’t say it’s a bad record. I’m just hearing something else.

[MN]: Okay.

[PW]: I was looking for quicker musicians in the studio. I was looking for quicker results. It came off okay but it took a lot of work to get the guys to get it off the paper because it was all new music, you know? I



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mean they would play great but it was still a jam session as far as I was concerned and I was not ...

[MN]: Well, I get you.

[PW]: ... you know? I mean, it wasn't what I was hearing.

[MN]: Your playing is very driven on that also as well as hearing "Live at Jimmy's"

[PW]: Yeah, yeah ... whatever. I need a break. [Recording stopped]

[PW]: What was the first one I did? I was a good friend of Phil Ramone's and he got me the gig with uh with Billy Joel. "Just the Way You Are." And Phoebe Snow, I did Phoebe Snow and Billy Joel in the same session. It was just me and Phil in the studio and he had the changes on the back of a matchbook cover, you know. And the Billy Joel thing is like a pop song, and Phoebe Snow was okay. And he got me an Aretha Franklin ... [sings da da da da]

[MN]: "Somewhere."

[PW]: "Somewhere," which really came out nice, I think.

[MN]: It was beautiful.

[PW]: I love that record. But the Billy Joel really all of a sudden it's the biggest selling record in history, you know. And wow, you know? I mean, I heard my solo all over the world. In fact, my solo is in the piano music, you know. And I made a grand total of 300 dollars. [both laugh] You know, Billy got a lot more than that. In fact, I ran across a lawyer from California that said, "Did Billy Joel take care of you?" I said, "What do you mean?" I said, "No, I didn't get a cufflink, a chocolate, nothin'." He said, "That's strange, because Billy was going to send you a check." And then it came out a little later on, right after this guy said that, that Billy Joel's manager ripped him off, stole all his bread. I mean, he really took a hit from the manager and I got, 'cause Billy Joel's a pretty good guy, and I got a feeling that Billy said, "Send Phil a check" you know, 'cause he's an important part of the record. And the manager said, "Oh, sure," and, you know, stuck it in his own pocket. So, but I mean I heard, I was in the middle of Warsaw and I heard that in a Polish hotel, a guy playing my solo. Every time I hear it I'd go up and say nice job on my solo and they'd say, "Oh my god, it's him!" You know. But the best one though is, I was working



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somewhere with a quintet ... [Phil's cat makes scratching noises as she plays nearby] Oh my god  
[chuckles] what's she doing? ... Hey, get down!

[MN]: She listens pretty well

[PW]: You're getting locked up for tomorrow! That's my cat, folks. She's part of my history, so what are you going to do. I love animals. Anyway I'm workin' this gig somewhere and here comes a young saxophone player, 17, 18, whatever and he's got his horn and he comes backstage and he said, "Can I talk to you?" And I said, "Sure, young man." He said, "Are you the guy on that Billy Joel record?" I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "Have you done anything on your own?" [chuckles] I said, "A couple things," you know, Dizzy, Quincy, Sass, you know. And then I did um, and it's funny because I was just, I just saw uh Donald Fagen. We were both given the ASCAP Wall of Fame, Wall of Fame award. [Cat interrupts] Let's put her, oh she's ok

[MN]: She's okay. Yeah.

[PW]: We were just given the Wall of Fame and I'm on the Steely Dan Wall of Fame, I'm on Dr. Woo, which was written as, supposed to be a reflection of uh a saxophone player's career. I don't really, you know, and I flew out to L.A., they put me in the Beverly Wilshire and I immediately invited all the alto players including Joe Roccissano, and Joe Lopes, my friends from Springfield, and everybody else. And I had oysters and lobster and champagne. I ran at the biggest rock and roll style party of anybody that Steely Dan – and Steely Dan had a lot of guest soloists – but I beat them all by running up the biggest tab ever, you know. And I went to the studio, it was just the engineer and me, I never met Donald Fagan or Walter, the leaders, and I'm in and out in about 20 minutes. And let me preface this by saying, it's coming up around Thanksgiving, and I said, "Man, it's like stealing." I mean, it's like what a piece of cake, you know. I mean, I'd been partying for three days, and worked for 20 minutes and I made a lot more than \$300 and eh, I'm going home. So I get the red-eye out of L.A.X., you know, and I'm on the plane ready to go and a dreaded voice comes up from the cabin and says "Ladies and Gentlemen, it seems like the fog is going to keep us here until morning." You know, it's midnight, we're not going to leave until daylight ..."



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and I said, "Oh my god." And I'm, you know, I'd been partying so hard. And he said, "... but the bar's going to be open" and that free booze, and I mean I couldn't possibly squeeze down. I've already partied my ass off for a week. And I'm sitting next to this big black lady who proceeded to get totally smashed, and I'm you know sitting in this plane for six hours before we could take off and she's rattling in my ear. And I missed my connection in Chicago; I missed Thanksgiving; I was like two days late, and I said, "Easy bread, huh?" [Both laugh]

[MN]: Spoke too soon.

[PW]: Never count your royalties until the chickens come home, baby. So I, you know, easy bread. But yeah, I mean I mean the Billy Joel thing I got more attention, you know, but I never, I never felt like using it in my publicity because I mean the people that had been following my career, and I go way back before Billy Joel, I mean people that were buying *Quill and Phil* and my early Prestige stuff, I can never say that, you know, "Phil Woods ... Billy Joel's alto player," you know. I could've played "Just the Way..." I mean, I could have, probably would have brought more people in, but I could never sell out. I mean, I got that far without selling out. It really seemed pretty silly to ... so I never used it. I mean, it makes a great story, you know, but uh as a career thing, no, never interested me. And I came close. What I was really sorry about is, Norman Schwartz was my manager at the time and he didn't know who Billy Joel was. But around that period people like Mike Brecker, Randy, the young soloists, if they did a date with a pop star, and there was a lot of that, because I mean pop was happening ...

[MN]: Mm hmm.

[PW]: ...and they were using jazz stars, and you know, I guess I was one of them. But the prescribed way of dealing with a thing like that, well, would be to ask for a point. If the LP, if they took a tune off the LP and it went single, you get a point. You don't get anything on the LP but if, if one of the tunes is a hit, you get a point. You know, and that sold like three billion records. That's a lot of points, man. If I, I'm sorry if we didn't ask for a point, because, I mean, I could have saved a lot of time and, you know, three billion pennies is a significant amount of bread.



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[MN]: That's a lot of pennies. That's a lot of copper.

[PW]: Three billion pennies adds up.

[MN]: That's a pile of copper.

[PW]: But, I mean, if I'd done that, the money would have been spent and I wouldn't have this wonderful story to tell. [laughs] And it's a good story, you know. But, yeah, I never, I would only do a pop thing if I felt I could contribute something. The Billy Joel thing was a Tin Pan Alley song; and the Dr. Woo thing, I loved that band, I still do; and the Aretha thing, and Phoebe, I mean it was all music to me, you know. I'm a professional musician, I never consider myself above it all – great artist, I don't stoop to – you know. I, I like the challenge of playing, of being able to contribute and I still do that. I did uh there's a Japanese singer who can barely sing but they gave me a whole lot of money to play on his album, and the tunes were great. I mean, he couldn't sing very well but the arrangements and everything was, you know, I did them and they were the biggest selling thing in Japan, you know. And in Japan they say "Oh, that's Phil Woods [mimics a Japanese accent] Pheer, Pheer Woods" [both laugh]

[MN]: Any, any uh opportunities that you turned down in the '70s that we don't know about that ...

[PW]: Earth Wind and Fire. I'm sor, I wish I had done that Earth Wind and Fire, because that's one of my favorite bands. I didn't know who they were and my idiot manager said, "They don't have enough money." But I, I think I would have gladly, I mean if I, \$300 for Billy Joel, that's not a lot of money either, man. Earth Wind and Fire would probably, would have paid twice that. And I just loved, I it was a mistake, I was misguided by my management. So, I never had a manager again.

[MN]: Was the Paul Simon thing after Billy Joel?

[PW]: Paul Simon thing was around the same period.

[MN]: Okay.

[PW]: Around the same period, yeah, when uh Phil Ramone called me and said, "I need you to play one minute of bebop, fast." I said "What key?" He said, "B flat," I said, "Okay." [both laugh] If it's a rock 'n' roll thing it could have been in B, and he said, "I need some 'I Got Rhythm,' fast," I said "B flat?" He said,



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“Yeah,” I said ...if he’d have said B natural, I would have said, “Call (David) Sanborn,” [chuckles] who’s a great player, by the way, and a dear friend. But yeah, I mean they were all recording and I’m sittin’ in the studio, and he said, “All right, Woods!” And they’re all packing up and I went in there [makes some alien-sounding, alto-impression sounds, very fast] and I’m gone, and I’m gone. I made like five,six hundred bucks. It was cool.

[MN]: And for the people who might not have heard that solo, it didn’t quite sound like what you just scatted, it’s a pretty *unbelievable* solo, I recommend ...

[PW]: I played every lick known to man [both laugh] [to cat] Come on, just settle down. I played all my licks. But they were my B flat, in fact, I gave my complete B flat reprise.

[MN]: Who needs all twelve keys.

[PW] What?

[MN]: Who needs all twelve keys.

[PW]: Who needs all 12 keys, greatly overrated. [MN laughs] Those sharp keys anyway. Yeah so I mean I like being a working musician, you know? I’d hate to be so, ... and I’ve never had a hit record. I mean, I think that was the downfall of Cannonball, I think. I mean European Rhythm Machine opened for Cannonball’s first tour of Europe and he was doing “Mercy, Mercy” and all that stuff, you know, the stuff that was the hit in the States. He was doing his Las Vegas act. European audiences couldn’t use it. I mean, I saw him get booed.

[MN]: Hmm.

[PW]: He learned a lot. I mean, he never did that again, but he wasn’t aware of the European audiences. The European audiences will not, they know, they know a lot more, and they don’t want to hear your pop stuff.

[MN]: Hmm.

[PW]: You know, so we opened and we’d get a great, you know a great reception and his band, not so much, you know? Uh, so I think having a hit record is a kiss of death in this business, you know? It,



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'cause that's what people are going to want to hear.

[MN]: Right.

[PW]: Or if you play a great solo. I mean, if I went out on the road with Billy Joel, I mean I probably would have made a lot of money but they would have wanted me to play that exact same solo, you know.

[chuckles], so. A friend of mine did an arrangement on that solo and we play it for when I do a clinic.

[MN]: Eric Doney.

[PW]: Eric Doney did it.

[MN]: That's a wonderful arrangement.

[PW]: It's a great little thing.

[MN]: Yeah

[PW]: And it goes into one of his things, so. You know, but that's years, years later that I can do it, but I didn't, you know, I never would have thought of it myself.

[MN]: It's a great ... it's kind of a looking back.

[PW]: Yeah, yeah, it's a little, it's fun now, you know. It's fun now.

[MN]: Well, I say we, unless you have any more, we could uh, break for today. What do you think?

[PW]: Uh, I wouldn't mind.

[MN]: Unless you've got some more steam and want to keep going.

[PW]: No, I think that's a good day's work, don't you think?

[Ken Kimery] : Sure.

[PW]: What do we got, a couple hours?

[KK]: Yep. [Recording stopped] [END TRACK 2 CD 2 BEGIN TRACK 3 CD 2]

[Recording resumes next morning]

[PW]: Did you have breakfast at Molly's?

[MN]: No, we had breakfast at the hotel, just a little bit, a little, but uh ...



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[PW]: Well, we'll be ready for lunch.

[MN]: Oh, yes. Well, here we are again with Phil Woods, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010.

[PW]: Third day of summer.

[NM]: ... as part of the Smithsonian. Yes, third day of summer ...

[PW]: 2010.

[NM]: 2010. Can you believe it?

[PW]: Time flies.

[NM]: Well Phil, I wanted to go back to the sixties for maybe just one good story.

[PW]: Sure.

[NM]: In 1962, you went to Russia with Benny Goodman.

[PW]: Sixty-two, yeah. That was that was quite a tour. uh I was supposed to go to to the uh when the uh World's Fair was in Brussels, which was in the late fifties, and I almost got on the Benny Goodman band at that point, but it didn't work out. But anyway, I was part of that of that tour and I remember the one of the rehearsals and the uh the government people the people from the State Department came and they gave us a lecture about, you know, you're going to Russia, your rooms probably will be bugged, fraternization will be at a minimum, be on your toes, and we all said, "What is this?" you know. Bug our rooms! They won't understand what Zoot and I are talking about anyway, because that was my roommate, Zoot. So yeah we went to, we began in Moscow, two weeks in Moscow, and we got there by way of Seattle. I mean instead of going from New York to Moscow, we went to, we took a bus to I guess Benny was testing us [both chuckle] to see how we were on a bus, you know. Took us to, I think we went to Chicago for a one-nighter and then we flew to Seattle and we did the Seattle World's Fair, and Zoot said, "This fair ain't fair," [both laugh] you know, with the the whatever that big restaurant on top of the tower. And then another one-nighter back to Kansas City and then flew to flew back to Idlewild Airport and got our plane to um to Moscow. [coughs] As I say we did two weeks in Moscow, very dour, I mean uh food was awful, you'd order a salad and they'd throw you a cucumber, you know, it was no lettuce, no



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greens, food was absolutely disgusting. And then we went to uh Sochee, which is on the Black Sea, which is known as a workers' vacation spot, very beautiful. And after two weeks in Moscow which was, as I say, very dour and dark, it was weird because we'd play the concert and then as soon as we finished a cordon of police would come across the stage so that nobody could come up there. I mean there was no fraternization whatsoever. In fact, we used to go on walks in Gorky Park and we used to call it the "talking bushes." The fans would be in the park but they weren't allowed to talk with us. So they'd yell out "Theolonius Monk" and you'd yell back "Dizzy Gillespie." And that was our communication you know because we didn't speak Russian and they didn't speak English, but they knew about the about jazz and stuff, you know. And for I mean the first part of the tour, for the first couple of weeks, we had we had arrangements by Tad Dameron, by John Carisi, by Bob Prince, we had some pretty good, and John Bunch wrote a bunch of stuff. But Benny was still we were still playing the the stuff from the thirties, "Milenburg Joys" and all the old Lunceford and you know they're not, we weren't doing any of the modern stuff. "Mission to Moscow" was as modern as we got, which was Mel Powell. And um and as I say it was rough we had, we wore bright red jackets. I remember opening night in Moscow, that was weird, because Benny, Benny came out in his all caked up. I mean, he was obviously I think he liked phenol-barbs or something but he was not well. I think he had trouble sleeping and I think he was still suffering from the effects of the sleeping pills. And I mean, here we are with our bright red coats, which I thought was a real nice touch, to play Russia with bright red coats, you know what I mean. [both chuckle] And uh and he said, [whistles] "Heads up, boys," he had the clarinet under his arm, you know. And the longest stage wait in history, I mean this is Russia, man, this is the first American jazz band in Russia. And come on, man, and it's, not a word "Heads up." [whistles] He couldn't remember the tempo to the theme they'd been playing since before Vaseline, right, and finally we started and played [sings daaa daaa da] "Let's Dance," right? And [imitates clarinet notes, fast] bap, he stops and then we're supposed to and it was silent, and then everybody looked up and Khrushchev went [clap ... clap] And the place exploded but they were all waiting for the chairman, you know, the boss, to nod his approval and then we were home



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free, and they loved it. But at many of the concerts, for two weeks we did a lot, they were all sold out. It used to drive Benny crazy, because the audience would yell "Zoot, Pheel, ... Zoot Pheel!" They wanted to hear some bebop, they wanted to hear some of the modern music, you know, and that reinforced Benny's thinking. "Oh, we're not going to play none of that stuff." [both laugh] So I mean, we finally get to Sochee, and as I say it's a resort. We all had rooms with balconies with overlooking the Black Sea, Jimmy Knepper and Jerry Dodgion had a room together and they threw a party. We had a few nights off and we broke out the the, we all brought Vienna sausage and tuna fish and canned goods, canned ham, you know, stuff to eat because we knew the food was not great and we needed a little touch of home so we brought pickles and, you know, all kinds of weird stuff. And a lot of vodka was drunk, you know. I remember I took a break and I went out on the balcony and I looked at the Black Sea. It was beautiful, the moon was out, man, it was a great night. And I was just, you know, I didn't like the leader. I didn't like what was going on. I just yelled out at the top of my lungs, "Eff you, King," you know. I'm just yelling at the sky, I'm just venting a little youthful vigor, you know. And at that very moment on the balcony below me was Benny, he happened to be out getting a breath, and he recognized my voice. So the next morning, 9 o'clock, "Rehearsal!" So, oh my god, you know, and I mean I couldn't even, I mean I was very hung over. I drank really too much vodka, and we had we went to the gig and the rehearsal was not in a rehearsal [hall], it was at the gig. It was outdoors, it was like 110 in the shade. It looked like something out of uh Beau Geste, you know, some foreign legion movie. I mean even at 9:30 in the morning it was hot as hell. And he said, "Alright, just 'Blue Skies,' just the saxes" and then Benny goes oops oops oh and then he said, "Alright, you play your part alone," and he stuck the clarinet in my ear, and he says "play your part alone," and I said "Okay." And, you know, I'm having trouble putting the mouthpiece in my mouth, and he says "No, no. Play with me." Then he started to play along with me, playing the melody. And then he says, "You know, I'm sick and tired of you thinking you're the only one that can swing in this band." And I said, "I don't remember saying that," you know, and as I looked around, there's Zoot, there's Willie Dennis, there's Joe Wilder, there's Joe Newman, you know, Teddy Wilson, I mean, you know. I said, you



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know, he was on me and he just kept digging and digging and digging and digging and finally Zoot speaks up. He says, "Hey, lighten up, Benny. Lighten up, Pops." And Benny said, "What's it to you?" And Zoot says, in his remarkable flare for languages, "He's my roomskie." [both laugh] And Benny Benny Benny chilled out, you know. But, man, I was walking around like this for a week, you know? I mean, what do you do in Russia, you don't quit, you'll end up in a gulag somewhere in Siberia, you know. And after the after the whole just recently I got a hold of the State Department report on the tour, and Benny did want to send me home, but he but he couldn't get a sub rapidly. I was going to get fired right after the first two weeks because of that, instead of just just calling me out, you know, talking to me the next day and saying, "I heard you last night." I would have apologized, said I didn't mean anything by it. I was ripped and it was just youthful ignorance, you know. I'm sorry, you know, and forget it. But I mean he put the whole band through that nonsense, it was really uncalled for, it was a typical Goodman move, you know. As I said, they asked Zoot what's it's like to tour Russia with Benny Goodman, and Zoot's reply was, "Any tour with Benny is like being in Russia," you know.

[MN]: That is a funny line.

[PW]: And then went on to Deblice and Kiev and Leningrad. Leningrad was the best. We had a jam session at the Leningrad University, and uh Gennady Goldstein was a young alto player and we started to hang out a bit. And he came to my uh came to my hotel and I wanted to give him a bathrobe that I had. A nice, you know, I wanted to give him something and I had a brand new bathrobe that I never wore, and he said, "I'd love it but if I leave the hotel with a gift from you, the police will take it away." Because everybody was watched, you know? Our rooms were always bugged, and the concierge on every floor, it was pretty uptight, you know? But uh it was very interesting. I mean um the music the music outed (?). We finally got to the hipper stuff in the band and then some funny stuff happened on the las ... We went back to Moscow for the last gig of the tour. And um I don't know, there was, we hadn't gotten paid in a while and so ... The band didn't exactly go on strike, but there was we, you know, we wanted to get paid before so ... They made us wait until we were getting on stage. As we went through the curtain we were



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handed a check. And we had Life magazine and the A.P., all the press services, European press, you know, it was very embarrassing, and it was, made, it was kind of a scandal in the States about the Benny Goodman band being on strike. We weren't really on strike; we just wanted to get paid and Benny made us wait until the very last concert, you know. But the Russians got even with him, you know. Because they, Benny was supposed to play, I dunno, the Brahms or some some classical piece, I don't remember what it was. And the Moscow um Symphony had been rehearsing it for months, you know, they wanted to make sure it was right. And when he got to Moscow he changed his mind, he wanted to play something else. You know, he would do things like that. Just impossible. They took him to visit ... we were invited to go to the Hermitage, one of the great museums of French modern painting, you know, the Degas, and Van Gogh, you know, Modigliani, and he never told the band. He went and he went to the museum but we were not invited. I mean, you know, "The savages will not be appreciated." I mean, he was he was a very difficult man to work for, so it was great to get home.

[MN]: Mmm Hmm.

[PW]: And as soon as we got off the plane, Jack Lewis met us and we did an album called *Mission to Moscow*, charts by Al Cohn. And that was, it sounded like we were all let out of a cage at that point, or let out of jail, I should say. But yeah, it was um it was a rough tour. Johnny Frosk called Jerry Dodgion a couple of years later and said, "I've got some good news and some bad news." And Jerry says, "Well, what's the good news?" And um Johnny said, "Well, the good news is that Benny Goodman died last night." And he said, "Well, what's the bad news?" And Johnny said, "Well, the bad news is he died in his sleep." [MN laughs] So we really loved him. A great player, don't get me wrong, a great contributor to the American music, but just not a, especially towards the end as he got older, he just was very mean to musicians. I mean, meant to everybody. I saw hem slap a cigarette out of Teddy Wilson's hand, and he was always giving Mel Lewis a hard time. He never messed with Zoot, but he told Joe Wilder, Bring a camera, I want you to document the tour." So Joe brought a lot of film and a bunch of cameras and had to ship it underneath the plane. And uh when we got our final pay check as we went through the curtain and



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Joe Wilder looked at his check, Benny charged him for all the overweight. And that's the only time I heard Joe Wilder swear [laughs], I mean, he cussed Benny Goodman out. I mean, when you can make Joe Wilder swear, you know the leader has not been kind. So it was ... At the moment there's a German film crew that is working on a documentary of the um the of that '62 tour and it should be, I think it's going to be out in Europe. It's going to be shown on German TV and hopefully it will get worldwide release eventually. And they've gotten a hold of a lot of Russian films that nobody's ever seen ...

[MN]: Oh, nice.

[PW]: ... and they interviewed the a few survivors: Joe Wilder, and John Bunch was still alive, and Jerry Dodgion and Johnny Frosk and myself were interviewed for the uh, for the uh final film. So it I can't wait to see it.

[MN]: Well, fast forward back to the '70s. We talked yesterday about all the stuff that you did, you know, pop stuff, and other things. But you started your own group in early seventies ...

[PW]: Yeah.

[MN]: ... in which two members are still on today. Did you ever think it would last that long?

[PW]: No, no, I never looked ... No, we've been together 35 years, Bill Goodwin, Steve Gilmore and I. yeah, thirty five years later. In fact, Jim McNeely who was one of my pianist at one point, said that if Phil Woods ever wanted to have a uh a reunion of all the people that have worked for him he could do it in a single hotel room, you know? [laughs] I said I've only ever had three piano players. I had Harry Leahey first on guitar, then Tom Harrell, I added him on trumpet, and then Hal Crook on trombone, then Brian Lynch. That's been the front line. Bill and Steve and been with me through everything. And piano players, it was first was Mike Mellilo, then it was Hal Galper, then Jim McNeely, and then Bill Charlap. So only four pianists and three or four front line. So it's only 10 people in 35 years, that's pretty remarkable, I think. But I think we just passed the MJQ as far as longevity is concerned. But we've had a change of personnel, they didn't have hardly any but, that's when it was only a quartet. But yeah, I'm very proud of that. We're like an institution, you know. And people say, "How do you keep a band together 35 years?"



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and the main thing is, well, Bill Goodwin has some uh bootleg film of me from uh a hotel room in Seattle  
[both laugh] so I can't fire anybody.

[MN]: No

[PW]: No. The, I think the main ingredient of keeping a band together is to be fair, uh you know. Many leaders you pay the band a certain amount of money then you get a plum that pays, you know, a real plum that pays a lot of bread and you keep all the bread and you pay the band the same amount of money you were getting when you didn't have money, you know what I mean? We've always shared the pie, as long as I got leader's fee we've always split it into sixths; I get two sixths, and my wife Jill takes care of the books so I couldn't steal if I wanted to. Because she's Bill's sister. A little nepotism keeps the books honest. And also by changing the book. Many bands continue play the same songs year after year and the same the leader will always play the same feature. And a lot of bands have the you know it's like the leader is up front and the rhythm section is a backup band. uh We can't operate, I don't think you can operate that way in jazz. It's got to be a democratic thing; everybody has input to play together, it's a dialogue. You be fair, and change the book, make sure, I mean, when the rhythm starts to sing the chorus along with you it's time to get a new bag, so. We're always adding new music. I mean, we can sight-read a tune better than most bands sound when they've been rehearsing it. I mean, that's one of things I look for when I have a player is a guy that can sight-read really good. And I always pass out concert parts you have to be able to transpose, so. It calls for some severe musicianship to play with the Phil Woods group.  
[MN]: Also uh I think one of the successes of your group was the arrangements. You played, you move the material but you sounded like a band,

[PW]: Yeah, it's a band, it's not a jam session. There's always a role for each instrument and a certain thing we're looking for. I was looking for contrast in the sets, you know, don't play this, two identical tempos, try to go into an exotic, a little eight to the bar at certain points and a swing and a jazz waltz. And, you know, play some obscure songs, and keep it interesting. So that when, if you follow the band and then you've been following me for thirty-five years you know you're not going to hear something I played



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in the seventies in 2010. We have a whole new set. We just did a week at Dizzy's and we had uh the first set at Dizzy's, we've been off for a while, we haven't been working too much. I mean, after 35 years we've been around the block so we've got to make some serious bread before we take the horns out of the cases. But we did a sound check and we rehearsed four new tunes and we played them on the first set. You know, not many bands are going to do that. Brian Lynch has been writing, and, you know, I always get the music from the band, you know, input from the players themselves. Jim McNeely always contributed something, Mike Mellilo contributed a lot of tunes, Hal Crook contributed a lot of music when he was in the band. I always get it from the guys that are part of the family, and uh, keeps it fresh.

[MN]: I think about Sonny Stitt who spent most of his life traveling the world playing with rhythm sections ...

[PW]: Yeah.

[MN]: ... just playing standards. You didn't want to do that did you? I mean ...

[PW]: No, no, I didn't want to do that. No, I wanted a band.

[MN]: "Stella By Starlight" and "Perdido" every night I heard you say one time, it doesn't appeal to you.

[PW]: No, no it does not. Or "Scrapple," you know. I mean, once in a while it's really neat to play "Stella" but not if it becomes like a work horse, you know, 'cause you're lazy. You know, lazy, you've been running these changes for, you know, at least take it up a half a step [chuckles], keep it interesting.

[MN]: So, in the seventies you won Grammy for *Images*, won a Grammy for *Showboat* ...

[PW]: Yep.

[MN]: ... You have a group that's steadily working. Are you doing what you want to do?

[PW]: Yeah.

[MN]: Can you call the shots a lot more than you ever had in your career?

[PW]: Oh yeah that was a great period, especially the band with Tom Harrell and Hal Galper, I think, was probably the ... Well, I think they've all been good bands but I really liked that period. We were all in our prime I think, you know. I hadn't been hit with my pulmonary problems, the lungs were still good, I still had



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my original teeth and so you know, I felt really good about playing. It gets a little harder as you get older, you know. But I think that's really some good stuff when I listen to it. I like most of the stuff we played. I think it retains a certain level of expertise and music we recorded I'm not ashamed of anything.

[telephone rings] Want to grab that?

[tape break]

[MN]: So you've got this band, and you're, in other words, you can kind of pick and choose. Your popularity's going up pretty good ...

[PW]: We were busy, very busy. We could call our own shots, yeah.

[MN]: Now uh some other nice things are starting to happen, 'cause I've always been a fan of yours, followed your career. *Down Beat* awards are, start to kind of pile up. They're nice to get, aren't they?

[PW]: Yep, sure.

[MN]: I mean that means the people are listening. The people are voting for you.

PWL Yeah especially the popular poll, and the critics poll too. It's all part and parcel of, I mean, if it keeps the band together I'm all for it, you know? But I also subscribe to what Charles Ives said. he said, "Prizes are for children." I mean, pay me and I'll play and buy the records and if ... I don't believe in being subsidized. uh I believe that if you can't bring enough people into the club and pay their admission. I'm against the guest policies. I mean, I will for really old time guests who haven't got any bread but usually I don't ... If you really love me, reach into your pocket and pay for a ticket and come see me, you know. But if you're a good friend, you don't ask me, 'cause I mean you're asking because you might be my friend. If you're my friend, as I say, pay. But you're asking the boss to give up a couple of tables in his club. I mean, I'm asking a certain figure that the bands got to make to pay the nut, and we'd like to not have ... you know, you give away seats, that's money out of the boss's pocket. That makes it harder for him to pay the band, and that makes it harder for you to make it as part of your yearly circuit, you know what I mean? So I mean people don't realize that, when they do that. I mean, if you're really on your ass and got no bread and I know you, I'll say, "Yeah, okay, come on," you know. But in general, I'm against



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guest policy, especially people that I never I don't see all year, you know, and then they I go to New York and I get a call, "Hi, Phil" [MN chuckles] "Yeah?" "Can you get me on the comp list?" I don't dig that, I'm not for it. If my band wants to do it that's different, but as the leader I'm, ag'in it. But at Dizzy's club which is the most civilized club, every band member, and there's no problem with it, is entitled to two guests per night which is pretty good and they feed the band and all that. But I still kind of I've been pretty selective about who I'll put on the guest list. Usually the band has their own guests and, you know, I make my friends pay. [both chuckle]

[MN]: Keep honest friends that way.

[PW]: Well, yeah, you know it's just a policy.

[MN]: Mmm hmmm. You mentioned Charles Ives. It makes me think ... jazz musicians should listen to other jazz musicians but what else should a jazz musician do if they really want to ...

[PW]: Oh, read a book. [laughs] Go to a museum. Learn a language. Visit other cultures; understand how other societies work. Don't be so myopic about your musical tastes. Listen to music that you don't even like. If you don't like something, listen to it and find out why you don't like it. You might end up liking it, you know? Stretch your ears, don't get in that comfort zone. uh A lot of jazz musicians are lazy, you know. They get into a bag and say I mean some musicians say, "Oh, I don't want to read," you know, "It'll spoil my art form," you know. It will also cut you off from the rest of what music has been written, you'll never be able to learn it because, you know, you can't just all of a sudden play Beethoven's ninth by ear. But it's nice to look at the score and listen to it. And, you know, be a musician. Benny Carter taught me that stuff, you know, and Dizzy. I mean, there's this false belief that the noble savage, you know, that they don't know anything they just do it by ear. That's the pure, that's pure jazz. uh Benny Carter went to Wilberforce Academy; Dizzy Gillespie studied music all his life. I mean, noble savage – I don't think so. I mean, a musician is a musician and Europe kind of does that thing in Europe about that. You know, that white people can't play. And it's, if they're reading music it's not pure and all that, you know. Music is music. I mean, whether you're green, purple, the rules of music apply to everybody, you know. You have



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to be able to read a little bit, you know. Learn some keyboard, learn some keyboard harmony. Be able to write a little tune, understand fugal techniques, understand the Bach, Beethoven, Brahms. I mean, if you're going to play bebop, um I mean, I think Bach is to fugal technique what Bird is to articulated bebop. That's the epitome. So you got to, and you can equate the two; Bach and Bird have a lot in common, I think, you know, rhythmically and the contrast and the way the stuff swings. Bach swings like crazy. And Beethoven, there's nothing more monumental or majestic or inspiring than Beethoven's music to me, that's the epitome of, uh you know. Talk about a man rising above – he was a curmudgeon and he was deaf but boy the guy could write beautiful music, you know? Brahms is one of my favorites, I love Brahms. Brahms touches me deeply. But I also loved Robert Schumann, I mean Schumann was...Mendelssohn kills me, kills me, and his songs, his lieder is exquisite, I mean you shouldn't expect... and learn other, listen to pygmy music. Pygmy music is very close to jazz. Nuevo flamenco, what the Spanish young musicians are doing is of great interest, um the children of Astor Piazzola, who was the Charlie Parker of the tango. Some of the new music coming out of Buenos Aires is truly astounding. And, of course, Brazil which is the most musical country in the world, as is Venezuela. And um the Cubans the whole Latin thing that Dizzy turned us onto. You know, the idea of the fusion of the afro rhythms, the Brazilian thing and jazz. It all works, you know, it all works – the harmonic stuff that he was doing, you know. Bill Evans' harmonic sense, Jobim's was extremely touched by what Bill Evans was doing, and Bill Evans was extremely touched by what Debussy and Ravel were doing. And it's all part and parcel of the world's music which really makes us all the same, I mean, kind of unifies us, you know with what we're hearing and what we're feeling. We're all kind of, have the same emotions. You know, we're human beings and it's nice to see what other human beings listen to. And now with the communications and so everybody knows, right? You go to the internet and you can listen to everything, and it kind of helps unify and makes us a better planet, you know? I'd like to think.

[MN]: It is revealing to uh know what people listen to.

[PW]: Yeah.



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[MN]: You have a story I read about Charlie Parker, where you discovered that he listened to Charles Ives.

[PW]: No, he listened to Schoenberg, "Pierrot Lunaire," yeah, when I was a kid. I mean, with Bird's and he listened to Bartok, he liked Bartok and Schoenberg. So, I remember going to the library and getting um uh ... Stravinsky was not quite so deep and Bartok was sort of in the pocket. But I think when my parents heard me listening "Pierrot Lunaire," you know, the early 12 tone stuff, which is really "out" [makes weird noises to demonstrate], you know, [laughs] wild intervals. I think my parents were quite ready to accept my hanging out with the Stravinsky and Bartok. They said, "That's okay, [laughs] the kid's okay, but what is he listening to now?" [laughs] They must have had their doubts. "That's not jazz, is it?"

[MN]: Is there anything that you're listening to right now that perhaps fans could say, "Hey I want to go check that out because Phil Woods is checking it out." [END TRACK 3 DISC 2 BEGIN TRACK 1 DISC 3]

[PW]: Well, I'm listening to, I love the Spanish I love what the Spanish are doing, the Nuevo flamenco. But anything special? No. I'm just listening to everything, everything I can. I mean, I've done all the research I could possibly do. My life is no longer a chemistry set. I mean, I'm not looking to experiment. I'm doing more writing, um, composing. I like staying home and writing and listening to music. uh, Anything, no nothing, nothing comes to mind.

[MN]: So sometimes there's a time to just be? We can search so much and find ...

[PW]: Well, I think you've got to find out who you are eventually, and find out what your strong suit is and stick with it. My strong suit is still playing songs. I still love uhm ... there's a set of two records that's out now that's my songs and my lyrics, of songs that I've composed over the past 50 years. And that's starting to ... that appeals to me. I'm doing more composing and uh adding lyrics, doing lyrics ... as Benny Carter did. Benny Carter did songs and did his own lyrics and stuff. I'm reminded of when Cole Porter and Irving Berlin had dinner together. The both said, "Imagine, it takes two people to write a song." [both laugh] I mean Irving and Mr. Porter both did the music and lyrics, you know. I'm trying to do that, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Dave Frishberg does it real well; Bob Dorough does it real well,



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you know. There's a few.

[MN]: What do you like to do other than music? What, when it's time to do something other than music?

[PW]: At the moment I like to watch World Cup, I'm a big soccer fan from living in Europe for five years. I like, uh I like American football. Of course, it wasn't happening in Europe. But I kind of fell in love with the game of soccer. I started to go to games and I really enjoyed that. I think it's a great game. It's about the only sport I follow. I like to cook a little bit; I'm a pretty decent cook. Um, my French is not too bad, my Italian is ok, my Spanish is a little bit .... I can order food and drink in most European languages. My German is weak but I can tell them my room is cold and if you've got a big wiener schnitzel, you know. And I'm **Al Steinager**, [laughs] um. Yeah, I think you have to be able to travel. Travel is, I love traveling, and that's not easy to say in the present day. It's getting more and more difficult. It used to be fun. I remember when people used to get dressed up to travel. Now, it looks like they're going fishing, you know.

[MN]: Getting on a plane was an experience, used to be.

[PW]: Yeah, it used to mean something. Yeah, it was an adventure, you know. And now it's just like cattle, it's like you're getting on a glorified bus, you know. But I still love it. I love getting off the, I love getting there because it gets harder. I like the newer planes because the recycled air is not quite so bad. Some of the older planes, I have trouble breathing and it really tires me out. I have to leave a couple of days early to get ready to play. I can't just fly and then get on the bandstand like I used to. But very few old people can, you know. I'm going to be 79, that's a long time to be out there.

[MN]: Well now more than ever you're saying, you pay me to get there, really comes into ...

[PW]: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'll play free but you got to, to get on the plane you got to give me a lot of bread, yeah, that's the gig, getting there. The gig is easy. I mean, you know, you got to fly for two days to play an hour, you know. God, what a strange way to make a living, you know. But, as I say, you don't pay me to play, you pay me to get there and play. But, uh you know, I'm not complaining. I mean, I'm glad to be considered that I can play that good that you're willing to fly me in and pay me to play for an hour. So I'm



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not I'm not against the the principle of playing for my supper but I hate giving the airlines more money than I make, you know? [laughs] That's when it starts to hurt, you know, the ticket costs so much and you're only making, you know, it's a little unbalanced. But it's the way it is and I accept it. I consider myself very fortunate that I can continue. I mean, I got a gig, a few of them, coming up. I go to the North Sea, then I go to Paris, then I go to Geneva, then I have a few days off, then I go to Barcelona, and I go to Belgium, and then I go to Rome, you know. I'm booked up until after Labor Day when I'll take a vacation. And we'll have our festival here in the Poconos which will be our 33<sup>rd</sup> year and that occupies a great deal of time, so ...

[MN]: That's a great festival, by the way.

[PW]: Yeah it is. It's the only festival in the world that was begun by jazz musicians and continues. But we're having a little trouble. We don't get the ... grants have been cut back. We used to get money from the state but that no longer applies so um, eh, we'll make it.

[MN]: This is a little "inside baseball," but when I was asking you what else you like to do, you named you like to cook. Are you a carpenter of sorts?

[PW]: No.

[MN]: And the reason I ask is, I thought I heard that, because you had something ...

[PW]: Well, I used to be a hack. I'm not a very good carpenter, I'm a butcher, but ... My brother was a good carpenter, my dad was a good carpenter. I'm not so good. But I used to build stuff. But I mean, only when I'm broke. I can put up a shelf and, you know, make a basic simple cabinets and stuff like that but not anymore. And I'm afraid of power tools. I used to use power tools but not anymore. I don't trust myself around power tools. So, not so much anymore, no.

[MN]: The reason I ask is, you had a hell of a think happen to you that most people don't have happen to them, is that your house burnt down.

[PW]: Yes it did.

[MN]: And when I heard that, and it was ...



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[PW]: But I didn't rebuild it. [laughs] But we had good insurance. We'd just changed our insurance from regular insurance to replacement insurance so we were able to replace all our stuff, including our washing machines and stereo equipment and television. Instead of getting money from the insurance company because your television set was old, you get how much money it costs to replace it. Which is a big, makes a big difference. Costs a little more but well worth it.

[MN]: But it wasn't, I mean you were here when that happened.

[PW]: Yes, I was.

[MN]: You had to get out.

[PW]: Yeah, but I mean there were so many, so many fortuitous events. We'd just replac...changed our insurance to replacement insurance. We'd just got Blue Cross/Blue Shield. My wife's hospital bill was almost \$20,000. Thank god, we upped our, we got Blue Cross which we never had before. uh I'd just put up smoke alarms, six months, within a year before the fire we'd done all this, so at least we were prepared. And I was home, thank goodness, because Jill would never have heard the smoke alarms. But we'll never sleep on the second floor again, we stay on the ground floor. We have exits all over the place, and the house is bullet proof and fire proof [laughs] ... just in case. [both laugh]

[MN]: Now um, you're you had after your quartet in the seventies, you decided to add another player, and what a player he is, and was.

[PW]: Well, no, the band had guitar, right from the get-go.

[MN]: Oh, that's correct.

[PW]: It's always been a quintet, basically

[MN]: That's right. So, Harry did leave after a while.

[PW]: Yeah and then we were a quartet for a while and Tom Harrell used to do the gigs when we were in New York and then eventually we added him for the road, yeah. No I like I mean it's it is-- you don't have a band unless you got I mean a quartet is not really a band. Two horns gives you an ensemble sound, then you can have a band do something to add to the texture of the rhythm and the counterpoint.



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Otherwise, you just have it's you know it's like it's too much like um a front guy with a backup group, you know, a quartet. But it's always been a band in the sense that we've had two front line and and rhythm.

[MN]: How about how-- do you feel like you've recorded enough? Do you like to record, do you like to get product out there?

[PW]: I love the studios, it's one of my favorite work places. I love being in the studio, and I work fast. With a quartet or quintet or any ensemble I'm dealing with we don't record until we know the music. Uh and it's ready to go. And then we treat the recording process like a gig. And we don't if it takes more than two takes there's something wrong I think. I think you lose something. If you if-- If you want to make it like a perfect head, I'd be more interested in a perfect solo, and if you keep doing the same take over and over and over again the solos suffer, I think. And, I mean, I don't think it, I mean if someone makes a slight error on the head I don't think it really matters if you got a great feeling for the whole for the ensemble and the solos are fresh. And with a band like I have, like we have, we know what we're doing. I mean the tunes have been refined on the job so it's, you know, put the tape on and you know if we're not if we're not back in an hour shell the village, you know.

[MN]: I um, I took some lessons off you back in the 80s you're a great teacher

[PW]: Thank you.

[MN]: You have a uh some opinions I'm sure you do about jazz education ...

[PW]: Yeah.

[MN]: ... the way it's done, the way it should be done?

[PW]: I'm all for it, I mean anything that puts an instrument in the kid's hands is, he's less likely to buy an Uzi and shoot me. [both chuckle] No I think I mean that I think learning an instrument makes you a better citizen, makes you no matter what you decide to do in life, I think having some music lessons and read some poetry and understand literature a little bit, speak a language. Yeah, you know, be a cultured human being. If you want to be a musician or an artist, you should be aware of ballet and classical music and literature, and you know, cinema verité, and, I mean, learn about what's going on in the world of



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culture. Um, if you just want to be a working stiff, you know, and that's okay, you want to play with a circus band or be in the pit all your life, that's nothing wrong with that. But I'm talking about if you're interested in the artistry of music then you have to learn about art in general, you know. That's an all-consuming uh study, you know.

[MN]: I suggest we take a little break.

[PW]: Okay. [tape recording stops] [taping resumes]

[MN]: Phil, uh one thing that impresses me about you is that um present day here we are present day you don't seem to be scared of this new technology that's out there. I've seen you embrace it ...

[PW]: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

[MN]: ... a long...you did a CD-ROM years ago ...

[PW] Yep.

[MN]: ... you write and arrange on it ...

[PW]: Yep.

[MN]: ... Can you talk about how much you like it ...

[PW]: I had the very, very first Music Printer Plus, which was the first music program; it was an old DOS based program, yeah. Because I got tired of having my sketches on the back of matchbook covers, and a piece of paper here. Now I have all of my music is in the computer, everything I've ever written including my final exam from Julliard. I've transferred ALL of my stuff into a computer, um a network with my wife, so she has she takes care of all the publishing so we have it all, and we have backup, of course. Yeah! And now I'm--, the Music Printer Plus that I was using, the DOS-based based program, you know, it was built on a small, and then it got, as they kept updating it, it became top-heavy, that's because of the DOS base and, you know, it was too cumbersome. Then finally it was Temper Lacuity, and they changed the uh instead of having a they went to uh Mac strictly, they abandoned PC and they changed the name of the program and whatever. So I said, oh my god ... I mean, Finale I never got into because I explored the idea of Finale when it first came out and I remember going to a music copyist in New York, Emile



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Charlap's office, which was the main copy service, and still is, in New York City, and I looked into the copy room and the guys were copying music. They had a music stand here with the score on it and then they had a music stand here with five volumes of *How To Work Finale* [both chuckle], you know, and I said, oh my god, because I, you know. So that's when I got into Music Printer Plus. And then, when that crashed I said, oh man, I'm gonna HAVE to have to go to Finale. And they said, well, check out Sibelius. In Sibelius, you can download the program but it didn't save so it was useless. But you could learn the program. But I mean, if you save anything. You couldn't you couldn't really use it but you could learn the technical part of how to--. And I fell in love with it. So I've been a Sibelius user. I'm up to Sibelius 6 and the new Sib 6 is incredible from where they were in Sib 1. And I work, and they work closely with Yamaha, at one point, they ran a thing that if you bought a Yamaha alto you got a free Sibelius. So I'm kind of hooked up with both of those companies. So yeah, I'm a firm believer in high tech. My son is uh really good at computers. He works for some big chemical company and does their in-house networking, you know. And he keeps me up to date on uh what's hot, what's not, what's good, you know. But he's into Mac. But I said, I'm a PC guy. But I love it. As I say, um talking yesterday, I do my writing, my composing, at the piano as far as thematic material and what I want to do. Or actually, when I compose a song, I might get an idea and it'll gestate, I mean, mostly it just--. You know, there's a I have a thing, uh with my wife that I do if she says, you know, she'll say like uh "Are you, did you remember to mail that off thing" I'll say, "Oh man, I was working on the rondo." "Did you remember to take the garbage out?" "Oh, I was working on my rondo." It always the rondo, the never-completed rondo. "I know, honey, I look like I'm not doing anything sitting here but I'm working on my rondo." You know what I mean? So one time we're driving, with my wife Jill, and Steve Gilmore is driving and we're going somewhere and she, you know, she asks me, "Did you remember to ..." I said "Aw man, I forgot. I was working on the rhondo. She said, "You know, you've been working on that goddam rondo for 30 years," and Steve Gilmore says, "Oh, but Jill, you can't rush a rondo." [both laugh] You can't rush it. So I was tempted, working on my book, I have a subchapter called "Life in E Flat or You Can't Rush a Rondo." [chuckles] You know? Buzz ... anyway,



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apropos of nothing but ... nevertheless, when I look like I'm not doing anything, I'm thinking about, I think about songs. I wake up in the middle of the night just like in the movies, I dash to the --, I carry a little booklet with me, you know, with staffs, and I jot down ideas and stuff. But, I mean, I get to a certain place in a composition and I can't seem to get over the fence, you know. And that melody just keeps going and then it stops and I can't get it, you know. And it takes a lot--, the gestation period can go on and then all of a sudden "Ahh, okay," then I go back to the keyboard and finish. And when I get from point A to point C or D or whatever it is, then I go to the computer and orchestrate or further develop. But a lot of it is just "Hmmm, what am I going to do here?" you know. I love the process, but sometimes it's painful. Something like "Goodbye Mr. Evans" took a long time to write. It's only a (da da da de da) and that's the whole song, it's just permutations of that motif. But it took a long time to get it of interest. And most of my songs have an odd number of bars. um "All Bird's Children" is 43 bars or something, "Goodbye Mr. Evans" is 27, you know. It's not eight-eight-eight-eight, you know, the basic 32-bar form. And it's not by design, it just, it just happens that way. And I kind of like the odd, to have it sound normal but it's really odd, you know?

[MN]: Uh huh.

[PW]: Uh, and now I'm quite aware that I do that instinctively, so I try to make sure that that's one of my signature things, that it's not a simple edifice. It's like architecture. You don't just square it, you know, put a block here, block there, block there, you know. Change it up. It's kind of you know, the element of surprise in any creation, I think, is really vital. And, um, like that there.

[MN]: So the technology ...

[PW]: Doesn't scare me at all.

[MN]: ... doesn't scare you at all.

[PW]: No.

[MN]: And it's kind of nice if you're in Europe or Asia or something and you don't have a part or something ...



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[PW]: Exactly. Well, I remember sending some--, when I used to write it by hand, I remember sending arrangements to Spain and they got lost in the mail. And I was writing the music at the computer. But my son says, Hey, Pop, you know you can send it by pdf." I said, "PD What?" And he said, come here, you know. And he turned me onto--. And now most of the music programs you can write the score and the parts and then turn them into pdf and just email them, you know. And if anybody loses the part, I got another one here, you know. Somebody loses the fourth trumpet part, it's in the computer. Or if the singer doesn't like that key, boom I push one button and change the key and send it off and I never have to get out of the chair. [chuckles] I don't have to go to the post office; I don't have to deal with packages. It's a wonderful tool for a musician.

[MN]: You said something in your answer that made me think of this next question. Your book.

[PW]: My book

[MN]: When can we expect a book?

[PW]: Well, Ted Pankin, who writes for *Down Beat* and is a very good writer, is working on it as we speak. I mean, I took it as far as I could and I realized that I don't know anything about the book business. I mean, the record business is hard enough, but the book business is really--, getting it published and all that. And then I realized that I'm an amateur writer. I mean, I can tell a story, but--. So he's been working on it, just making it ea...not changing he's not changing my words he's just making it more readable. It doesn't sound, you know, people that really understand literature, when they read my book, they can see the seams and the--. It's not it's not quite there, so I'm getting, I've got a professional guy who knows about that sort of thing, how to make the timelines and all of that, and he does the research, and not to have repeated words. You know, just little small details that I I'm aware of but I don't have the technique, the, the chops to do it myself. uh I took it as far as I could, so it's about finished. And he's working on it and we I hope to have it--. But selling it is hard, these days, and I don't know where we're going to go. I don't really care if I sell it because it's never been about, because I'm not asking any money for it. I just want to have it out there ... for, so uh it's finished for archival purposes, just for if only my family reads it,



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it's my life and the stories and uh. You know, because as I say, I was perched historically at a very important time, you know, after the Second World War when the cultural explosion, and you know, getting to know Bird and Dizzy and you know. I played with everybody, so it's not so that I'm important, but it's important with all the people I know and learned from. So, I wanted to share that and make sure it was documented. So, I mean, I figure after, when I'm gone I know it'll be published, because my records will probably sell more, that's a reality. I mean, I'm not, I hate when they say, "He passed away." No, he DIED. [MN chuckles] You know? Especially in America. We're afraid of death but death is part of life and I don't, I'm not afraid of that or technical things, you know. I'm more in the reality of existence, you know, and I'm going to die someday. So I'm making sure that my affairs are together. And I'm hoping it'll all--. But I'm saving it for last.

[MN]: Right.

[PW]: [chuckles] It's the last thing I'm going to do. [MN laughs] But I, I don't, you know death is a part, I mean, it's something we all have to face and with our eyes wide open and straight ahead. Yeah, you can die, man. So get your shit together, man. And from that point of view, I don't have any fear of it. But, I mean, every day I, you know, I get up in the morning I brush my tooth, [MN laughs] you know, I look in the mirror, I give myself a round of applause, say thank you to whoever, I'm not a religious man but whatever, thank you, and get on with it and treasure each day, you know. I know what I'm going to eat, what I'm going to have, I drink the best coffee in the morning, my espresso machine, I drink good coffee, I eat well. You know, I've got some little neck clams and tonight I'm having linguine and clams, that's what I'm going to make, you know. That's my supper tonight, I got that all figured out. I've got some prosciutto to start with, with a little melone. I mean, I'm going to have, I don't drink much wine anymore, but I might have a glass of wine, you know. But, I I don't plan each day but the sensual pleasures I'm still aware of. I like to eat well, like that sauerkraut we had yesterday, in that pork roast, that was good. I mean, it was simple diner food but it was five star. But a good diner, not a junky one. So, I like that kind of quality. I'm looking forward to--. I'm going to be in the North Sea Jazz Festival. They had a cancellation so I'm going over to



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do the one-nighter. I don't know who it is, and then I'm supposed to open up in Paris but it's not until a week later. So they said, "Do you want to stay in Rotterdam?" I said, "No, man, I want to go to Paris as soon as I can." And I'll just hang in Paris, man, because my French is good and I won't need anybody. I'll be by myself, and I have a nice suite. I will eat well, and I know where the restaurants are. I know what wine I want to have, I know what I want to see. I'll do the Bateau Mouche, which I always do; I'll go to Sacré-Coeur; I might even go up in the Eiffel Tower again; just visit old friends and just enjoy Paris. It's a great, great city. Having--, that's one of the perks of being a musician when you've been around the block. I mean, I was in Paris in '59; I lived there five years. It's like my second city. Rome is a little too intimidating. I don't know Rome as well. But I know London, I know Paris, I know Frankfurt, I know Munich. I love Munich. um Barcelona has become one of my favorite cities; Madrid not so much. But I have the cities that I know, you know, and I really enjoy spending time and living their way, you know. Living the European way, I love that.

[MN]: Have you ...

[PW]: And Japan, I love Japan. You get to know the cultures and feel comfortable with them, you know. And if you're afraid of traveling, you don't learn about other cultures. You know, you might as well, don't become a musician, you know. I mean, I understand. I mean, I've had players that are not really good at traveling, not good on the road and that's cool. But I'm great at it. I got chops, man, I got chops, you now. So, um, yeah,

[MN]: Why are you so good? Are you patient?

[PW]: I'm excited by the adventure of life, you know. I mean, I love coming home but my home is very comfortable. I mean, I just enjoy living, man. I mean, it's a marvelous gift and my health is--. I mean, I've dealt with prostate cancer, I have emphysema, I'm having bleeding ulcers, I need, uh, I've got cataracts, I have false teeth, but I'm still smiling and I'm still reading, you know, and I'm still eating and none of this is going to slow me down, man you know? I'm still playing. I mean, I've always--. One of my favorite lines is, "Emphysema is nature's way of saying you've been playing too many goddamn notes," man, you know.



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[chuckles] So now when I play I'm not as fleet a finger as I was when I was 24 but who is? I mean, as I approach 80 I can still play, man, because I know--. I have I have rearranged my breathing process, you know, so I have to leave more space. But I my music has become clearer to me because I have to pace it differently. I mean, you make adjustments. Each decade, I think, is a process of evolution. As you grow, either to maturity or age or being slightly infirm, you deal with whatever you're dealt and try to make art out of it, you know? And I really like these later years. Musically, I'm really playing better than I ever played before because I think it's more thoughtful, it's not so glib. I'm trying to be more direct, trying to get right to the core of what a note means, you know. I'm not so busy and filling the air with what the French call "rump le sage," which is like "the frosting." I want to get to the cake part, to the what the frosting sits on, you know. So, every day is a challenge. And I still love to play. I mean, I love to travel but I sure love to get to the gig – get off that goddamn airplane, [chuckles] you know, and just get to the gig and say, "Ahh, I'm safe now, on the bandstand, they can't hurt me here." That's, you know, the bandstand, that's a sacred place to me and I love being there. I love getting off the bandstand and getting back on the plane and coming home, too. I love the circle of life, you know. But you've got to keep moving, and my life is very rich in the fact that I'm still moving. I'm still--, I mean I've been almost everywhere. I don't want to go to China, never been there but I'm not interested in China because the air quality would be very rough, I think, on my lungs. I have to be careful about that. So, I'm not interested in uh Africa or places that I'm not sure I can rent an oxygen machine, you know. So, I have to deal with the western civilization that I can get the-- I want the best room, I want nice clean water, I want an oxygen machine and, you know, the comforts that I require. But within those parameters, I'm pretty I'm good to go. Ninety percent of the world is still my oyster.

[MN]: But as you say, you're getting older. It's not for sissies, is it?

[PW]: No, but life is not for sissies, I mean, you know. But I mean yeah, it's, it's an adventure, it's the voyage, it's the journey, you know. I mean, retirement does not interest me. That would assume that you've arrived. You know, you never arrive. You do it until you can't do it anymore and then you die. Ciao.



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[laughs] But I'll be back! [both laugh]

[MN]: Well, I think a lot of people are going to be glad to hear you say that, that you've still got that passion at that age ...

[PW]: Oh yeah, the passion. I think music keeps you--. I think doing something you love to do keeps you young. I mean, there's so many embittered sons of bitches that do a job they hate, you know. "Can't wait to retire" and then go crazy. I mean, my job gets better and better, you know.

[MN]: So uh while you're alive, you've been honored. The NEA has honored you.

[PW]: NEA, that's a great thing, the hippest club in the world. [chuckles] You know, all my heroes. Yeah. And they helped me. I just completed a "Children's Suite," and that's what I--. NEA gives you a nice fat check and I used my check to buy my plasma TV and I used it to produce "The Children's Suite" which is a piece of music based on A. A. Milne's poems. But the NEA--. I took the money that I got from the National Endowment for the Arts and put it into the art of my music, you know. I didn't want to buy a new car. I mean, I wanted to buy a nice entertainment unit, state of the art, and I wanted this piece I wrote forty years ago finally realized. A. A. Milne and Walt Disney, I had a lot of trouble dealing with Mickey Mouse and all that. But finally I got permission to do the piece and the NEA's been, I mean it's, like I said, it's the government saying jazz is okay, and I think it's great. I think it's, finally, you know. Um We're not the cultural barbarians that people paint us out to be, and the NEA is a great example of that, you know, that they honor jazz artists and--. Yeah. God bless them.

[MN]: Well, I saw a performance of your "Children's Suite" a couple years ago at the Sherman Theatre here in town and it was wonderful. Big band arrangements, acting, singing.

[PW]: We just did it in New Orleans, it was very successful. And the NEA helped me take it on the road, so I'm hoping to do more of that with the help of my government. That's neat, so, you know.

[MN]: Well excellent. Well, Phil Woods, in closing, I uh saw a one of the jazz books that I was reading through, maybe back in the '80s or the '70s -- there's a jazz book that has a little bio on everyone in the jazz world, and when it came to Phil Woods at this particular time it described you as a force to be



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reckoned with. And I say that, almost 79, you are still a force to be reckoned with.

[PW]: Well, God bless you.

[MN]: So, it was an honor to interview you.

[PW]: Thank you, man.

[MN]: And if there's anything you'd like to say in closing, other than that, thank you very much.

[PW]: Well, you did a good job, and I'm honored that the Smithsonian is doing oral histories of the jazz masters. I think that's a great thing, for archivally will be, have a part of American history, that scholars and young people and old people and if you're interested I'm sure it's going to be online, the information about who you are and what you did. So, it's not so much about how many records you sold or how popular you were but as an artist you have a place in American history and for that I am forever grateful.

[MN]: And we are too as well. Thank you, Phil Woods.

[PW]: Thank you.



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