

## APPENDICE

### Documento n°1

#### *What Is Democracy?*

*Democracy is not the government in Washington. Democracy is not the government in Sacramento, nor is it the government in our own city hall. It is you and I, and the way in which we live together. As Walt Whitman once wrote, "Did you, too, O friend, suppose democracy was only for elections, for politics, and for a party name? I say democracy is only of use there that it may pass on and come to its flower and fruits in manners, in the highest form of interaction between men, and their beliefs, —in religion, literature, colleges and schools—democracy in all public and private life, and in the army and navy/" You don't tell me how to live; I don't tell you how to live. But if the things we do should bring us into conflict, we put our heads together to find a solution that will be mutually satisfactory. In war, as in peace, we use the same democratic principles. When some outside force threatens our country, or our way of life, again we put our heads together and devise ways and means to meet the threat. If war should come, we do not wait for a dictator to whip us into line and force us to fight—instead, if necessary, we become a fighting machine with a soul and a mind—a high ideal and a knowledge of what we're fighting for. We know that we are not sacrificing ourselves for the political whims of some gaudily-uniformed autocrat—we're fighting for our right to live as we think God intended us to live. But, fortunately, democracy is a way of life that leans away from war, not toward war. Indeed, democracy knows no hereditary enemies but sin, ignorance, and disease. And the struggle against these is one of toil and sweat, not of blood.*

*Democracy is a generous faith in human nature. It does not foolishly assume that all men are perfect or that even a majority acting in concert always does the right thing. But it knows that most of us have good impulses most of the time. It knows from experience that most of our words and deeds will stand the most rigid tests of morality and justice. It knows confidently that our mistakes, great and small, will be corrected and compensated for as soon as we are a little calmer or a little wiser. And the grandest article of Democracy's faith in human nature is this—Mankind is improvable. It follows then that the democratic State is improvable, for "What constitutes a State? Not high-raised battlements, or labor'd mount, Thick wall, or moated gate; Not cities proud, with spires and turrets crown'd; No: men, high minded men; Men, who their duties know; But know their rights; and knowing, dare maintain.*

*These constitute a State/" [Thomas Jefferson, to J. Taylor, 1816]*

*Democracy does not stand still. It is a great reservoir of kinetic social force, a force that will grow because it is willing to try everything. For every new voice that speaks in the world, it has an ear; for every plan offered that may make this world a better one, it has a place. And thus democracy keeps pace with the times, but still its foundation is always firmly based on those truths that are as vitally and assuredly alive today as they were a thousand years ago—or as they will be a thousand years from now.. those truths carefully preserved in our public documents and in the laws of our land. Democracy is the best part of you and me. It is our dream of better men, a better world, a better tomorrow. It is the natural and becoming pride which inspires every American to value himself. It is the generous, tolerant brotherhood that welds this great nation into one unassailable unit forever. It is the spirit that keeps every American from bending his knee or his spine before any authority lesser than almighty God.*

Paul Breitenfeld, *San Francisco Chronicle*, giugno 1941, riportato in *TF*, pp. 50-51.

### Documento n°2

*"The band is beginning to sound better, but no 3-tenor outfit could ever really sound good to me. The most amazing thing about it is the way publicity has been building it up before it even got started. Last Thursday at this time, neither Hal nor I had ever seen Jack Buckingham. We didn't get the trumpet player until Friday, and the drummer came along with him. So we get down here, after two short rehearsals, and find big glowing ads in all the papers—'Top's Cafe, opening tonite,*

*will inaugurate its new policy of presenting strictly name bands with Jack Buckingham, etc. etc."... "Dance to Jack Buckingham & his Orchestra at Top's Cafe"—on all the street cars and buses in town. Two broadcasts per nite on a local station, with a coast-to-coast hookup vaguely scheduled for some time in the future. It seems an awful shame that a stinking 3-tenor outfit could get all that build-up, plus all the broadcast breaks, after just 2 rehearsals, within 5 days after the time the band was organized...The only other thing I am worrying about is that playing tenor might wreck me as a clarinetist and alto man. In all the name bands in the country, nobody that plays good tenor plays good clarinet, and vice versa. In fact, the most terrific tenor men play very sad clarinet, indeed. And the really wonderful men, like Goodman and Shaw<sup>5</sup>, play absolutely no sax at all.. .To get a beautiful, crisp, clear tone like Goodman, which possibly one or two other jive clarinetists in the country have, and which I am going to get if it's the last thing I do, you have to have a tight, powerful embouchure. But if you use that same embouchure on tenor, you get a thin, hollow tone, and you have trouble getting low notes. So you have to relax, use a loose embouchure on tenor—and your clarinet tone starts falling flat and whiny Alto is a cross between them, just complicates matters more. I've always wanted a job playing with a band—but alto and clarinet, preferably, so it would build me up, help to mellow my alto tone down to blend better with a section, and round my playing out in general. I wanted to improve my style, too, and learn to phrase and sight read better. And this job is tearing every God-damn one of them down.. .I have to practice all day just to keep where I am... And I hate playing with a lousy band. I still don't know how long we're going to stay here—Jack still says he thinks it will be for several months, possibly five or six. Hal doesn't expect to hang around here more than 3 more weeks.. .so he might bring the car back, if he leaves before I do...I'm not at all sure how long I'll stay with it. There must be bands in the country that play good stuff and are looking for alto and clarinet men. People are going nuts over powerhouse bands. Harry James is raking in more dough in a week than even the top ickie<sup>6</sup> bands make in a month. He has the Coca-cola broadcast twice a week, Chesterfield times a week, Jack Benny's radio show, hotel dates and one-nighters, and movies for M.G.M.—the best is another terrific Mickey Rooney-Judy Garland deal. Jimmy Dorsey just hit the Palladium in L. A — brasses, 6 saxes, 4 rhythm. Even small-time outfits like Gus Arnheim, whom we heard last night (o night off) are going powerhouse—5 saxes, 5 bra\* They play wonderful arrangements, too. Origin; inspiring, really solid scores. It makes me slight sick to think of ours in comparison. Somewhere sometime, I'm going to get into oi of those bands. Until then, all I need is something kill the taste of this 3 tenor music every night. May I should try marijuana. Outside of these minor gripes, everything fine. Only I like L.A. better."*

Paul Breintenfled a Emil Breintenfled, 1 ottobre 1941, in *TF*, p. 58.

### Documento n°3

*"What the hell is wrong with L.A.? From the quick look I got at it, I have been living with false ideas of the place for the last 5 years. Hal and I both went nuts over it. It's utterly mad, delightful, and kind of fairy-like, in spots. The Streets of Paris, with Meade Lux Lewis (the originator of boogie-woogie, you heard him on the Goodman radio program several years ago), Art Tatum, one of the top 5 piano men in the country, and Murray McEckern (sp), who plays every instrument in a modern band, and is very fine on all of them. And the district around Sunset and Vine, with the CBS and NBC studios, Music City, Radio City, Hollywood High, the Hangover Club, and the Palladium, not to mention all the unearthly conglomerations of buildings around there—the movie palaces, swarming all over the place, the sunshine, the food, even the people—the town just knocks me out and puts me away. I see your point, though. I guess S.F. might be better to settle down in and raise a family in, but right now S.F. seems so dead by comparison.. .First of all, in S.F. the coming of a name band is looked forward (to) feverishly for months—then the band finally gets there, plays a perfunctory one-nighter in Oakland, and it's all over for another month. All the hotels in S.F. have nothing but stinking 3-tenor outfits like us. (We might hit one of those hotels, after we get back, if the band improves a little.) But down in L.A.—the Palladium, the Casa Manana, the Trianon, the Hollywood Casino, and at least 2 or 3 theatres always, 7 days a week, are reeking with terrific powerhouse bands. Goodman, James,*

*Dorsey, Lunceford, Basie, Hampton, all come swarming in, spending about 3 months apiece there. Hal and I walked up Sunset for an hour after dinner, with our mouths open, taking in all the completely incongruous buildings lined up next to each other. And those mansions, out in Beverly Hills, that we passed on the way to San Diego.. .and the cars they drive down there! We came to the conclusion about an hour after we hit town that everybody in L.A. either drives a cream-colored Cadillac convertible or a flame-red Buick. Talking about cars, the more I drive the Pontiac, the more I am convinced that we're very lucky. Hal used to be a chauffeur, and he likes it better than any other Pontiac he's ever driven, and even better than most of the high-class limousines he used to pilot around. I think it's just beginning to hit its prime. Pick-up, speed, smoothness, power, comfort—everything is perfect. I wish gas wasn't going to be rationed."*

Paul Breintenfled a Emil Breintenfled, 1 ottobre 1941, in *TF*, p. 58.

## Documento n° 4

*Sunday Nite*

*"ABANDON ALL HOPE, YE WHO ENTER HERE"*

*Greetings,*

*I should have written much sooner, but my handwriting has degenerated to such an extent that 24 hours after I have written a letter, I can't read it myself. I'm not kidding, either. For 26 years now, I haven't written by hand at all, except to sign my name, which I did very infrequently. And I just can't write any more. When I do, it's such an effort to write one sentence that by the time I'm half-way thru, I've forgotten what I started out to say. So I just waited around until I could locate a typewriter, which I finally did.*

*About the Presidio—I take it all back. After running around like mad down here, and spending my next month's salary on long distance phone calls, I finally slid thru. Presidio sent a request for me to be transferred up there, said letter starting its journey at the General Adjutant's Office, Washington, DC. By the time it got down here, I would have been in Alabama, with the rest of the guys I came in with, were it not for the fact that the corporal in the Assignment Office in charge of my case happened to like Benny Goodman, and I played all the Goodman choruses I knew and several that I didn't, at the dance last nite—all for him. Then we had a coke together and settled down to an argument about who was better—Goodman or Shaw—with me agreeing at great length with*

*everything he said. So by today, when I was to have been shipped out (I've already been here 3 days over the usual time limit)—instead of shipping me out at 7 this morning, he gave me an extra day to wait for the confirmation, which came in over the teletype at 3 this afternoon. It was a close fight, but I won. All I have to do now is wait around for my orders, which shouldn't take long, and then I'll be back in Frisco. I think I get to take my basic training at Presidio, but even if I don't I'll end up there. That's for sure. So—I'll be seeing you again sooner than you think. Thank God I'm not going where the rest of the guys are, anyway—they go all over to hell and gone. Tank Corps Replacement Center, Iowa—some new camp being started in Alabama—Florida, Maine, Seattle, Idaho—these guys are scattered right and left. They think they're lucky if they get stationed at Camp Roberts, or San Luis Obispo, or some other California hell-hole. (Did you read "Basic Soldier," in the last New Yorker? Ah, for the life of a soldier—carefree, gay, nothing to do but wait for your orders—no worries, no cares, nothing to think about—your whole day is planned out for you.*

*Seriously, though, I hardly mind it at all. It's the guys like the one in that New Yorker sketch I feel sorry for. There was one with us for a few days—a young, dark, very good looking serious chap who'd been married about a year, and whose wife was expecting a baby. It finally arrived, two days ago. The telegram she sent him arrived here at 9:30 in the morning, and he got it about 3 the next afternoon. And they didn't even let him have a pass to go home and see it for a day before he left—they shipped him to Camp Roberts at 6:30 the next morning, and, with typical army humour, put him on K.P. duty from 6 that nite until midnite to take his mind off his worries. In the length of time he had off, it was impossible for him to call his wife long distance, and Western Union curtly informed him that no messages of congratulations were allowed for the*

duration, so he couldn't even answer her telegram. It's things like that that I don't like. After that, any of the minor gripes I have are awfully trivial.

As a matter of fact, I have only one gripe so far. Getting up in the morning doesn't bother me—it never did, as a matter of fact, after I had finally got up, got dressed, and eaten. And although I don't seem to feel as joyously untroubled as you did about being ordered around like a bunch of sheep, I don't especially mind it. The food is ok, and I've met a couple of guys I get along with fairly well—but. The most trivial thing of all (you'll probably laugh out loud when you get to it) drives me absolutely nuts. It's that woolen o.d. shirt we're supposed to wear with the uniform. First of all, I never could stand wool next to my skin. I don't know why—maybe I have a slight allergy to it—but that's one of my baby traits I never got over. Wool bathing suits, for instance, I never could stand. For years now I've been using gabardine or Lastex. The same thing goes for the bathrobe mother got me—that's the only reason I've never worn it. That's where my aversion to sweaters started. Even suits, which don't touch your skin—that's why I got those soft, doeskin slacks which I've been wearing incessantly. I also have a very, very slight touch of claustrophobia. Another reason why I got those drape suits—because they're very loose and comfortable. I hate feeling something tight and restricting around my body—which is why I never liked overcoats—I'd rather freeze than feel all tied up—or sweaters, which are tight in addition to being wooly. Or why I liked to sleep in a bed better when it was thoroughly messed up, and all I had to do was pull a few covers loosely on top of me. If I'm in a bed with the covers tucked in tightly, I have a very tough time dropping off to sleep. So now, all of a sudden, comes this infernally tight uniform of rough wools—and it has the same effect on me as noise does on you when you want to sleep, or eat—or anything that gives you that hopelessly furious feeling. In Frisco I think I can get some rayon o.d. shirts to wear instead of the wool ones, which will help. Meanwhile, that's the only thing here that bothers me at all.

This whole thing is very much like an assembly line. We arrived here at 7 Monday nite. By 7 on Tuesday, we had had an examination for venereal diseases, been shot for tetanus and typhoid (these shots, by the way, are very much over-rated. They didn't bother me anywhere nearly as much as the wool shirt does), taken 3 classification tests: mechanical aptitude, on which I was hopeless, general intelligence, on which I got comfortably above the minimum Officer's Training School requirements, and radio aptitude test, which I got quite low on, mostly on purpose. (It consisted of telling which of two Morse code signals were -no, I'll start that again. They played pairs of very short Morse code signals, and you wrote down whether they were the same or different. To a musician they were very easy to distinguish, but at least five musicians I know have been yanked out of bands and put to work sending and receiving signals all day long. Which I don't want to do.) Then we had interviews to classify us and place us in the army, got completely equipped (one o.d. uniform, with 2 shirts and 2 pants, 2 sets of high-heeled shoes, a fatigue uniform (first overalls I've ever seen with a drape shape) (they look like heavy green pajamas), a good raincoat, a huge, imposing-looking overcoat which I detest and will wear only if facing court-martial, underwear, handkerchiefs, sox, a canteen, mess equipment, a plastic helmet, a light field jacket (also very nice, also forbidden around here), a kit containing soap, tooth-paste, razor, sewing kit, etc. etc., leggings apparently left over from the last war, and various other miscellany I can't think of right now. Then we got our haircut, which will no doubt make you very happy. I look something like a Fuller Brush, model G-18, used for cleaning latrines. We also had several lectures—on sex, military courtesy, the Articles of War, and the Art of Making Beds. Since Wednesday, things have quieted down for me somewhat. The process seems to be: First day—processing. Second day—likewise. Third day—work. From 4 a.m. until 7:30 at nite. Some of it is rather silly. For instance: the floor has to be completely mopped and scrubbed between each meal, which takes time. When they're through with mopping the floor and getting everything in the kitchen spotless and cutting the tops off all the milk cartons to collect the three drops of milk inside each carton and other such all-important jobs, they take ten minutes off and whip up a rather sad meal, which you eat from damp, clammy trays with blackened, slightly slimy silverware. A lot of misdirected energy, as far as I can see, but that's strictly a matter of opinion. The day after that, usually, you ship out. If you're waiting around after that, they put you on detail duty, specifically dedicated to the purpose of doing the least amount of work with the most possible men. For instance—instead of one man with a lawn mower

and a grass catcher attached cutting a lawn, there will be ten men with small hand scythes to cut, 5 men with ineffectual rakes to collect the grass, 3 men with brooms to keep it off the walks, and two men with boxes to take it away. Other vital jobs are all over the place: dragging the ground with thick-bristled brooms to make the sand nice and neat, with little ridges in it, so people can walk over it and make footprints. Probably so when a corporal is hunting for a detail, he can follow the clear footprints of new G.I. shoes, and track them down, so they can wipe away the footprints so they can make some more so when he wants them to wipe them away again, he can find them.

After all my years of experience in cutting classes at Poly and State, though, dodging detail work around here is a cinch. This place is such a madhouse that they couldn't possibly keep track of everybody—there's a new pfc or corporal in charge of you every day. And they're so damn sick of the 300 new recruits piling in here every day by now that they don't care what you do, as long as you don't get into trouble. And please let's have no lectures on being a shirker in your next letter, either. Every guy I've ever met in the service has told me to get away with anything I possibly can. Anybody who volunteers for anything around here is just dumb. "Tor Crissake," is the gist of their advice, "any time you see a noncom walking around trying to scrape up a detail, just turn around and walk away, real fast, like you have a job to do somewhere."

Musicians around here are practically nonexistent. They had a dance last nite, with music by miscellaneous musicians from around camp— -2 trumpets, neither of whom could play, a fairly good piano player with whom I played my first joint job in Frisco (Bert Beals<sup>6</sup>—I worked with him at the Silver Dollar when I first came back from San Diego. He went in the army the next week, and has been handing out sox in the supply department 7 days a week since then), a guitarist, Howdy Smith, who plays piano ordinarily. He worked at the Tin Pan Alley shortly before I started—he was there with Bob Russell. There was a sergeant drumming most of the nite, very sad, but for a few wonderful minutes Howard Keith sat in. He played with Goodman at the Gate, left him at the end of the week there, and is waiting to be sent to Fort Stockton. There is also a banjo player who played with Eddie Peabody, and who plays the Poet and Peasant overture over the p.a. system every day after lunch, but let's not talk about that. All in all, it is very sad.

The chess set came in handy the first few days—there were about 4 guys around camp that knew how to play. They're all gone now, though, so I spent most of my spare time either practicing or in the library. There is a wonderful librarian here, by the way—a charming old lady with utterly perfect diction and the most marvellous disposition I've seen down here so far. Whenever I have nothing to do I drop in and talk to her for a while, then leave, all cheered up.

This Presidio deal will probably do wonders for me, though. When all the discipline I am now getting is converted into the sole purpose of making me a good musician, things should start happening. That's the one thing that has been keeping me back—lack of either the discipline or will power to practice steadily. I've just been coasting along on my talent, such as it is, and the small amount of experience I've had so far. Sometimes

I wonder how I ever got as far as I did—I haven't really practiced clarinet, sax, or piano since I left town with Buckingham. And I don't mean that I just haven't practiced steadily—I haven't practiced right even once. So when I get into the routine of getting up early, playing with a marching band, rehearsing 3 hours a day with a concert band, 2 hours a day with a dance band, practicing by myself—enforced—for two hours, and jamming or playing dance jobs at nite—if I don't get a hell of a lot better, I guess I never will.

I'm supposed to be on K.P now, by the way, but I wanted to get this letter written while the librarian had her typewriter down here. It was worked by a neat strategy previously doped out between the librarian and myself. The visitors' hall is right next to the library, and the librarian often has the double duty of taking care of the visitors and the library at the same time. So she sent a note to the p.a. announcer to the effect that I had visitors, it came booming out over the speaker in our barracks, and I was excused from k.p. Which is only fair, anyway, because they detailed me to play at the dance last night until 1, and I had to get up at 6 this a.m. and march about a mile up the Hill to help wrap civilian clothes for recruits who wanted them shipped home. (My clothes I gave to the Red Cross<sup>7</sup>, by the way, so don't expect them). I've been half asleep all afternoon, as you can probably tell from the letter, and the idea of going on k.p. duty, which is the most grueling job around here, from 6 until midnite tonite and get up again at 6 tomorrow

*just didn't appeal to me.*

*There really isn't a hell of a lot more to write about—things are awfully dull and monotonous around here. No women, no music—I'll be glad to get back to Frisco. My address is below, if anything urgent comes up, but I don't think I'll be here long enough for you to answer this.*

*Hope everything is ok at home. Have you quit down at the theatre yet this week?*

*Regards, etc. Paul*

*Pvt. Paul Breitenfel Company A, group 802 S.C.U. 1930 Presidio of Monterey.*

Paul Desmond a Emil Breitenfeld, fine '43 inizio '44, in *TF*, pp.66-68.

## Documento n° 5

*La gelida colonna sonora che usciva dal sax-contralto di Lee Konitz ai tempi eroici del cool jazz e che noi tutti, qui in Europa, si fantasticava esile e gracile (anche se affascinante e deliziosa) prima che l'altosassofonista ci capitasse a tiro con una puntata inattesa e solitaria (occorse trovarli dei "ritmi" degni, e non fu impresa facile) e ci aggredisse con un volume imponente che giustificava in pieno le sue milizie orchestrali — ove occorre soffiare con generosità per non farsi coprire dagli ottoni —, la gelida colonna sonora fu catturata da Paul Desmond, altosassofonista bianco e occhialuto al pari di Konitz, più anziano di tre anni (Lee è del '27, Paul del '24) e legato, proprio come Konitz, spiritualmente a un pianista. Solo che il legame di Lee faceva capo nientemeno che a Lennie Tristano, mentre quello di Paul si riferiva a Dave Brubeck, pianista furbacchione, colto, ma assolutamente "non" artista. E anche Desmond tradiva, per il vero, scarse predisposizioni artistiche. Mentre artista è sempre stato, senz'ombra di dubbio, Konitz. Ma, forse su suggerimento di Brubeck e, certo, per sua particolare predisposizione, Desmond riuscì a costruire una sintassi sonora che ricalcava, stupendamente in superficie, il sinuoso, pulsante, provocante gelo dell'arte konitziana, smussandone tutti gli spunti più scomodi, eludendo le implicazioni provocatorie che la innervavano, trascurando bellamente anche certa connaturale dinamica espressiva. Desmond condusse lo stile di Konitz in camera a settica, ove è di rigore mascherina e guanti sterilizzati, perfezionò frasi gelide in cui mai singola nota o accento o scansione o arpeggio o passaggio sarebbero risultati men che perfetti. Espresse linee solistiche di assoluta compiutezza formale, caratterizzate da pulizie sublimi, la levigatezza totale, esaltando un jazz sotto vuoto spinto, dipingendo, alla Dalì, una musica polare di colore bianco-azzurro. Sull'onda del successo di Brubeck, Desmond vantò consensi e apprezzamenti mai conosciuti da Konitz e solo la spietata, crudele realtà della sua scomparsa fisica (avvenuta il 30 maggio 1977), ridarà al dimenticato Lee la gioia di un grande ritorno, di un meritato riconoscimento, pur a distanza di quasi trent'anni.*

Bruno Schiozzi, *Paul Desmond*, nel fascicolo n° 43 'Lee Konitz' de 'I grandi del Jazz' (dir. Bruno Schiozzi), Nuova Edizione, Fratelli Fabbri, Milano 1979.

## Documento n°6

*"Practice and learn all available Brubeck arrangements*

*Work out details of a financial agreement ("with union safeguard")*

*Deal with prospective personality problems in the band*

*Work on something to record with Dick Practice, and try out new reeds*

*Analyze the trio as to commercial atmosphere. . . state the most convincing possible argument for the extent to which you could increase same greatly. Jazz—obvious. Bongo feeling subtle, rippling clarinet. 2-beat into stomp. . . Dixie clarinet and incisive alto. Crystalline, locked-hands piano—alto doubled lead or obligato. Emphasize value of sustenance and continuity as contrast to now almost exclusive percussive effect (cf Jersey Bounce on air) No matter what outfit in country, on or near top, they all have that sort of contrast. Miles, Shearing, Tristano. Revitalize fugal (strict) improvisation—commercially the most effective thing at the Band Box, still untouched across country. List of proposed arrangements for the four, with 4 tremendous ones as samples. Spend some time on this, examine the 4 most popular things they do, figure out what makes them so popular and write some that are more so. Mention eagerness to learn, even unto practicing an*

hour a day the hi-hat or some such noise-maker to fill in behind Cal. Remind of ability to write clever patter, in case ever needed. Also offer self as public relations assistant offering as sample a simple and clear explanation of fugal improvising, along with why it is almost as much fun to listen to as to play. Point out that it will be a long and bleak time before they run across another sax man who can play alto and clarinet at the same time while tap-dancing. And who will cheerfully copy out scores, take care of the library, handle the cleaning and pressing of uniforms and baby-sit on the side.

Final note: From now on until you either make it or don't, try for once in your life to do something with consistent, unremitting, furious singleness of purpose, determination, and cheerful, optimistic drive. See how it works. Personally, I think you'll make it. Nothing is even remotely near as vital as getting with Dave. Not writing, schoolwork, money, women, leisure, certainly not mulling over books, magazines, correspondence, records, etc. Forget the tape recorder has any other uses than to play Brubeck."

Promemoria di Desmond per sé stesso, novembre 1949, in TF p.119.

## Documento n° 7

### Operation Paradise

#### 1. Learning the arrangements

Get a list of the arrangements; organize it roughly as to popularity (in numerals) and adaptability (in letters); list all those not already recorded and get good cuts of them as soon as possible. Play them night and day until you know thoroughly what everyone in the trio does on each. Get a goodly supply of bennies, get on the best possible overnight playing kick, and play along with them until you have worked out the best alto part you can.....according to these

principles: The alto or clarinet must add something— at the minimum, a bit more body, color, and sustenance. Ideally, it should be individual— another voice not in the original arrangement. But, and this is essential—it must never clutter up or get in the way of the original; it must never play just to be doing something. Make notes of the additions to each arrangement, particularly in reference to any proposed or actual changes in the other parts. Be absolutely certain that the shift of emphasis from vibes and piano is balanced to result in a natural easing of the nitely melodic burden rather than an encroachment. Don't, of course, plan on taking over the lead on all first and last choruses. When in doubt, provide for alternate possibilities, and plan for a long talk with Dave and Cal about their ideas on the subject, in preparation for which you would be shrewd to think carefully about the psychological angles involved. If possible when at the club, notice which tunes they don't seem to care too much about, and which they like.

Before attempting to add parts to each arrangement, try to analyze its type, style, mood, etc. List its best quality and don't do anything until you think of something which will increase that quality, or add another quality in keeping. Wherever you find simplicity, for God's sake leave it alone. It's getting too rare as it is. Edit tape reels until you have clear, good cuts of all arrangements; play the finished arrangements along with them until absolutely perfect. If possible, find another tape recorder-----

or rent the use of a really good one, and re-record the whole library with the added parts so you can hear them as a whole. Then either play them for Dave—or, which would be vastly more fun, go over to the Burma on a second-nite kick, and work the whole job.

#### 2. Playing goals:

##### Mechanical

1. Pretty, but strong, sound. Volume with dignity to match Dave. Soft tone, when used, still firm, definite, and relaxed.
2. Automatic technique. Ideas emerge before you even realize you have them.
3. Consistently good intonation without squeezing or choking.

##### Musical

1. Individuality. Of a definite nature, not an evasive dodging of other styles.
2. Continuity and form. A definite melodic line, not just a set of spliced cliches. Ideal: A certain elusive kind of logic, without triteness.

3. *Emotion, honest and simple. You play something because you mean it, you feel it, you like it, and you know pretty much that the people who hear it will like it too, if they have any sense, and if not, the hell with them. Avoid deliberately wringing any expression out of your ideas and playing evenly with a cold tone just because it is being done widely these days by assorted wigs. Also avoid affectation of great feeling—either frenzy-to-order, or God-isn't-this-beautiful lyricism. If your ideas emerge spontaneously and are reasonably good ones, the feeling comes along with them. When the emotion is assumed first, the whole process becomes rather phony.*

4. *A beat. Which, you should know by now, comes thru best when you forget all about it, often shrivels up completely when you pursue it, wild-eyed and frantic.*

5. *Ideally, the main emotion should be the joy of creating, which would mean that a happy feeling should prevail and be communicated to some extent to persons attentive to such things. Incessant wailing of the blues, or wistful longing-for-something-ineffable type moods have their place, and a very good one it is too, but they can get to be mechanical very quickly and then can become awfully monotonous. This is a pretty tricky distinction, tho.*

*Enough. The fine points of emotional validity can wait, for the time being. The important thing is to have a clear idea of the basic principles to follow and to keep them firmly in mind during the day-to-day influences of changing styles, other people's preferences, etc. Otherwise you either dry up or become another of the many musical chameleons about these days and if you're going to do either, it's pretty ridiculous to be a jazz musician at all. If you ever lose faith in your own taste, you're 9/10 thru. And current fashions should influence your taste only insofar as they reflect the actual musical validity of what's being played these days, which you should decide for your self, independently of what everybody else thinks. If you like something, it's good, "Trolley Song" or whatever. If you don't like something, if it has no meaning for you, if you don't much care to listen to it, it's bad, Charlie Parker or whatever. That must be fundamental. If you are to have any individuality as a jazz musician, you must have the courage of your convictions, as well as the convictions themselves. Unless it's really important to you that one style of music should be enjoyed—listened to and played—in preference to other styles, your own playing can't possibly have any conviction. And the minute you defer to someone else's opinion, or start trying to play things you really don't like yourself because you think someone else will like them, you're hung. This begins to get a bit too involved for ironclad rules, tho—a certain amount of change and influence is unavoidable in the natural process of development, and stubborn resistance to all such situations can be as damaging as complete acceptance of everyone's opinion and the consequent stifling of your own. You have to take it from here yourself. Only thing you can really do is be honest, have fun, and stay alive. And never forget that it's completely impossible to be all things to all people; the more you try to do it, the more you stifle and destroy whatever it is within you that produces ideas you've never heard or played before, but that you know in advance are good. And no matter how adroitly you play like someone else, it's a pointless and inevitably frustrating thing—unrewarding enough if it's someone you sincerely admire, and most bitter if it's someone you really honestly dislike. You end up, at best, being admired by the wrong people for the wrong reasons—and, quite possibly, being disliked by those with whose tastes you have most in common. And at worst, you end up by being of utterly no interest to anyone, and being regarded in the same condescending manner by those whom you imitate as you would regard those who imitate you.*

Promemoria di Desmond per sé stesso, novembre 1949, in *TF* pp.120-121.

## Documento n°8

*"...the group seems to have an unusually wide appeal. Which is a good thing these days, because the public taste for modern jazz, which is comparatively limited at best, is split up into a number of factions, ranging from the small but determined cult of Tristano<sup>6</sup> followers (that's the guy whose writeup in *TIME* you showed me— who claimed that everybody in his group plays with a different beat) to the considerably more numerous and boisterous Jazz at the Philharmonic fans, who can be moved only by an earth-shaking back-beat and the honk-and-squeal method of sax playing. And while neither group is quite as hysterical about us as about their respective favorites,*

*there seems to be enough of a mixture of various things in our music to keep them all agreeably entertained for a few sets. This, plus our own private cult, may mean that we'll really start making some money by the second or third time around. If you want to take a really starry-eyed view of the future, you can reflect on the fact that we did a bit better than George Shearing did on his first NY job (at Bop City, under almost identical circumstances), about three years ago, and he now gets a comfortable \$60,000 a year from records alone. Not that we'd ever have the mass commercial appeal to duplicate that, probably, but it's by no means impossible for us to be making twice or even three times what we're making now in a few years. Particularly in view of the fact that neither Dave nor I are playing anywhere near as well as we're ultimately capable of, whereas almost everybody else in this class has pretty well solved all the technical difficulties that still plague us, and is playing at a pretty established level, in which each new record is at best a sort of rehash of what has already been done, and at worst an inferior copy. The management of Birdland, at least, was pretty happy about the whole thing, and hired us back for our first open date, sometime in February. And enough celebrities of frightening stature have been in to hear us so that I don't think there's anyone else whose sudden appearance at a front row table in the middle of a set would seriously unnerve us. All the New York jazz critics, and all the musicians, and assorted representatives of other fields, like Judy Holliday (who rose up and shouted "Bravo" after one particularly successful fugue.)"*

Paul Desmond a Emil Breitenfeld, inizi 1952, in *TF*, pp. 137-138.

## Documento n° 9

*"He was playing alto with the Brubeck Quartet. Brubeck, utterly without guile or humor, a man of invincible innocence, played the piano as if he were clearing a life-long trail through a forest of giant sequoias. Paul Desmond leaned against the piano, hands folded over his cunning axe, and seemed to be in reverie amid the hearty clangor. An amiable solitary at the revival meeting. "Then, long-legged, lean, bemused, he approached the microphone and transformed the night. With an insinuatingly pure tone, he spun cool, sensuous, melodic variations on the theme of the moment; although Brubeck was still fighting Indians in the background, Paul drew the audience into another, more gentle fantasy. Romantic, but not sentimental. We were too hip for sentimentality in public. His was the realm of an urbane dreamer all too aware of how close yearning is to feeling ridiculous, but existentially (as we used to say) ready for anything in our minds".*

Nat Hentoff, "the Solitary Floating Jazzman", *Village Voice*, 22 agosto 1977, pp. 35-36, in *TF*, p.139.

## Documento n° 10

**PD:** = Paul Desmond **CP:** = Charlie Parker **JM:** = John McLellan

**PD:** ... that music because there's many good people playing in that record, but the style of the alto is so different from anything else that's on the record or that went before. Did you realize at the time the effect you were going to have on Jazz -- that you were going to change the entire scene in the next ten years?

**CP:** Well, let's put it like this -- no. I had no idea that it was that much different.

**JM:** I'd like to stick in a question, if I may. I'd like to know why there was this violent change. After all, up until this time the way to play the alto sax was the way that Johnny Hodges and Benny Carter played alto, and this seems to be an entirely different conception, not just of how to

*play that particular horn, but music in general.*

**PD:** *Yeah, how to play any horn.*

**CP:** *Yeah, that I don't think there's any answer to. It's just the way [overlapping comments] I was speaking, John. That's what I said when I first started talking, that's my first conception, man, that's the way I thought it should go, and I still do. I mean, of course it can stand much improvement. Most likely in another 25, or maybe 50 years, some youngster will come along and take the style and really do something with it, you know. But, I mean ever since I've ever heard music I've thought it should be very clean, very precise -- as clean as possible anyway, you know. And more or less to the people, you know, something they could understand. Something that was beautiful, you know. There's definitely stories and stories and stories that can be told in the musical idiom, you know. You wouldn't say idiom but it's so hard to describe music other than the basic way to describe it -- music is basically melody, harmony, and rhythm. But, I mean people can do much more with music than that. It can be very descriptive in all kinds of ways, you know, all walks of life. Don't you agree, Paul?*

**PD:** *Yeah, and you always do have a story to tell. It's one of the most impressive things about everything I've ever heard of yours.*

**CP:** *That's more or less the object. That's what I thought it should be.*

**PD:** *Another thing that's been a major factor in your playing is this fantastic technique, that nobody's quite equaled. I've always wondered about that, too ... whether there was ... whether that came behind practicing or whether that was just from playing, whether it evolved gradually.*

**CP:** *Well, you make it so hard for me to answer, you know, because I can't see where there's anything fantastic about it all. I put quite a bit of study into the horn, that's true. In fact the neighbors threatened to ask my mother to move once when we were living out West. She said I was driving them crazy with the horn. I used to put in at least 11 -- 11 to 15 hours a day.*

**PD:** *Yes, that's what I wondered.*

**CP:** *That's true, yes. I did that for over a period of 3 to 4 years.*

**PD:** *Oh, yeah. I guess that's the answer.*

**CP:** *Well, that's the facts anyway. (chuckle)*

**PD:** *I heard a record of yours a couple of months ago that somehow I've missed up to date, and I heard a little two-bar quote from the Klose book that was like an echo from home ... [Desmond scats the quote.]*

**CP:** *Yeah, yeah. Well that was all done with books, you know. Naturally, it wasn't done with mirrors, this time it was done with books.*

**PD:** *Well, that's very reassuring to hear, because somehow I got the idea that you were just sort of born with that technique, and you never had to worry too much about it, about keeping it working.*

**JM:** *You know, I'm very glad that he's bringing up this point because I think that a lot of young*

*musicians tend to think that ...*

**PD:** *Yeah, they do. They just go out ...*

**JM:** *It isn't necessary to do this.*

**PD:** *... and make those sessions and live the life, but they don't put in that 11 hours a day with any of the books.*

**CP:** *Oh definitely, study is absolutely necessary, in all forms. It's just like any talent that's born within somebody, it's like a good pair of shoes when you put a shine on it, you know. Like schooling brings out the polish of any talent that happens anywhere in the world. Einstein had schooling, but he has a definite genius, you know, within himself, schooling is one of the most wonderful things there's ever been, you know.*

**JM:** *I'm glad to hear you say this.*

**CP:** *That's absolutely right.*

**PD:** *Yeah.*

**CP:** *Well?*

**JM:** *What other record?*

**CP:** *Which one shall we take this time?*

**JM:** *I want to skip a little while. We, Charlie, picked out "Night and Day", that's one of his records. This is with a band or with strings?*

**CP:** *No, this is with the live band. I think there's about 19 pieces on this.*

**JM:** *Why don't we listen to it then, and talk about it? [Musical interlude]*

**JM:** *"Night and Day" -- Charlie Parker with a big band.*

**PD:** *Charlie, this brings us kind of up to where you and Diz started joining forces, the next record we have coming up. Where did you first meet Dizzy Gillespie?*

**CP:** *Well, the first time, our official meeting I might say, was on the bandstand of the Savoy Ballroom in New York City in 1939. McShann's band first came to New York, I'd been in New York previously but I went back West and rejoined the band and came back to New York with it. Dizzy came by one night, I think it was the time he was working with Cab Calloway's band and he sat in with the band. I was quite fascinated with the fellow, and we became very good friends and until this day we are. But that was the first time I ever had the pleasure to meet Dizzy Gillespie.*

**PD:** *Was he playing the same way then, before he played with you?*

**CP:** *I don't remember precisely I just know that he was playing, what you might call in the vernacular of the streets, a beau-koo of horn, you know.*

**PD:** *Beau-koo horn?*

**CP:** *Yeah.*

**PD:** *Okay.*

**CP:** *You know, just like all the horn packed up at once, you know.*

**PD:** *Right.*

**CP:** *And we used to go around different places and jam together. We had quite a bit of fun in those days, and shortly after McShann's [Jay McShann] band went West again I went out with them and I came back to New York again I found Dizzy again, in the old Hines' organization in 1941 and I joined the band with him. I was in New York. I ... we, both stayed on the band about a year. It was Earl Hines [piano] and Dizzy Gillespie, Sarah Vaughan [piano/vocals], Billy Eckstine [vocals], Gail Brockman [trumpet], Thomas Crump [alto sax]. Oh, there was Shadow Wilson [drums] -- quite a few names that you'd recognize in the music world today you know, were in that band.*

**PD:** *That's quite a collection.*

**CP:** *And that band broke up in '41. In '42, Dizzy was in New York, he formed his own little combination in the Three Deuces, in New York City and I joined his band there and that's when these records you're about to play now. We made these in '42 in New York.*

**PD:** *Yeah, I guess the first time I heard that group was -- you came out to Billy Berg's [Hollywood].*

**CP:** *Oh yes, but that was '45, that was later -- we'll get to that.*

**PD:** *I'm just illustrating how far I was behind all this.*

**CP:** *Oh, don't be that way -- modesty will get you nowhere.*

**PD:** *I'm hip. [laughter]*

**JM:** *So shall we spin this 1942 one?*

**PD:** *Yeah.*

**JM:** *Okay, this is "Groovin' High" with Dizzy and Charlie. [Musical interlude]*

**JM:** *"Groovin' High", 1942, with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, and some others.*

**CP:** *Yes.*

**JM:** *I guess ... was it Slam Stewart [bass] and Remo Palmieri [guitar] I guess and I don't know who is on piano.*

**CP:** Yes, I think that was Clyde Hart.

**JM:** Probably. Yes, I think so.

**CP:** And Big Sid Catlett [drums] -- deceased now.

**PD:** You said at that time New York was jumping in '42.

**CP:** Yeah, New York was. Well, those were what you might call the good old days, you know Paul?

**PD:** Oh, yeah.

**CP:** Gay youth.

**PD:** Tell me about it.

**CP:** Well, descriptively, just like I was going to say -- gay youth, lack of funds.

**PD:** Listen to grandfather Parker talking here.

**CP:** There was nothing to do but play, you know and we had a lot of fun trying to play, you know. I did, plenty of jam sessions, much late hours, plenty of good food, nice clean living. you know. But basically speaking -- much poverty.

**PD:** That's always good, too -- no worries.

**CP:** It has it's place, definitely, in life.

**PD:** Would you like that sort of situation to have continued indefinitely?

**CP:** Well, whether I liked it or not, it really did, Paul. I'm glad it finally blew over of a sort, and I do mean of a sort.

**PD:** Yeah.

**CP:** Yeah, I enjoy this a little, much more in fact, to have the pleasure to work with the same guys of the sort that I've met, and I've met other young fellows, you know, that come along. I enjoy working with them when I have the pleasure to. If I might say I you, yourself, Paul.

**PD:** Oh, thanks.

**CP:** I've had lots of fun working with you, that's a pleasure in a million, David, Dave Brubeck, David Brubeck. Lots of other fellows have come along since that particular era. It makes you feel that everything you do wasn't for nought, you know, that you really tried to prove something and ...

**PD:** Well, man, you really proved it. I think you did more than anybody in the last 10 years to leave a decisive mark on the history of jazz.

**CP:** Well, not yet, Paul, but I intend to. I'd like to study some more, I'm not quite through yet. I'm not quite ... I don't consider myself too old to learn.

**PD:** No, I know many people are watching you at the moment with the greatest of interest to see what you're going to come up with next in the next few years, myself among the front row of them. Well, what have you got in mind?

**CP:** Well, seriously speaking I mean I'm going to try to go to Europe to study. I had the pleasure to meet one Edgar Varese [1883-1965] in New York City. He's a classical composer from Europe. He's a Frenchman, very nice fellow and he wants to teach me. In fact he wants to write for me because he thinks I'm more for ... more or less on a serious basis you know, and if he takes me over ... I mean after he's finished with me I might have the chance to go to the Academy of Music in Paris itself and study, you know. My prime interest still is learning to play music, you know.

**PD:** Would you study playing or composition?

**CP:** I would study both. I never want to lose my horn.

**PD:** No, you never should. That would be a catastrophe.

**CP:** I don't want to do that. That wouldn't work.

**PD:** Well, we're kind of getting ahead of the record sequence here, but it's been most fascinating. Do you want to say something about Miles Davis?

**CP:** Yeah, well I, I'll tell you how I met Miles. In 1944, Billy Eckstine formed his own organization. Dizzy was on that band -- also Lucky Thompson [tenor sax]. There was Art Blakey [drums], Tommy Potter [bass] and a lot of other fellows and last and not least, yours truly.

**PD:** Modesty will get you nowhere, Charlie.

**CP:** [chuckle] I had the pleasure to meet Miles for the first time in St. Louis, when he was a youngster he was still going to school. Later on he came to New York. He finished Julliard, Miles did. He graduated from Julliard and at the time I was just beginning to get my band together, you know, five pieces here five pieces there. So I formed a band and took it into the Three Deuces for maybe seven to eight weeks, and at the time Dizzy -- after the Eckstine organization broke up -- Dizzy was about to form his own band. There was so many things taking place it's hard to describe it because it happened in a matter of months. Never-the-less, I went to California in 1945 with Dizzy, after I broke up my band -- the first band I had -- then I came back to New York in '47, the early part of '47, and that's when I decided to have a band of my own permanently, and Miles was in my original band. I had Miles. I had Max [Roach] [drums], I had Tommy Potter [bass] and Al Haig [piano] in my band. Another band I had -- I had Stan Levy [drums], I had Curley Russell [bass], I had Miles and George Wallington [piano]. But, I think you have a record out there -- one of the records that we made with Max and Miles, I think, and yours truly, Tommy and Duke Jordan [piano] I think it's "Perhaps". Is it not so? Well this came along in the years of say '47, '46-'47. These particular sides were made in New York City at WNEW, 1440 Broadway, and this was the beginning of my career as a band leader.

**JM:** Okay, well, let's listen to "Perhaps". [Musical Interlude]

**JM:** And so, because our time has run out, and still there's much more to discuss, we'll continue

*this transcribed interview with Charlie Parker by Paul Desmond next Saturday at 7:00. I'd like to remind you to avail yourself of the opportunity sometime tonight or tomorrow to hear Charlie Parker with his own group at the High Hat and Paul Desmond with the Dave Brubeck Quartet at Storyville. Now, this is John McLellan hoping you will join me next Saturday at 7:00 for part two of the Parker story and more recorded music ...*

This is a radio broadcast (approx. 21:00) from early 1954 (probably March) in Boston Mass. With announcer John McLellan. \*Philology Vol. 8 --W 80-2  
Transcription by Claire Hiscock - Edited by Mel Martin

## Documento n° 11

*"Arrival hysterical. Spooky ride thru East Berlin about 9 pm. Trite observation I know but crossing border like time machine. Space warpsville. Train station like subway to purgatory. Sturdy (but not unfriendly-looking) women taking tickets, walking around with those wild-looking conductors' lanterns attached to their waists. Like glass bird cages with candles in them. No interpreter this part of trip, hence many good-natured charades in German, Russian, Polish. Customs, curious at one point about what was in the black drum cases, disturbed when Dave explained, ("Boom boom boom"), beamed when caught on. Fellow with currency declaration form had difficult time with Gene Wright, who wanted it understood that he didn't want to bother with any foreign exchange; Dave paid all his expenses and Gene just played the bass, had no cash. The guy kept pointing at the line for Gene to sign, where it said "nomone," and Gene kept writing "No money" and the guy kept tearing them up and giving him new ones. Finally he gave up. Much neurotic conjecture, also, about where to get off. Long discussion in next compartment between kindly old conductor and members of troupe. Every so often everyone would chime in together on the word " Alles," one of the very few in our community German vocabulary. As the night wore on it began to sound something like one of those folks songs with lots of choruses."*

Paul Desmond, incompleta pagina di diario, marzo 1958, in *TF*, p.192.

*"...possibly because I sympathize with their desire to live in the past. Outside of a few very minor problems (finding food after midnite, or coffee anytime. And heat), very pleasant...Two Sunday afternoons in London, which makes Philadelphia seem like Mardi Gras.. .Walked around streets for a while, came presently to huge throng . 'Groovy/1 thought, 'At least the day hasn't been a total loss. Some unique British Sunday-afternoon diversion. Bear-baiting, perhaps, or a street-corner debate, if I'm not being redundant.' Gradually pushed way thru crowd. Turned out to be a Lincoln Continental...*

*England was a howling success financially (for the promoters, not us), and the people seemed pretty happy, but it was kind of a bomb musically. Not that it was especially bad, or worse than usual; I just thought everybody would stay inspired and play over their heads for a month or so here but it never quite happened. I get the feeling that this group is slowly drawing to a close, although I could be wrong (I've had this feeling for the last four years, but I didn't used to quit three times a week as I've been doing lately, due to certain musical frustrations and great feelings of loneliness and desolation). Anyway it's definitely the Joe Morello show at this point, so Dave is in great shape to forge ahead as a trio if and when I find a reasonably comfortable environment. At this point, I must admit, nothing really matters too much. Great feelings of complete irrationality about everything."*

Paul Desmond, probabilmente a Mort Sahl, 12 marzo 1952 (copia carbone), in *TF*, pp. 192-193

*"Disc jockey who met us in Stockholm noted that American musicians seem to fall into two categories; they either want to talk about socialism or they say, "where are the girls?" Although I understand theoretically it's possible to belong to both groups, I seem to be in the first one this trip, which really makes everything futile. Although I get the impression in a kind of detached way*

*that Europe might very well be the answer for someone with no emotional attachments. Even stewardesses and chicks in airline offices are much more impressive. They all speak about 12 languages, and their English is even better than at home. The announcements sound the end. But I don't seem to be able to talk to anybody except Sue. I'm sure you know the feeling."*

Paul Desmond a Mort Sahl, in *TF*, p.193.

*"Poland, weirdly enough, turned out to be the most enjoyable so far. More about this if I ever see you again. Life is pretty grim but much more relaxed than I expected. Jazz, which was a punishable felony two years ago, is now a very big thing. Have yet to see a Russian or, for that matter, a Communist. Everybody wants to come to the States and become a capitalist, especially our interpreter and only link with outside world, name of Adam Czong, who will probably be in *The Apple* by Yuletide. Many touching scenes—arriving at Szczecin (first gig) at 6 am, met by cluster of jazz fans who stayed up all nite to help with the luggage and all. And at train station in Krakov at 5 am (seems to always be the time we get places) were chicks with flowers and 3 piece band (E-flat clarinet, tenor, trumpet) playing "Westwood Walk". Unfortunately, nobody recognized it at the time. We all thought it was something by Sidney Bechet. Jam Session at the club in Krakow after the concert, where all the best jazz musicians came from all over the country to play for us, and everybody had chipped in for a banquet with really wild food and wine and vodka Good place to retire on US bread and spend a year writing or something, if you really want isolation & economy, which I'm sure you don't. Rate of exchange pretty ridiculous. Steak dinner 20 cent.; etc. Very little English spoken: "What time does the train leave?" "Yes."*

Paul Desmond a Mort Sahl, in *TF*, p.200.

## Doc n°12

*Paul Desmond, fugitive saxophonist from the Dave Brubeck Quartet, ran a hand thru his vanishing hair and lit a cigarette. "The reason I'm here" he responded to the obvious question, "is to work on a jazz album based on Jamaican rhythms. And this"—while indicating with an uneasy wave the idyllic view from the terrace of his room at Sunset Lodge—"is such a fantastic place to relax and work.*

*"What first hooked me about Jamaican rhythms" he went on, "is that they get so much accomplished with so little. Musicians in the States go to all kinds of trouble to get a band—or even just a rhythm section—to swing, and sometimes it happens and sometimes it doesn't. But down here you can wander into the back yard of a restaurant and find five cats standing around with a marimba box, guitar, banjo, maracas and beer bottle, and somehow the whole place is rocking. Everybody in the room starts moving in time with the music, unconsciously, as if they're lying on the ocean and move whenever a wave comes by. And it's not something that hits you on the head from outside; it seems to happen inside you. It's wild.*

*What I want to do is see if I can get that feeling going and then have a quiet jazz thing happen on top of it."*

*He lit another cigarette, took a lethal drag and placed it next to the first one, which was still burning. He keeps doing things like that.*

*"Speaking of quiet jazz things," he continued after a brief interlude of coughing, "I spent a little time playing with some of the musicians here—Baba Mota and Billie Cooke, among others, and it was very enjoyable. I get the feeling that they feel the same way about music as I do, which is very refreshing and scarcer than you would think."*

*"Where" he was asked inevitably, "do you go from here?"*

*"Back to work" he responded with an alert shudder. "The Brubeck troops reconvene up north on the 14<sup>th</sup>, after which we'll be doing concerts in the East for a bit, then California in March and Paris in April. Or is it the other way around? Anyway, I'm not complaining, because the jazz scene these days is getting very scratchy. Between the avant-garde, the discotheques and the folkniks,*

*the jazz audience has really been fragmented, so there are very few steadily working jazz groups and even fewer clubs where they could work. We're very fortunate because we've been concentrating on concerts for six years now and concerts are about all that's left. And, perhaps from lack of alternate choices, the quartet seems to be doing as well at concerts as it ever did, so we should be good for another year at least. After that, I have no idea what happens. I'm reasonably sure I'll be leaving Dave by next year at this time, and I'd like to take a couple of years off to write and generally disintegrate. The ideal thing would be to come here and live, but that would take a lot of organizing.*

*"In the meantime," he concluded with what one would have to call a wistful sigh, "I'll be coming back whenever I can. Out of all the places I've been—which is far too many—Jamaica is my favorite. Especially for all the really important things in life: writing, playing, drinking, pursuing romance, and floating on an air mattress. One way or another, you may be sure you'll be seeing me again".*

Paul Desmond, documento senza data, battuto a macchina con correzioni a penna e matita, probabilmente 1964, in *TF* p. 228.

### Doc n° 13

*Paul Desmond occupies a position that just about every other jazz musician must find anguishingly enviable. Without even playing a note in public during 1968, he recently won the annual Playboy poll as a member of that magazine's all-star band. Without doing a lick of work (except for an LP taped late in the year and released a couple of weeks ago) he lived a sybaritic life, whiling away four months at a house in Montego Bay, then relaxing at his Manhattan apartment. Even without the sorcery of his alto sax to lure the attention of toothsome young ladies at one-nighter gigs, he remains, at 44, the jazz world's most eligible bachelor.*

*Those who look green-eyed upon a man in this situation should be reminded that Desmond worked for it. During his 17 years with the Dave Brubeck Quartet he played enchantingly, travelled endlessly, and, most important of all in terms of his present security, composed "Take Five" the first famous jazz tune in 5/4/ time. Desmond, a tall, placid man with a Cheshire cat grin, commented a while back that jazz was in a state of chaos and urged a return to melody. "I got so used to not listening to radio last year that I had to rely on a grapevine of friends to draw the better things to my attention—Simon and Garfunkel, (Bert) Bacharach and the rest." "I also like Brazilian music; I may make my next album with Milton Nascimento, the guitarist and composer from Rio. If not, I'll just go through the whole pop field for material and do an LP called The Eclectic Circus"*

Leonard Feather, *Melody Maker*, 22 marzo, 1969, p. 12, in *TF*, p. 252

### Doc n° 14

*Over the years, Dave Brubeck and I have started albums in various unlikely places throughout the world, but so far this one is my favorite. We were somewhere in the Atlantic between New York and the Bermuda Triangle, aboard the S.S. Rotterdam as part of one of their semi-annual Jazz Cruises. The group included Dave, myself, and a rhythm section composed mostly of Dave's sons. Our mission was to play two concerts in exchange for room and board, at least for me.*

*Now it's about half an hour before concert time, and after we've set up the equipment and run through the more complicated numbers, we have about five minutes to get together on a ballad - not enough time to rehearse the changes with the rest of the troops, who haven't played it before.*

*Inspiration. Look how we're 2000 miles out to sea, everyone's on a holiday, who's to know, why not just do it as a duet? No problems with changes, we worry about the ending when we get there, and we're home free. What happened when we got to it turned out to be kind of mind-blowing. With just the two of us playing, an almost eerie feeling of freedom occurred which seldom happens when there are other instruments to be considered. Dave and I have always had*

*a bit of ESP happening musically between us, and this turned out to be the ideal situation in which it could flourish. All manner of possibilities opened up. I could play a totally illegal note at any point and Dave would instantly come up with a voicing making it sound like the most perfect note imaginable. Counter-lines, quiet, reflective musings, unabashed romantic wailing - everything worked. On the second concert we did another ballad the same way and the same feeling happened. Then we did a third concert, just for the ship's crew (partly a Noble Gesture on our part and partly because Peter Flynn, the road manager, was looking to get next to one of the ship's nurses). We played "You Go To My Head" — same way, same feeling, and the loosest and most relaxed of the three. During all this, BBC-TV was filming and taping all the concerts for a British TV series. Later we listened to the tape, a bit apprehensively because things that feel good while you're playing don't always work out on tape. But by God it sounded good. Rough, a few honest mistakes - nevertheless, the emotional quality was there.*

*After a few days of mourning the fact that somehow we'd never stumbled into doing a duet in all the years we spent together, we resigned ourselves to the fact that the duets would become a sort of footnote, heard only by the passengers and crew of the Rotterdam and possibly by audiences at future concerts Dave and I might play with various groups. The tunes are listed elsewhere — mostly things Dave and I have been playing over the years, except this time there ain't but the two of us. One number in particular - "Koto Song" — is a more spaced-out version than formerly, the approach being to make random sounds for a while and wander gradually into the melody (The percussive sounds at the beginning, for those of you out there who are curious, are made by closing keys on the horn without blowing into it — one of several things I've wanted to try for years but somehow never got around to. I mention this mainly because in this day and age many unusual sounds are produced electronically and are pretty much taken for granted. Not so in this case; it's your straight medieval sound, batteries not included.) The last tune on the album, "You Go To My Head" is taken from the original BBC tape, partly so you can hear how and where the duet idea began and partly because Dave and I have a very warm feeling about it. The technical quality, obviously, is different from the studio tracks, but enough of the emotional feeling comes through to explain why Dave and I hung in there together for a number of years through various ups and downs. Speaking of a number of years, here is a bunch of pictures from some of them ~ mostly self-explanatory ~ once you accept the fact that when Dave and I began we looked enough alike to occasionally be mistaken for one another. Since then we've headed in quite different directions, visage-wise ~ Dave in the direction of Grandfather Walton, me veering more towards Dorian Gray. The foursome on board ship consists of the incurably photogenic Brubeck and the incomparable, regal Iola Brubeck; the perplexed gnomish apparition is me, and the Scott Fitzgerald type on the end is John Snyder, boy wonder of the record business, who put this whole thing together. The ship, of course, is the Rotterdam, towards which, and all who sail upon her, we're most grateful.*

Paul Desmond, note di copertina per 'Dave Brubeck-Paul Desmond, 1975: The Duets', Verve 828 394 915-2.

## Doc n° 15

*After the war, Dave and I would occasionally find ourselves together with some small group, usually in a hopelessly doomed situation - filling in for another band on a Monday night, or playing for the wedding of a friend of a friend. We were still far too radical for anything in the nature of a steady job. I was mostly screeching away at the top of the alto and Dave appeared to be playing Bartok with his right hand and Milhaud with his left. Together we could empty any club in half an hour with no mention of the word "fire". Finally, in the spring of 1951 (which I suppose makes this roughly our 25th anniversary), we opened at the Blackhawk with a quartet. (An official assist for all was provided by the wartime entertainment tax, which mysteriously decreed that groups which sang, qualified as entertainment, thereby subjecting the audience to a 20% entertainment tax. Instrumental groups were regarded as background music and were therefore tax-free. Anyone who had ever heard me and Dave sing in earlier groups would, I'm sure, gladly have paid upwards of 50% to avoid that privilege; as it turned out, the 20% break was just enough to make*

*us marginally employable, which at that point was critical.)*

*Oh. For the technically minded among you, and as a way of saving everyone involved a bit of time and repetition, here are some answers to questions we sometimes get asked.*

*Dave plays a Baldwin piano when it's available, which it usually is (although there have been times when we'd arrive at a concert and the promoter would peer nervously into the back of the station wagon and ask where our piano was.)*

*Joe plays Ludwig drums with sticks named after him, and if you send a dollar to the William F. Ludwig company, along with a young drum student, they might send you a set. But don't ever expect to see the drum student again.*

*I play a Selmer alto and a Gregory 4A-18M mouthpiece, both circa 1951, and Rico 31'2 reeds.*

*Gene has several basses, and if he risks bringing his favorite one on the road this time, it's beautiful, was made in Europe, is older than water, and don't even ask how much it's worth.*

*So there, in ridiculously abbreviated fashion, is part of our story. Thanks for coming by, and we hope what you hear tonight is more or less what you wanted to. And who knows, maybe something funny will happen on the way home.*

Paul Desmond, dal programma del *Dave Brubeck Quartet 25th Anniversary Reunion*, in *TF*, p.292.

## Doc n° 16

### How Jazz Came to Orange County State Fair

*Paul Desmond, alto saxophonist with Dave Brubeck and winner of countless polls, has been promising for years to write the history of the Brubeck Quartet. This installment is the first he has ever been persuaded to write.*

#### DAWN.

*A station wagon pulls up to the office of an obscure motel in New Jersey. Three men enter--pasty-faced, grim-eyed, silent (for those are their names). Perfect opening shot, before credits, for a really lousy bank-robbery movie? Wrong. The Dave Brubeck Quartet, some years ago, starting our day's work. Today we have a contract (an offer we should have refused) for two concerts at the Orange County State Fair in Middleton. 2 pm and 8 pm. Brubeck likes to get to the job early. So we pull up behind this hay truck around noon, finally locating the guy who had signed the contract. Stout, red-necked, gruff and harried (from the old New Jersey law firm of the same name), and clearly more comfortable judging cattle than booking jazz groups, he peers into the station wagon, which contains four musicians, bass, drums, and assorted baggage, and for the first and only time in our seventeen years of wandering about the world, we get this question: "Where's the piano?" So, leaving Brubeck to cope with the situation, we head into town for sandwiches and browsing. Since the sandwiches take more time than the browsing, I pick up a copy of the Middletown Record and things become a bit more clear. TEENAGER'S DAY AT THE ORANGE COUNTY STATE FAIR, says the headline across the two center pages (heavy move, in that the paper only has four pages). Those poor folk, especially the cattle-judging type (who was probably lumbered into heading the entertainment committee), thought we were this red-hot teenage attraction, which, Lord knows we've never been. Our basic audience begins with creaking elderly types of twenty-three and above. Nevertheless, here we are, splashed all over this ad, along with the other attractions of the day--judo exhibition, fire-fighting demonstration, wild west show, and Animalorama (which may have been merely misspelled). And right at the top, first two columns on the left, is this picture of Brubeck's teeth and much of his face, along with the following text, which I'm paraphrasing only slightly. HEAR THE MUSIC TEENAGERS EVERYWHERE THRILL TO, it begins. HEAR THE MUSIC THAT ROCKED NEWPORT RHODE ISLAND (an unfortunate reference in that only a few weeks earlier the Newport Jazz Festival had undergone its first riot). HEAR DAVE BRUBECK SING AND PLAY HIS FAMOUS HITS, INCLUDING "JAZZ GOES TO COLLEGE," "JAZZ IN EUROPE," AND "TANGERINE." So, now realizing--in Brubeck's piquant ranch phrase--which way the hole slopes, we head back to the fairgrounds, where the scene is*

roughly as follows: there is a smallish, almost transistorized, oval race track. (I'm not exactly sure how long a furlong is, but it seems not too many of them are actually present.) On one side of the oval is the grandstand, built to accommodate 2,000 or so, occupied at the moment by eight or nine elderly folk who clearly paid their money to sit in the shade and fan themselves, as opposed to any burning desire to hear the music their teenage grandchildren everywhere thrilled to. Directly across the track from them is our bandstand--a wooden platform, about ten feet high and immense. Evidently no piano has been locatable in Orange County, since the only props onstage are a vintage electric organ and only one mike. Behind us is a fair-sized tent containing about two hundred people, in which a horse show for young people is currently in progress--scheduled, we soon discover, to continue throughout our concert. This is hazardous mainly because their sound system is vastly superior to ours. So we begin our desperation opener. St. Louis Blues. Brubeck, who has never spent more than ten minutes of his life at an electric organ, much less the one he has at now, is producing sounds like an early Atwater-Kent Synthesizer. (Later he makes a few major breakthroughs, like locating the volume control pedal and figuring out to wiggle his right hand, achieving a tremulo effect similar to Jimmy Smith with a terminal hangover, but it doesn't help much.) Eugene Wright, our noble bass player, and me take turns schlepping the mike back and forth between us and playing grouchy, doomed choruses, but the only sound we can hear comes from our friendly neighborhood horse show. "LOPE," it roars. "CANTER...TROT..AND THE WINNER IN THE TWELVE-YEAR-OLD CLASS IS...JACQUELINE HIGGS!" "As always in difficult situations such as these, we turn to our main man, primo virtuoso of the group, the Maria Callas of the drums, Joe Morello, who has rescued us from disaster from Grand Forks to Rajkot, India. "You've got it," we said, "stretch out," which ordinarily is like issuing an air travel card to a hijacker. And, to his eternal credit, Morello outdoes himself. All cymbals sizzling, all feet working. (Morello has several. Not many people know this.) Now he's into triplets around the tom-toms, which has shifted foundations from the Odeon Hammersmith to Free Trade Hall and turned Buddy Rich greener than usual with envy. The horse show is suddenly silent. Fanning in the stands has subsided slightly. Suddenly a figure emerges from the horse tent, hurtles to the side of the stage, and yells at Brubeck. "For Chrissakes, could you tell the drummer not to play so loud? He's terrifying the horses. "Never a group to accept defeat gracefully, we play a sort of Muzak for a suitable period and split. When we return at eight, all is different. A piano has been found, the stands are packed with our geriatric following of twenty-five and above, and we play a fairly respectable concert. Even so, we're upstaged by the grand finale of the fair--the fire fighting demonstration. A group of local residents has been bandaged and made up to appear as if they've just leapt from the Hindenburg and their last rites are imminent. But instead of remaining discreetly behind the scenes until their big moment, they mingle casually with friends and neighbors in the audience during the evening, sipping beer, munching popcorn, casting an eerie, Fellini-like quality over the gathering, and considerably diminishing the impact of their ultimate appearance. After their pageant come the main events of the fair, which have clearly been planned for months: a flaming auto wreck, followed by a flaming plane wreck, each to be dealt with instantly and efficiently by the Middletown Fire Dept. At one end of the oval is a precariously balanced car; at the other end, a truly impressive skeletal mock-up of a single-engine plane, tail up. Midway, at ground zero, is the Middletown Fire Truck, bristling with ladders and hoses and overflowing with volunteers. A hush falls over the stands. At a signal given by the fire chief, the car is ignited. The truck reaches it in two or three seconds, by which time the fire is roughly equivalent to that created by dropping a cigarette on the back seat for two or three seconds. It is extinguished by many men with several hoses. A murmur falls over the stands. The fire chief, painfully aware that his moment of the year is at hand, signals for the plane to be ignited, also instructing the truck to take it easy, so that the fire should be blazing briskly when it arrives. The truck starts, at about the pace of a cab looking for a fair. The plane goes WHOOSH!, like a flashbulb, and by the time the leisurely truck arrives, has shrunk to a lovely camp-fire, just large enough for roasting marshmallows. Later, four pasty-faced, grim-eyed men pile into a station wagon and drive away. It may not be bank-robbery, but it's a living.

Paul Desmond (Appeared originally in "Punch," 1/10/73. © 1973, Paul Desmond.)

## DOCUMENTO N° 17

*Paul Desmond-per un'estetica della solitudine*

*"...Briefly, then, I'm this saxophone player from the Dave Brubeck Quartet, with which I've been associated since shortly after the Crimean War. You can tell which one is me because when I'm not playing, which is surprisingly often, I'm leaning against the piano. I also have less of a smile than the other fellows. (This is because of the embouchure, or the shape of your mouth, while playing, and is very deceptive. You didn't really think Benny Goodman was all that happy, did you? Nobody's that happy.) I have won several prizes as the world's slowest alto player, as well as a special award in 1961 for quietness..."*

*Dietro la cortina del sarcasmo si celano più temi strettamente connessi allo sviluppo dello stesso artista: dall'esautivo rapporto con Brubeck alla malinconia e alla solitudine di un'arte troppo frettolosamente posta ai margini del versante bianco della musica improvvisata di estrazione afro-americana.*

*Desmond è stato un musicista contraddittorio, e le sue contraddizioni le ha pagate a caro prezzo, prima sull'altare di Brubeck, poi venendo relegato tra quei « minori » che fanno la gioia di alcuni « happy few » e che, come afferma Hauser, sanno talvolta offrire, più di chiunque altro, un autentico quadro della loro epoca. Rimane difficile, comunque, capire come un artista tanto dotato abbia potuto legare le proprie sorti così a lungo a quelle di un musicista discutibile quale Brubeck. Per calcolo, anche, certo: l'improvvisazione quasi konitziana, che ha preso le mosse da un arduo Pigmalione come Tristano. non ama rendersi facilmente intelligibile (prova ne sia che lo stesso Konitz gode ancora oggi di un successo ben più « di stima » che praticamente palpabile), specie se così introversa e sottile come quella messa in luce da Desmond; il lavoro con Brubeck gli consentì di raggiungere, in termini concreti, quelle realizzazioni sfuggite al glaciale lirismo di Lennie Niehaus, al barocco improvvisare di Lee Konitz, al teso variare di Art Pepper, alla complessa linearità di Hal McKusick. Ciò non basta, è vero, a spiegare la sua volontaria reclusione in un campo di concentrazione musicale ma, a ben vedere, il fatto che Desmond sia stato affascinato dall'universo del pianista non è poi tanto difficile da comprendere.*

*Il suono di tendenza edonistica qualifica Desmond per ciò che veramente è, un brillante esecutore attestato, consciamente o meno, su posizioni assai lontane dalla cultura musicale afro-americana, da cui ha ereditato, in pratica, solo il modulo improvvisativo. L'incontro definitivo con Brubeck (già da lui conosciuto, se non erro, nel 1944), avvenuto nel 1950, gli permetterà di avvicinarsi — durante lo sviluppo del cool jazz — a un musicista apparentemente più colto, che gli darà modo di familiarizzarsi con il contrappunto, la politonalità, etc, con una cultura, insomma, che è in realtà sotto cultura, perché è una cultura banalizzata ma con pretese di originalità, rivolta alla cattura proprio di quegli strati borghesi americani a cui, a ben vedere, appartiene lo stesso Desmond. Si stabilisce così, tra il sassofonista e il pianista, un rapporto che sembra riportare alla memoria quello esistente tra Jacques il Fatalista e il suo Padrone: un connubio che per Desmond fu al contempo utile e dannoso, poiché proprio nell'ambito del quartetto di Dave Brubeck egli fu messo in grado di plasmare un mondo proprio che seppe, pur essendone staccato, vivere in simbiosi con quello del pianista. Certi retaggi, pur se accomunati a una sottile intelligenza e ad una sensibilità assai viva, sicuramente impedirono che egli intraprendesse ricerche più avanzate, come quelle già iniziate da Konitz o McKusick (un altro grave caso di sottovalutazione), ma non impedirono che egli portasse a un limite espressivo, pur entro i confini della musica di Brubeck. uno stile improvvisativo che sembra essere, attraverso un uso insistito di citazioni, una sorta di malinconica « recherche du temps perdu », che si caricava di rimpianti via via che il musicista si rendeva (forse) conto dello sperpero attuato a spese delle proprie possibilità.*

*Desmond ebbe probabilmente a rimpiangere il musicista che non potè, non seppe o non volle essere: per averne piena misura si ascolti Take Ten nella versione incisa nel 1963 a fianco di Jim Hall. Gene Wrisht e Connie Kay. A quell'epoca Omette Coleman aveva già registrato Free-Jazz, mentre Coltrane si apprestava a esplorare il mondo di Ascension, e certo ogni paragone di questo genere è improponibile. Eppure, il sassofonista dimostra di essere tutt'altro che insensibile al mutare dei tempi, introducendo delle modulazioni di chiaro sapore orientale dove si innestano, con sorprendente modernità, linee di canto estatico. Si tratterà, purtroppo, di una eccezione: Desmond continuerà a essere fin troppo fedele a se stesso, giungendo alla matura*

*interiorizzazione di uno stile ormai troppo cristallizzato per assumere delle connotazioni chiaramente innovatrici. E' ben probabile che proprio il lungo periodo passato accanto a Brubeck sia la causa principale della mancata realizzazione delle sue amplissime potenzialità, e di quel processo di cristallizzazione esteriore necessario per adeguarsi al mondo materialmente immutabile del pianista.*

*Di lì l'esigenza di un giuoco sempre più interiorizzato, più frustrato, incapace di andare oltre dei limiti amati-odiati. Questo mondo interiore costretto a formarsi è, però, tutt'altro che banale: la prudenza formale del sassofonista non rispecchia quell'ardito processo di ricerca armonica, quel gusto per l'inafferrabile e sottile ambiguità che è la più autentica caratteristica del suo mondo. Quel mondo che Brubeck, con la passiva complicità dello stesso Desmond, seppe costringere in un campo di concentrazione musicale.*

*In tale scenario a lui così estraneo, il sassofonista appare ancora più solo, ma la sua funzione è indispensabile, poiché conferisce tutta l'elasticità, l'improvvisazione, l'eleganza di cui il pianista ha bisogno per poter concludere il proprio discorso ammaliatore che, altrimenti, annegherebbe nella propria volgarità.*

*Ma Desmond non ha bisogno di Brubeck: prova ne sia che, durante i suoi interventi, l'accompagnamento pianistico è ridotto al minimo, quando non scompare del tutto. Il più delle volte Desmond, nel quartetto di Brubeck, suona in trio. Brubeck crea uno show in funzione di Dave Brubeck, ed il suo mondo (che fa pensare a qualcosa a metà strada tra Disneyland e un super-mercato) non ha nulla da spartire con quello di Desmond: sono due entità in realtà inconciliabili. Nei suoi assoli percussivi, iterativi (si ascolti l'esecuzione registrata dal vivo di Pennies From Heaven) il pianista utilizza elementi per lo più déjà entendu per suscitare emozioni elementari, che il gusto per il contrappunto e la sofisticata improvvisazione di Desmond non riuscirebbero mai a provocare.*

*Brubeck è per l'America il McDonald del jazz, l'hot-dog dell'improvvisazione; al contrario di quanto accade nell'arte di Desmond, il suo make-up politonale segue le regole dell'ovvio, costringendo l'improvvisazione ad assumere le caratteristiche di una semplice merce di scambio: tu paghi il biglietto, e io ti ricompenso dei soldi spesi offrendoti emozioni semplici e travolgenti. E Desmond è solo, nell'oggetto di mercato offerto dal pianista. Egli ci si avventura come l'uomo si avventura nella mostruosità della metropoli: perché è necessario uscire all'aperto, talvolta. E forse il mondo di Brubeck, con il suo parallelismo con la voracità di taluni allucinanti agglomerati urbani, è necessario a Desmond per dargli la forza di affrontare la realtà del « diverso ». In questo, il pianista è più necessario a Desmond di quegli stessi musicisti a lui poeticamente più affini, ma che lo porterebbero all'esasperazione di quell'introversione che gli è propria (si ascolti, a tal proposito, la splendida articolazione dell'assolo in Southern Scene).*

*L'arte di Paul Desmond è un'arte estenuata e solitaria, racchiusa in sé stessa, e incurante della realtà, colma di ambiguità, di presentimenti, di angoscia e di incertezza. Nelle registrazioni con Brubeck la solitudine di questo sassofonista appare con evidenza in una voce raccolta, soffocata da un edificio di Kitsch pericolante. Noterete come la sua raffinata improvvisazione, sappia arricchire di note angosciate e desolate un brano di esotica banalità quale Koto Song: la caramellosa melodia acquista, attraverso il suo squassante e breve assolo, una dimensione di ineluttabilità; ogni assolo di Desmond sembra essere una sorta di « canto del cigno ». E nella sua dimensione fatalista — per linee prima abbozzate, accennate, spezzate e poi proseguite per frammenti ora corti, ora lunghi — l'arte del sassofonista non ha paralleli: nessun musicista è mai stato così prossimo alla Fine, né ne è mai stato così intimo. Le sue frasi sinuose ma tese, colme di un pudore sensuale, e caratterizzate da una grande lucidità, fanno di lui, più che un discendente di Konitz (di cui ha ereditato il suono ma non il vocabolario), una versione lenta e traslucida di Johnny Hodges (non dimentico però degli insegnamenti appresi da Pete Brown, Willie Smith e, soprattutto, da Earl Bostic). E quanto la sua sensualità mal dissimulata sappia essere carica di sottigliezze, di tensioni e di ambiguità è dimostrato dalla interpretazione di Desmond Bine, un vero e proprio vertice/sintesi della sua arte: un'esecuzione piena di abbandono e di struggente melanconia, tiepido e scattante acquerello che ci offre il volto bianco, delicatamente perlaceo, del blues. Le sue sono linee esili, fluide e sinuose, piene di delicatezza, che anche nei momenti più accesi sono poco più di un mormorio; sembrano nascere dal nulla, soffiate nello strumento con la stessa cura e delicatezza che un vetraio di Murano ha nel soffiare e plasmare la*

propria opera, ma nel contempo sono dotate di una costante corposità che permette all'edificio sonoro di ergersi senza correre il pericolo di sgretolarsi. Gii Evans afferma che esistono due tipi di musicisti: « the singer » e « the dancer », e a proposito di Desmond parla di un « abstract dancer ». E' una definizione felice: Desmond era un « abstract dancer », che sembrava improvvisare su un canovaccio di sapore impressionista.

Proprio recentemente si è potuto gustare l'etereo ed elegante duetto tra Lee Konitz e Gii Evans e, pensando a Paul Desmond, si è fatto più vivo in noi il rimpianto per il destino che non ha voluto dare al sassofonista un partner di simile levatura. Poiché Brubeck, con il suo stile aggressivo e percussivo, non è certo stato l'accompagnatore ideale per sottolineare gli eterei svolazzi desmondiani (e vi è un'eccezione a confermare tale regola: quella serie di duetti, in cui però il pianista si ritaglia un ruolo assai ampio, che Desmond e Brubeck incisero per la Horizon non molti anni fa). Soprattutto, Brubeck non era in grado di seguire l'evoluzione che portò il sassofonista, sul finire della propria carriera, a trasformare l'elemento « swing » in una lenta, carezzevole pulsazione. Col passare del tempo, infatti, la voce ha mantenuto la sua delicata, sottile sonorità, ma il fraseggio si è fatto ancora più meditativo, più « distillato »; i tempi si sono dilatati, il fraseggio si è fatto più attento, più accurato e, soprattutto, più sobrio: le frasi costruite meticolosamente e con un gusto che, più che badare alla frase in sé stessa, presta attenzione al colore, all'impasto timbrico con gli altri strumenti, alla voce color pastello. Un'arte che acquisisce un carattere « autunnale » e che ci appare come un'estrema appendice di una delle ramificazioni del cool jazz di Tristano e Konitz, sviluppata attraverso un gusto per forme centripete.

Un reazionario, Desmond? Senz'altro, ma quale ricchezza di idee si cela dietro quelle posizioni assunte quasi inevitabilmente e senza troppa volontà! La storia, è vero, non si fa né con i « ma » né con i « se », ma non è difficile pronunciare una profezia a posteriori: lontano dalla comoda strada battuta al seguito di Brubeck (il quale però — è bene ricordarlo —, se è riuscito a raggiungere dei risultati non disprezzabili, lo deve in massima parte alla lirica introspezione del suo sassofonista), Desmond avrebbe potuto trasformarsi in un brillante analista del suono come Lee Konitz, con meno arditezze e geniali intuizioni forse, ma con altrettanto, se non maggiore lirismo (e questo, soprattutto, per la diversità delle origini: Konitz, infatti, attraverso Tristano revisiona le lezioni di Charlie Parker, mentre Desmond offre una versione cool del fraseggio di Johnny Hodges).

E' indubbio che, messi al servizio dell'astuto commercialismo di Brubeck, Desmond abbia contribuito a creare e ad affermare un modello musicale assai criticabile: appare però ancora più ammirevole la capacità del musicista di creare e ricercare, pur senza troppi sbocchi, un edificio sonoro a sé stante, denso di brevi frammenti che troppo spesso sono stati sottovalutati o ignorati. L'ascolto della versione di Body And Soul nel discutibile arrangiamento di Bob Prince ci rivela un musicista capace di scandagliare a lungo e con immutata poesia la più sfruttata struttura di un brano. Una grande capacità di distillare la melodia, svolgendo all'interno di essa una attività minuziosa ed incessante che scompone e ricomponde il tema in una sequenza di brevi frammenti elaborati. Una paziente e delicata scomposizione che, nel suo lento degustare, è forzata a rinunciare al concetto tradizionale di swing, per sostituirlo con un beat quasi del tutto nascosto, affiorante soltanto nella funzione di indispensabile tessuto connettivo. Ma, come afferma Alain Tercinet: « Eh oui, Desmond swingue, la chose n'est peut être pas encore reconnue comme vérité première, mais elle est bien réelle ». Così, l'uso costante di citazioni (in ogni esecuzione, Desmond fa riferimento non solo ad altri brani, ma a particolari interpretazioni di essi) rende nota anche la vasta conoscenza del jazz e della art-song americana posseduta dal sassofonista, che è in grado di giostrare con materiali estranei alla esecuzione del momento, e di annetterli disinvoltamente alla geometria di una ironica composizione istantanea. Se c'è un aspetto che differenzia Desmond da Brubeck è proprio nella composizione: il pianista, infatti, varia e non compone durante le proprie improvvisazioni, che si trasformano in abili variazioni sul materiale tematico. Si tratta, praticamente, di una abile quanto astuta continuazione del tema sotto altre forme: un travestimento che troppo spesso viene confuso con la improvvisazione jazzistica, assai più complessa e sofisticata anche nelle sue forme più naïf. Ecco che Desmond, invece, sia attraverso il recupero di materiali esogeni, sia per mezzo dell'improvvisazione ortodossa, utilizza la propria voce leggera e controllata per comporre su di un canovaccio che, per lui, appare quasi un pretesto. Dove Brubeck sembra soffermarsi a indagare meticolosamente su delle relazioni

*puramente matematiche, Desmond assurge a un'astrazione personalissima, dove il tema utilizzato non è che una parte di un coacervo improvvisato che però non manca mai di logica o di coordinazione; questo perché il sassofonista era in grado, attraverso una raffinatissima sensibilità, di non disgiungere qualsiasi elemento dal proprio idioma assai personale: anche l'uso insistito delle citazioni non comprende l'originalità della composizione istantanea, tanta è la ricchezza di insospettite connessioni armoniche celate dietro una visione che, a un ascolto superficiale, può apparire vuotamente edonistica per la cronica carenza di quella dimensione orgiastica che, specie dopo Parker, si è troppo presto attribuita al sassofono « jazz » (e non è un caso che Lester Young non abbia ancora oggi ricevuto il riconoscimento che gli è dovuto).*

*L'arte di Desmond è, infatti, estremamente raccolta e modesta, sacrificata se vogliamo: persino un attentissimo e controllato esecutore come Lee Konitz può apparire esuberantemente avanzato, se confrontato al pudore che caratterizza il sommesso crepuscolarismo di Desmond; eppure, nonostante nel secondo ciò sia meno evidente a causa delle innumerevoli sfumature, vi è in ambedue lo stesso desiderio di chiarezza, lo stesso approccio per linee costantemente sovrapposte al materiale tematico originario. Ma, come ho già detto, il riferimento di Desmond all'eleganza di un Johnny Hodges provoca una notevole attenuazione di quella tensione interna che in Konitz appare geometricamente e rigorosamente disposta, e che in lui viene invece sacrificata per un sottile gusto del particolare.*

*Va ripetuto infatti che non il vocabolario, ma il suono konitziano influenzò Desmond, il quale per troppo tempo è stato considerato soltanto un pallido epigono di Konitz. La differenza tra i due è, però, amplissima, e può essere sintetizzata anche banalmente: se Konitz è lo scalatore che articola minuziosamente la propria ascesa fino alla cima, e da lassù contempla attentamente tutto il paesaggio, Desmond è lo scalatore che si sofferma ad ogni pie' sospinto per gustare ciò che gli è intorno, e si estasia, e si perde nella contemplazione, senza mai, probabilmente, raggiungere la cima. (Il paragone è rozzo, ma può essere di qualche efficacia).*

*Certo, non è facile proporre una rivalutazione dell'opera desmondiana (così come non è facile proporre un'attenta riconsiderazione di quella intera scuola di altosassofonisti di cui sono esponenti Hai McKusick o Lennie Niehaus): è più probabile che essa rimanga confinata nella produzione dei «minori» riservata agli «happy few». E' bene ricordare, tuttavia, che Desmond (così come altri solisti a lui simili) ha rappresentato un lato particolare del volto bianco della improvvisazione post-parkeriana, ricercando una via ad essa estremamente originale dove la aggressività ritmica non fosse soltanto attenuata, ma venisse addirittura sostituita ai fini di una diversa ricerca armonica. Difficilmente la improvvisazione avrebbe potuto affrontare un'impresa così ambigua per le sue radici, ma tale ricerca non manca di un fascino a cui ancora soggiacciono molti improvvisatori bianchi. I parametri estetici tenuti presenti nella sacrificata ricerca di Desmond e di altri musicisti come lui, non sono stati ancora del tutto esplorati.*

Gianni Gualberto, *Paul Desmond-per un'estetica della solitudine*, in *Musica Jazz*, settembre 1980.

## Documento n° 18

### IRONIA E PIGRIZIA DI UN SAX FRAINTESO

*A dieci anni dalla morte, Paul Desmond attende ancora di essere giudicato con obiettività. Accanto a Dave Brubeck ha vissuto quasi per intero la sua carriera e ha raggiunto grande popolarità, ma molti ritengono che avrebbe potuto percorrere anche strade proprie e più coraggiose, con maggior profitto.*

*Dieci anni fa moriva Paul Desmond. La ricorrenza ci da l'occasione per riparlare di un artista che — in quella selva di categorie in cui la storia del jazz ha ripartito i propri alfieri non di primissimo piano: i sottovalutati, i dimenticati, gli incompresi, **ecc.** — può trovare una catalogazione un po' diversa da quasi tutti i colleghi. La sua categoria potrebbe essere infatti un'altra ancora: quella dei fraintesi.*

*Altosassofonista di rara eleganza ed efficacia, Paul Desmond ha incontrato negli anni trattamenti difformi, e sempre, comunque, un destino alquanto singolare: quello di vedere il proprio nome*

regolarmente preso a prestito per dibattiti stilistici incentrati su altri. Strumentalmente, ciò ha significato dapprima l'esser visto come una sorta di fratello minore di Lee Konitz, poi di padre putativo di Anthony Braxton, che proprio in lui ha più volte indicato il suo primo grande amore, fin da quando, ancora in calzoncini corti, appunto da quel tipo compassato che pareva uscito fresco fresco da un libro di Woodhouse aveva appreso che neppure nel jazz l'acume inventivo può essere mai una pura questione di pelle.

Perché Paul Desmond è uno «yankee», dalla testa ai piedi. Per decenni è stato alfiere di un certo modo, tipicamente bianco, di intendere il jazz, in quel suo essere costantemente associato al nome di Dave Brubeck, il pianista, californiano come lui. Ma lungi dal fargli da semplice spalla, Paul ne è stato, per oltre vent'anni, il braccio destro, quanto meno, ma soprattutto il solista di gran lunga più squisito e creativo del quartetto. Brubeck compreso, naturalmente.

Nato a S. Francisco il 21 novembre 1924 — uno scorpione, dunque — da padre organista cinematografico divenuto in seguito arrangiatore, Paul Desmond aveva iniziato a collaborare col pianista fin dalla primavera 1946, dopo aver studiato il sax alto al Politecnico della sua città natale. Il primo nucleo brubeckiano riuniva otto allievi — «The Eight», appunto — del grande Darius Milhaud, i quali, dividendosi tra impegno strumentale e compositivo-arrangiativo, intendevano battere strade per l'epoca tutt'altro che frequentate, abbeverando il jazz alla fonte della musica occidentale, con tanto di fughe e contrappunti. Una collocazione geografica, una formazione e degli intendimenti tipicamente bianchi, come si diceva.

«The Eight» anticipava per certi versi la ben più nota Tuba Band riunitasi nel 1948-50 attorno a Miles Davis e Gil Evans. Gli otto studenti — che per la cronaca erano i fratelli Dick e Bob Collins, rispettivamente tromba e trombone, il clarinetista Bill Smith, il tenorsax-sofonista David van Kriedt, il bassista Jack Weeks e il batterista-vibrafonista Kai Tjader, oltre a Paul e Dave, ovviamente — uscirono per la prima volta allo scoperto nel 1949, dopo aver già fissato su disco i frutti della loro cooperazione. Entro lo stesso anno, peraltro, l'ensemble si scioglieva, lasciando nei cultori impressioni contrastanti, dall'alto di una formula e di tracciati stilistico-espressivi di grande rigore e innegabile ricercatezza formale, sposati però al jazz con intendimenti certo giudicati insidiosi dai più. Quando nel 1951 Brubeck decise di ampliare il trio nato subito dopo lo scioglimento dell'ottetto, Desmond fu automaticamente della partita. Il sassofonista aveva allora ventisette anni e già appiccicata addosso la prima etichetta a cui si faceva riferimento: quella di vice-Konitz. Ma se è vero, come appare pacifico, che l'arte rappresenta un monito del carattere, del temperamento di chi le dà corpo, ecco che già tale parentela inizia a vacillare. Tanto quanto Konitz si è sempre mostrato musicista avido di esperienze, talvolta anche non del tutto avveduto nelle scelte e comunque dinamico e iperattivo, Desmond ha infatti palesato spesso la propria naturale indolenza, specie non tentando mai con convinzione di battere strade proprie, certo più accidentate, irte di insidie, di quella di prima voce del «coro» brubeckiano.

Conviene fissare subito le distanze intercorrenti fra il solismo desmondiano e quello konitziano. Rilevato come al tempo degli esordi professionali di Paul, un diciannovenne Lee Konitz non potesse influenzare chicchessia — perché è di influenza, più che di parentela vera e propria, che i testi in genere parlano — notiamo anzitutto come negli emisferi strumentali dei due altoisti, nella loro evoluzione, già si possano cogliere riscontri eloquenti delle differenze caratteriali appena additate. In Konitz l'evoluzione è infatti evidentissima, dal fraseggio terso e incorporeo degli esordi con Lennie Tristano, al frequente ricorso — a volte fino all'abuso — del «soffiato», alla sonorità più corposa e rotonda degli ultimi anni. In Desmond, invece, un processo dinamico non è coglibile con chiarezza. Anzi: è pressoché inesistente. E ciò dall'alto di un distacco da ogni forma di engagement — sia pure per un semplice rinnovamento tecnico-strumentale — che ha dell'ascetico. Altra componente di matrice temperamentale è in Desmond quel raffinato senso dell'ironia così nitidamente in linea con una delle sfumature dominanti della sua personalità extramusicale. Tale connotato traspare inequivocabilmente dai frequenti sbalzi climatici dei suoi assoli, dai repentini salti di ottava, dall'accentuazione secca, talvolta scientemente forzata, delle note acute. E traspare pure dalla contemporanea, fondamentale impermeabilità nei confronti di quelli che sono invece gli scarti ambientali, strutturali; dell'atmosfera globale del gruppo, in altre parole. Qui il distacco desmondiano, la non-sintonizzazione con dati cambi di marcia, genera squisiti effetti di contrasto e conferma al tempo stesso il suo profondo senso dell'humour, oltre che, appunto, dell'ironia. Non è in fondo ironia la capacità di non lasciarsi coinvolgere più di tanto dagli

*agenti esterni?*

*Ironia, indolenza, imperturbabilità: ecco tre caratteri-base che allontanano più o meno vistosamente Desmond da Konitz (i primi due — non estranei al carattere di Lee — nella loro accezione più bonaria, antidrammatica, magari anche un po' civettuola) e di cui esempi indicativi si possono cogliere nella parte centrale e finale dell'intervento contenuto nella versione del 1963 di Blue Rondò À La Turque, in quello del Cielito Lindo presentato in Messico nel '67 (e qui Paul sembra adeguarsi a meraviglia al clima locale, tanto che lo si potrebbe senza sforzo immaginare dietro un qualche sombrero nella tradizionale siesta postmeridiana), e ancora in quella fondamentale univocità dell'attacco, così poco rispettosa della specifica connotazione ritmico-strutturale del tema affrontato. Al di là del ricorso più insistito, oltre che tecnicamente ardito, al registro acuto, un altro aspetto che differenzia Desmond da Konitz sul versante improvvisato è l'evidente predilezione del primo per linee espositive ben tornite, cantabili, rispetto alla maggiore propensione alla fioritura, all'arabesco, a un'esplorazione prima ancora armonica che melodica da parte del secondo; il quale propende pure, specie agli inizi, verso l'introspezione, il sottile gusto per l'implicito e il riposto, tanto quando Desmond è invece più frizzante ed estemporaneo.*

*Nel corso dei sedici anni di ininterrotta permanenza nel quartetto di Dave Brubeck, Paul trova più di una volta, ma tutto sommato in maniera sempre episodica, l'occasione per rivestirsi dei panni, per lui assai scomodi, di leader e coleader. Nella prima veste, si avvale spesso della collaborazione di Jim Hall, chitarrista quanto mai calibrato e parsimonioso, particolarmente significativo proprio per quanto nei suoi interventi viene sottinteso. Per Desmond un alter ego ideale, vista la differente canalizzazione di una creatività sviluppata però su basi parallele.*

*Tra le coleaderships da ricordare quelle con Gerry Mulligan, nel cui universo espressivo Paul si cala alla perfezione, illuminando le esecuzioni degli stessi bagliori di solito offerti dalla tromba di Chet Baker. Il frequente ricorso ai tempi lenti, peraltro, finisce per nuocere ai suoi assoli, che risultano non di rado privi di nerbo, un tantino manierati rispetto alla fluidità, alla verve che appare sui tempi mossi, come innumerevoli incisioni realizzate in seno al quartetto di Brubeck, specie allorché contrabbasso e batteria sono nelle mani capaci di Gene Wright e Joe Morello.*

*Perennemente in bilico fra la popolarità goduta presso il pubblico e la diffidenza della critica (ma a Desmond anche i più severi censori di certi furbeschi espedienti brubeckiani hanno sempre riconosciuto valore e dignità), il quartetto si scioglie nel 1967. Da allora Paul Desmond finisce per autoconfinarsi ai margini del giro, salvo che per qualche nostalgica riapparizione a sfondo commemorativo in seno all'antico quartetto, o magari per registrare — nel '75 — otto pregevoli matrici, poi riunite sotto il titolo «The Duets» (Horizon AMLJ 703), in compagnia del solo Dave.*

*Per il resto, non si fa fatica ad immaginarlo, aggirarsi per casa in vestaglia e pantofole, a coltivare la tardivamente appagata vocazione di scrittore, a concedersi qualche generoso sorso di whisky di marca. La morte lo coglie non ancora cinquantatreenne il 30 maggio 1977 per un tumore ai polmoni.*

*Come compositore — attività non approfondita come sicuramente il talento e la preparazione tecnica gli avrebbero consentito — Paul Desmond lascia una non troppo pingue cartella di partiture. Tra esse un capolavoro assoluto: quel Take Five che va annoverato fra i temi più acuti e singolari, con quel suo progredire per intero su tempo dispari, del jazz moderno e che è diventato un hit per tutte le stagioni.*

Alberto Bazzurro, *Ironia e pigrizia di un sax frainteso*, in *Musica Jazz*, maggio 1987.