CECIL TAYLOR:

Jazz Pianist of the Future

When a jazz concert was held on the lawn of the White House last summer, one of the performing artists was pianist Cecil Taylor. After he finished, the president rushed over to congratulate him saying: "I've never heard anything like this before."

By Frederick A. Douglass

My introduction to the music of Cecil Taylor was completely by accident.

During my teens I purchased an album by Gil Evans that featured him fronting an orchestra that intertwined the sounds of Duke Ellington, Basie and others on the first cut or two that I played.

The music was finger - popping band, so I tuned up the stereo full blast since big band was one of the few areas where my father's musical taste agreed with mine.

The second tune ended and there was a pause of silence. Suddenly the house was filled with a sound somewhat akin to what poet t. s. Eliot once described as "the noise of [illegible] over glass" as saxophones, drums, bass and piano screeched in unison.

I wondered what was going on. Surely this couldn't be Gil Evans gone berserk.

My father sreamed at the top of his lungs "take that garbage off "

He had endured a prolonged listening sessions with artists like John Cokrane, Thelonious Monk, Grechan Moncur and Eric Dolphy, but this was just to much for his ears which preferred the vocalizing of Nat King Cole for the saxophone wizardry of Coleman Hawkins and Illinois Jacquet.

Bewildered, I scrambled up the steps to find out what these strange sounds blasting forth from my stereo could possibly be.

Picking up the album cover after having complied with my father's demand to turn off the music, I discovered that for some reason the Impulse label had decided to sandwich in three tunes by some cat named Cecil Taylor on the album that had been released under Gil Evans' name.

While the liner notes gave some background information on Taylor, there was not a clear explanation of why the album had been packaged in such a curious manner.

Although the initial exposure to the music of Cecil Taylor was a bit much for my jazz - oriented but somewhat conservative musical tastes (I dug Trane and Dolphy, but had problems with Ornette Coleman), I was intrigued by the strange packaging of the album and the even stranger approach of Cecil Taylor to playing the piano.

Cecil Taylor

I played the tunes by Taylor over and over again and eventually I was able to make sense of what he was doing.

Having listened to Monk, I was willing to listen to a different to the piano. But I wasn't used to hearing really innovative piano playing because all of the radical changes at that time were being forged by saxophonists.

Conventional Harmony

Historically, the saxophone has been the instrument of innovation in jazz with players like Coltrane and Eric Dolphy soaring to uncarted quasars of sound where chord progressions and conventional harmonic motifs ceased to exist.

Meanwhile, the piano players were relegated to playing drone - like repeated chords in the background.

Sasophonists like Ornette Coleman and the Trane often sought total harmonic freedom, therefore, would limit the keyboard player to a fixed role or would completely eleiminate him from the group because the pianist was wedded to a tradition of playing chord progressions.

But Cecil Taylor has changed all that by devising a totally new approach to playing the piano that virtually ignores the fact that the piano is a chordal instrument.

Suprisingly, however, the most accessible music by Taylor can be found on a rare Coltrane album entitled "Just Friends" which features Taylor playing in a relative conservative, almost Monk - like style. He lays down a chordal foundation that served as the launching pad for earthy solos by trumpeter Kenny Dorham and stratospheric, planet hopping saxophonics by John Coltrane.

recorded Works

But the major lbody Taylor's recorded works like "The Greatest Concert," "Unit Structures," "Silent Tongues," and "conquistador" spotlight the racial, non - chordal approach that Taylor employs when wailing on all 88 keys of the piano.

Taylor's rare public performances (Taylor can be heard live on "The Greatest Concert") tend to be even mor nor traditional because his devoted fans urge him on and, fueled by their enthusiasm, Taylor stretches out to the max. Listening to Taylor's recordings prepares the listener for the frantic music antics of Taylor, but are no sustitute for a live performance.

Seeing Cecil Taylor in person is the creme de la creme of concerts for music lovers devoted to exploring every phase of contemporary and historical jazz because you see and hear jazz created on the spot.

Taylor's recent public appearances during 1978 include the White House and a two - night stint at the Corcoran Art Gallery under the sponsorship of D.C. Space, a club that specializes in presenting non - traditional Jazz artists.

Accompanying Taylor at the Corcoran were Jimmy Lyons, alto saxophone; Raphe Malik, trumpet; Ramsey Amin, violin; and Ken Tyler, drums.

The compositions played by Taylor included "Laali Ta Sa," "Mean, Mean, Lean Evergreen Or What Shall We Call (This)," "Matu on Morn," "Standing in Air," "Glass 1, 2" and "La ali ta Sa."

Taylor's energy level is fantastic and each night at the Corcoran he played two two-and-a-half hour sets, taking only a fifteen minute break between each.

Although Taylor has sidemen, he plays a continuous solo,

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Perhaps the best way of describing Cecil Taylor's music is to quote his statement "I try to imitate the leaps in space a dancer makes."

The music of Cecil Taylor is wild and futuristic, but his benchmark performances must be listened to by any musician who aspires to be a top notch jazz pianist.

Whether or not you like the music of Cecil Taylor, you have to react to it by either becoming totally engrossed in his art or heading for the neartest exit. There is no middle ground.

But when the smoke clears and the controversy surrounding Cecil Taylor's music fades out like the early twentieth century controversy about Igor Stravinsky's music, Cecil will be recognized as the greatest innovator on the piano for all kinds of music and as [illegible] who developed a totally new, non-chordal vocabulary for the keyboard instrument.

—Recipes

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1 teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon hot pepper sauce
10 ounces fresh broccoli, chopped
½ cup chopped radishes
1 cup shredded carrots

In large saucepan, sprinkle gelatine over water. Place over low heat; stir constantly until gelatine dissolves, 3 minutes. In large bowl beat together mayonnaise, cottage cheese and vinegar. Gradually stir in gelatine mixture. Stir in onion and salt, hot pepper sauce and vegetables. Pour into 6-cup mold. Chill several hours or overnight, until firm.

Yield: Six servings.

Peach Spinach Vinaigrette

[illegible] cups fresh peach halves
[illegible] bag fresh spinach
1 head butter or bib lettuce
4 strips bacon
1 tablespoon yogurt
Grated peel of one orange
Juice of one orange
2 teaspoons vinegar
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon pepper
½ teaspoon garlic powder
¾ cup olive oil or vegetable oil

Drain peach halves and set aside. Wash spinach and lettuce; drain and tear into bite-size pieces for salad. Fry bacon until crisp and set aside to cool; then crumble.

In deep bowl combine yogurt, orange peel, orange juice, vinegar, salt, pepper and garlic powder; mix well. Slowly add oil, beating vigorously with wire whisk until all ingredients are completely mixed; add crumbled bacon. The dressing should have a creamy texture. Make a bed for peach halves out of spinach and lettuce. To serve, pour dressing over all.

Serves six.

—Jazz

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pounding maniacally on the keyboard even while other musicians are soloing, often overwhelming them with the intensity of his playing.

Seeing Taylor actually lay hands upon the piano gives the listener a greater understanding of what his music is all about as he scurries heker skelter up and down the keyboard, playing each of the 88 keys at some point.

—Poetry gallerie

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Please ride me, I said to the old see-saw
But no mercy at all was shown
I'll ride two people who are in love
But not one whose all alone
The winds whistled a tune, take heed, take heed

The birds sang out in prayer
Go seek, go seek and you shall find
There's someone for you out there

I need, I want but I do need help
Just where are lost feelings stored
I've been hurt so much I've lost everything
I told the see-saw board

The old see-saw began to creak
And split right on my side
And the cracks spelled out a message to me
Saying push aside your pride

Good things will come to those who wait
You seek and you shall find
Someone compatible to things you do
Lovable, sweet and kind.
I did wait as I was tole
I saw and found a friend
I told the old see-saw come give me that ride
I can fill the other end
As I sat upon its splitting boards
I felt so god inside
To know I have a reason to sit where I am
And accept the see-saw ride

I love that old see-saw
It's the only friend I've got
In part it told me where I went wrong
And taught me quite a lot.

HARRY BOLDEN

MY FRIEND

It's hard to find a special friend
Who will help in times of sorrow
Someone who will make you see
There will be a better tomorrow.

Someone who will listen
To all your problems through
And help you sort them out
To do what's best for you.

Someo[illegible] [illegible]r downfalls
And lend a helping hand.
Someone there to share your glories
And push you to triumph again.

Someone you can turn to
When life's been a pain in the ass
And always there to let you know
It's time to forget the past.

Good friends are hard to come by
But it's not a problem for me
I found my special buddy
This poem is for you TERRY.

DEBORAH E. COUNCIL

—Skibobbing

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(Switzerland) restaurateur goes the credit for having invented the skibob sometime in the early 1930s.

His mountain top restaurant, high above the town, was the place to go for both local Swiss and tourist alike. By the time he would close his restaurant for the evening, the last cable car to the valley had left.

In the summer months, it was a simple matter of walking down the hill. One winter day, he attached an old bicycle frame to a ski and managed the late slide home very well.

Soon the idea was caught on with neighboring children who thought it was a lot of fun. What was a child's toy has since become a vehicle for adult recreation.

Feel At Home

Skibobbing is much more under control than any skis. On skis the fast speed would terrify you. But on your trusty little skibob, a kind of bicycle on skis, you feel right at home.

The vertical drop is several thousand feet and the ride across open snowfields and twisting tree enclosed trails is four to five miles in length.

There is much more to skibobbing than sheer pace. Indeed, speed alone would be a waste of the beautiful mountain side. The breath-stopping plunge is replaced by the easy glide.

If you can walk, you can skibob and even a woman or child can carry the fifteen pound ski bike up the ski lift using the mini skis to ski along wherever necessary, depending on the kind of lift one is on.

Joe Fisher, one [illegible] first black ski shop owner [illegible]ned his first ski shop as a concession in the Columbia University book store in New York in November 1955.

He has now moved his business to Boston and expanded. In 1970, Fisher purchased 100 skibobs that are now being used in his tour operation.

The skibob club of Boston sponsors weekend trips for only $79 that include breakfast, dinner, transportation, skibobs, boots, insurance on equipment, skibob lessons and a disco.

—Quiz

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1966 appointed Robert C. Weaver head of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, making him the first black to serve in the Cabinet.

Weaver 1909-) received a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard University. Coming into government service during "The New Deal," he served as aide to the Secretary of the Interior in 1933 as his advisor in the Public Works Administration.

He held other federal positions until 1944 when he left to serve Chicago in the field of race relations and housing, to teach, lecture and do foundation work, as well as work with the United Nations.

He became the first black in New York State's Cabinet. Under President Kennedy, he returned to Washington as head of the Housing and Home Finance Agency.