

## Wayne Shorter Interview 13<sup>th</sup> April 2005

Q: I greatly enjoyed the two CD compilation *Footprints* and I notice you said it had your DNA in there! What interested me was that you were constantly challenging the tradition, which few young musicians today seem to want to do.

WS: Yes. That's the whole point. You know about the United States, with the 'Red States' and the 'Blue States'? There are so many 'Red States' that they're not taking any risks at all. That's what I am doing, musically, taking risks. Having the music reflect, for people to have the courage to step out beyond these artificial barriers in life. They're comfort zones, places of familiarity. And hearing something familiar, only putting your money down on something that seems to have 'guarantees,' built-in guarantees and all that. That's why somebody has to strike a blow for original thought, and I am thinking maybe that the music we're doing will inspire people to be more individual in their decision making, starting in the United States here, which is needed badly in this country.

Q: In similar circumstances to this conversation, I was speaking to Pat Metheny, and he had this 'Red State/Blue State Theory' and said that when he played Red States he was always worried whether people would turn out, and he would see them leaving before then end so as not to get snarled up in the traffic. And the Blue States he was confident he would get a good audience and they would stay to the end!

WS: Yes. He's right

Q: The first tracks on the *Footprints* compilation, did you from the beginning want to move away from the status quo in your writing or did this emerge as you developed your musical personality?

WS: I've had these types of thoughts since I was around 15 years old! Especially when I was 15, when I first heard Charlie Parker. I heard this whole new music called bebop, I had no

desire or thought of being a musician, because I was an art major in high school. But hearing this new music opened the way for my getting my first science fiction books, when I was 15. I was 13 when I got my first fantasy book called *The Water Babies* by Charles Kingsley. My first science fiction book I got was *Occams's Razor*, after *The Disappearance*. [Then] I read about this individual thinking, *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand, and then *Atlas Shrugged*. That was 17 or 18, I started expanding my reading material to everything that had to do with this high individual quest, which I saw acted out in life very seldom. This kind of quest for adventure and opening doors to free thought, based on – as well as you can – your own thinking. Because I have come to the realisation that every generation is high-jacked from the cradle – hi-jacked! – hi-jacked from the cradle and sedated, and conditioned, there are very few moments where your thoughts are really your own. Sometimes people will fight to the end and give their life for someone else's thoughts, thinking that they are their own.

Q: The corporations control everything, from the way we go shopping to what we watch on TV

WS: Unless we can break away, and they are the ones they call crazy! Have you heard the new album?

Q: That's a very interesting band. I wonder if you can describe how you brought everyone together

WS: That was not musical events. It was social, what I was speaking of since I was 15 was a need for this kind of performances you are hearing to come about. There is a need for it. And I'm not giving up on that need. I knew it when I was 15 or 16, and sometimes when we get older we abandon those dreams of our youth, dreams of making a difference in the world, changing something, doing your part to leave your mark. I *know* that we were asleep as a nation, a planetary beings, you go to the bookstores now. There are not many people in bookstores in America, more people are in bookstores in Europe – bookstores in Paris, in London, in Rome, but the United States? It's like silent night! Unholy night!

Q: What are your feelings about the extreme right wing agenda of the government under President Bush?

WS: It's getting to the point where not enough people wake up, it is going to be scraping the bottom of the barrel. People in America, some people say things are getting worse and worse and worse, and to me that's a sign that things are getting better. How would you know things are getting better unless you know what worse is? Some people wish for a perfect world, and if there was a perfect world how would you know it was perfect?

Q: Well, these things are relative, of course, and we do tend to rationalise events in terms of our own personal experiences

WS: Like having nothing else but salt. You never know what pepper is!

Q: The reason why I was interested in your view on Bush was that in Europe, as you're well aware, the arts in many countries continue to be subsidised by government, and so is jazz, to varying extents, according to each European country, and I just wonder without that kind of support in the USA, with Bush cutting support to the arts, how do you see jazz surviving in this very competitive music marketplace for the leisure dollar where pop is king?

WS: Oh yes. Well you know what, I think this is the power of determination, assiduous practice, I am very well aware of the process that runs through the course of human endeavour, the process of cause and effect, for the controllers, the movers and shakers – I call the ten per cent-ers – the most wealthy people who are in the position to run the planet, one of the things they would be most fearful of would be – they would question accomplishment, something they are against, that runs contrary to their method of control. How could anyone who runs contrary to their method of control accomplish opening these doors of individual successes, successful endeavour, without soliciting any funds and financial help from them? They are afraid of whatever it is that money cannot buy. So if you have the talent, and the talent is confirmed with the creative process, you must create away without money

Q: So you see arts funding as a form of control

WS: Yes. The creative process involved, 'How can I creatively do this without depending on the wealthy to finance this product and therefore putting them in a position to own it.' That's been happening too much historically. That banker who bankrolled Thomas Edison in his time, can't think of his name, he used to talk to Eleanor Roosevelt in World War Two, to go to Washington and try and tell them how to strategise the war!

Q: How do you see the Jazz at Lincoln Center then, within this context. On the one hand it is forcing the white American majority mainstream to acknowledge black excellence, but on the other it seems to be pushing the music backwards into the past.

WS: Yes. The mindset, the thought processes around the Lincoln Center is so immature, unaware, adolescent. Somebody there has never taken philosophy 101! From that narrow point of view that leaves much to be desired in the way of education, on a broad plane. We know that when Miles Davis spoke to Wynton Marsalis, Miles Davis spoke to him and Miles Davis told him to shut up, and get his tone together [laughs]. Because Wynton goes all over the world, speaking about and trying to solidify what 'jazz' is supposed to be, what it is, what is pure jazz and what is not jazz, and he stops at somewhere after Louis Armstrong [laughs] and runs flat into the embrace of Duke Ellington, but this one mind knows nothing of the parameters of the vastness of human existence. Anyone who is going to fall for that kind of rhetoric gives me the reason why the bookstores in the United States are half empty. Not even half empty, almost empty! And they are on the computers, which can also be the lazy mind's way of investigating and not thinking for one's self, and doing the hard leg work of *reading* Schopenhauer, Emanuel Kant, *reading* Victor Hugo, *reading* some great African writers, Asian writers, *expanding* one's self , *reading* *The Fountainhead*, seeing the motion picture, *reading* Bernard Shaw, *tackling* Shakespeare, *reading* the speeches of Martin Luther King, reading Fredrick Douglas – NOT JUST N'ORLEANS! Yeah. Looking at Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture, reading poetry, just scanning through Dr. Stephen Hawking's lectures on quantum physics,

even if you haven't taking physics, Stephen Hawking has a way of making it understandable. I think of music sometimes when we are playing, I am thinking of what Stephen Hawking is involved with, I like to try and do that musically. Dr. Hawking! The whole DNA thing, and the double helix of Dr. Linus Pauling, Albert Einstein, a lot of people in the United States don't know that Gary E. Morgan was the inventor of the whole world traffic system, a black man, Gary Morgan. My album *Breaking the Sound Barrier* – breaking the sound barrier, that was a movie with Sir Ralph Richardson. I saw that movie seven times. If you get the album *Beyond the Sound Barrier* with the whole cover, I have maybe ten people that I dedicate the album to including a black woman who filled her kitchen sink up with water and experimented with the concept of torpedoes ejecting from a submarine, and she tried to get a patent, and they wouldn't because she was black. I have Stephen Hawking too, I dedicate it to him, for going beyond the barrier of his skeletal and flesh and muscle and structure, beyond the disease that he has, going beyond that barrier, the 'sound barrier' meaning here going beyond 'sound advice!' Going beyond marrying someone with a sound profession, only. *Going beyond safe and sound, that's what all this music is about.* Talking about music, what makes someone do something musically, is not *it*. *It* is boring, it is not *it*! In a way I'm glad I'm not a physicist, because I can appreciate Dr. Hawking much more by not knowing how to decipher the formulas, and all that. So, a lot of people ask me, I have tapes of John Coltrane and Charlie Parker talking. And Charlie Parker giving a saxophone lesson to a young student, and another interviewer asking John Coltrane questions about philosophy; and there's Lester Young speaking and Coleman Hawkins talking; they all go to saying about playing life. Miles Davis said the same thing. Because Miles Davis liked boxing. He liked movies too, he said, 'If you could play the way Humphrey Bogart walks, play that!' He said [imitates Miles Davis] 'Can you play that?' [laughs]. I remember once, Miles said to me, six years I was with him, one night he asked me, he said [imitates Miles Davis] 'Hey Wayne! Do you ever get tired of playing music that sounds like music. I get tired of that!' So, to play – have you seen that movie with William DeFoe about Dracula? Someone is looking for somebody to play Dracula. And in the film the director is looking for someone to play the part of Dracula, they're making a movie of Dracula. William DeFoe is actually a vampire, he's auditioning to play the part! He said, 'I am not auditioning to play the part of Dracula, I want to play the part of the actor who is playing the

part of Dracula' [laughs] If I could translate that into how we play onstage, we're getting into that now, if you see us in London, we're coming to London soon,

Q: I saw you about a year ago and I was fascinated by the way your music was not afraid to touch base with classical music, sometimes you had a chamber group feel to some pieces, and wondered whether this was conscious, like on parts of *1+1* with Herbie Hancock where it came to the surface on some tracks

WS: Yes, whatever the creative process is, whatever the creative stuff, the name of where it comes from doesn't mean anything to me. I'm glad Ravel did what he did, and the great Ralph Vaughan Williams, I have his symphonies, I carried them around with me on this last tour. The musicians with me haven't heard some of this stuff, in between when we were taking a rest I let them hear the 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony, and some of the guys that never heard go 'What?!' The guys I'm working with had a good time listening to that! I going to listen to Beethoven's string quartet's, the one's he wrote before he died, some of that stuff

Q: Some of that's difficult stuff too, to play and to listen to!

WS: Yes, but it's good! Chopin, I'm thinking Beethoven and Gabriel Fauré, they had the jazz spirit, they were moving on, even though Beethoven couldn't hear, he was moving on. To me the name jazz doesn't mean anything except creative, moving on! Moving on in the most democratic, in that most ideal idea of freedom and democracy, this spirit has to be identified more than the style which identifies something as being jazz. To me when something is identified as being jazz, and there is a consensus where everyone embraces that, it becomes like a frozen statue.

Q: But isn't this the problem of the last few years. When you were coming up, 'Mainstream Jazz' was a Buck Clayton jam session or Ruby Braff and Ellis Larkins doing duets, but the real action was going on elsewhere – you and Miles, Charles Mingus and so on. Whereas now,

mainstream has become the tail that wags the dog and if you're not in the mainstream, some people say you're not even playing jazz.

WS: Yes! I would say in the early years of flight, the old double winger, the circus flyers and everything like that, and now they're flying jets but would someone deny that the person who is flying the jet is not involved in aeronautics? This is what the blindness and fickleness and the smoke screening, the hi-jack process is very successful in taking people's attention away from the essence of life's flow itself

Q: And in jazz a lack of creativity sometimes?

WS: Yes, lack of creativity in being involved and maintaining something that is supposed to 'sound like jazz.' And so creativity goes out of the window because everyone is wearing the same suit! [laughs]. Making copies – of the same suit?

Q: I don't know whether jazz education has something to do with this? Homogenising the language of jazz?

WS: Oh yes! Jazz education is transmitted by people, and people have all the frailties and flaws, thinking they are scholars! The one thing that sets off the few people who grasp what the spirit of jazz is and the one's who declare what jazz is not, is *vision*! That's why I have one piece of music on my album that's called 'As Far As the Eye Can See,' how far is that? My answer to that is eternally, to see eternity eternally. To me, when something becomes too familiar with rules and regulations, that it stays true to a prescribed set of rules, it stays true to that, stays obedient, to a set of prescriptive mandates, dogma. Art Blakey used to say, 'It's like a fish in a pond which has no inlet or outlet, and it comes polluted and anything that lives in that pond becomes polluted and dies.'

Q: You have gathered around you a group of musicians who see jazz from a similar perspective as yourself but they are few and far between, so how did you meet up with them?

WS: I met the pianist [Danilo Perez] at the State Department in Washington D.C., the Thelonious Monk Institute was conducting a competition, which they do once a year, at the Kennedy Center and we were invited by Colin Powell, but before Clinton left we were invited by Secretary of State Albright, to the State Department and that is when I met Danilo, the piano player. Christian McBride, the bass player, brought Brian Blade [the drummer] to my home in California, when I was living in California. I heard about Brian Blade some years before, we met and then John Patitucci [the bassist] had played on some of my records in 1986 when he was still with Chick Corea, and we knew each other, he played some jobs, some concerts and along with my booking agent we called them together and I was thinking as I heard them that it could be a possibility we could get together and they agreed to get together and as we came together, we only had one rehearsal, one rehearsal! And from that moment on we have never had any rehearsals, when we go on stage to play and when asked what we're going to play, we just say, 'Hold on to your hat!'

Q: I read somewhere that you said, these are your words, 'With Miles I enjoyed the joy of not rehearsing.' Is there a correlation to be made there?

WS: Yes, because it's like today there's Iraq, there's North Korea, there's nuclear threats – we're faced with something called the unexpected. 9/11 was unexpected, many things are unexpected, explosions, terrorist attacks, lighting your shoes up on the plane – that's unexpected. Of course, unexpected 101, the unknown. Are they preparing us, they say you are being prepared to go into the world, but commercial process has ingrained this whole thing about guarantees and familiarity, buy what is familiar to you, don't take risks, funny they say don't take risks, the sedative they have been feeding us for hundreds of years is in all actuality risks! [laughs] We're living proof of a risk gone awry! [laughs]

Q: Have you read Chomsky and the way the corporations control things – and the media?



WS: Yes. I have been practicing Buddhist for 31 years now, I am a practicing Buddhist, me and my wife, all of us. I have a whole collection of books on Africa, African history from the 7<sup>th</sup> century written by African scholars, and of course books on Western history and all that, and I'm determined to go through as many books that may be deleted from American libraries if this kind of administration continues to flourish, through the Red and Blue states

Q: There is a divide now...

WS: Yes, there is a divide, but the courageous – I hear lately that the Democrats here in America, they say 'Democrats are a bunch of spineless, mealy mouthed cowards with a yellow streak down their back!' The so called liberals are not standing up to that either. There are a lot of liberals who are not Democrats.

Q: How can all this change, because the right wing agenda is firmly controlled by the corporations who control the news media and thus access to information, for example, CNN is controlled by AOL Warner and during the Iraq war there was a CNN memo that said no dead bodies were to be shown on the TV – a de-sanitized war.

WS: There are movies – there is one called *What the Bleep Do We Know?* – and this movie talks about exactly this, it's not on general release but you can get it on video and DVD, and talks about exactly what we're talking about. What's needed and courage and all that, what we're taught, and hi-jacking from the cradle and all that stuff, and what actually real self thought involves. For instance, people were asking about all this stuff going on since 9/11, where are today's philosophers, where are today's wise men and women, how come you don't see them standing up on television, where are they? In my Buddhist practice it is becoming clear that today's heroes and wise people are each and every one of us, we have to come forward as individuals, we have to come forward as wise people, this challenge is on the table waiting for us, so its going to be one by one, so I say the longest way is the shortest way. The quickest way – after all, we have eternity don't we [laughs]. And those who don't believe in eternity, I think they will murder someone, because they think they only live once, they'll steal

to get what they want because they think they only live once, that's in the soup there of non-believers, faulty belief and all that, ignorance

Q: In terms of relating the kind of music you are playing, what extent do you work in the United States and what proportion do you work outside it?

WS: Okay. This last weekend we played three places, we played Santa Barbara in California, that's between San Francisco and Los Angeles, and then we went down to Los Angeles and played University of California, UCLA (TAPE ENDS)...Berkeley College, after we played we did some book and record signings, long lines of people, and I heard comments like this – one lady said 'My Son' – a beautiful young lady, it was hard to believe she had a son – 'My son was just killed in Iraq, but the music we heard tonight tells me we shall see him again.' The music tells me there is such a thing called eternity. And someone said, a young man, after signing his CD he said to me, 'Thanks for exposing yourself.' There's a book someone wrote, a biography on me, where Miles, I saw Miles before he died, and Miles Davis told me in the dressing room, the last time I heard him play at the Hollywood Bowl, he said [imitates Miles Davis] 'Wayne, you need to be exposed!' So this gentleman said to me 'Thanks for being exposed, and inspires me to be a better father, a better husband a better world citizen.' So some of that stuff is getting through. Just one group is swimming against the tide, like the salmon up stream, seemingly alone, and we're getting a lot of comments like that and young people, just coming backstage and telling us – a thirteen year-old girl said to us, 'I know what you're doing.' Her mother put her hand over her mouth and said, 'She's a classical violinist and she has big ears!' We're conductors, the *new* conductors. A book is coming out soon on the new conductors, now David Roberts, we worked with him and the Lyon Symphony Orchestra, we'll be doing stuff with him, we'll be doing stuff with the St. Louis Orchestra, and the LA Philharmonic, David wants to do a concert with them, whatever we write, in '06 they want. Two nights in the new Disney concert auditorium, and I am communicating for about a year and a half with Renee Fleming, the opera singer, she completed Andre Previn's rendition of the opera *A Street Car Named Desire*. She did Blanche DuBois, all atonal, the score, but very contemporary. She did it without music and they produced it on TV, I mean she did it from

memory. We're working with her, and she is on the same track as moving forward with the creative process, whether we name it jazz or contemporary music or whatever, the names and everything, I am not going to be concerned with formality, I'm throwing in my vote for substance over formality! And that includes synthesiser/acoustic, are synthesisers acoustic? Is water colours or oils? So I'm not going to get into that trap about synthesisers and all that, electronics and all that, that's *formality*. That's formality. SUBSTANCE. You guys want to play with electronics? Okay. Let's do some substance – hell, we can't live without electricity, we have an electrical charge in ourselves, we are electric too!

Q: When will this be performed?

WS: January '06, the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> at Disney Hall, Los Angeles. The St. Louis will be in September. The St. Louis orchestra. There's somebody making a film. She was in Paris with us with us when we did a week there, with the Lyon Symphony Orchestra, we're continuing making film, the filmmaker was taught by David Lynch, we have a very competent filmmaker, husband and wife team, traveled with us, and she's making a film about everything we're talking about.

Q: This will be a documentary

WS: Yes, a documentary, but going the other way from the Ken Burns thing!! [laughs]

Q: In what way?

WS: It's not going to be like a chronological talking about *j-a-z-z* its going to be – there are many titles, but a question I always ask, what is music for? Besides making money. Then the subtitle, 'What is anything for?' You can keep going. What is anybody's real name. Well, we're spirits aren't we? Well who says? Just to play with those things. We're entities, we're the essence of something, we are what we are, or we are what we're going to be. Or we're evolving. Whatever. I am certain of one thing, that this eternal process is like an adventure

aboard the Golden Mean [referring to a track on the new CD called 'Adventures Aboard the Golden Mean']. And I know that the Golden Mean is captive to the extremity of the right or left, north, east, south or west, its not a captive to any extreme, the Golden Mean is not even a captive to the middle, not even a captive to itself. I like the Golden Mean, I like that spaceship 'Golden Mean' – let's get aboard! [laughs] That's like all those adventures aboard the Golden Mean, life is an eternal adventure

Q: Just a rough corollary. I remember reading an interview about development and mention Wynton Marsalis once came around to your house as a young man, and asked you to play the Plugged Nickel sessions with Miles Davis

WS: He wanted to watch me listening. He wanted to listen to the Plugged Nickel sessions and watch me listening to them too. He wanted to see my demeanour, and also he wanted to meet me at that time. And he had just left Art Blakey's band after being with them for a short while, he was much younger at that time. And he closed his doors to it quickly. He took it upon himself to be prophetic, without any development of real development of history, purpose, vision, supposition, and the great what if? Or looking at the repetition of what he is doing, the history of pre-emptive events, which people do, even when they look in the mirror, they cut themselves off from something called esteem, they raised themselves ahead of time!

Q: When you were with Art Blakey and Miles Davis, and Weather Report were you conscious of making history or being part of history in the way that is missing from, say, Wynton's experiences

WS: Yes. Oh yes. We knew that kind of thinking existed, and Wynton wasn't even born then. We knew that thinking, and when bebop came along it was because of that kind of thinking, not only musical, that kind of thinking, the way something should be, this is all connected with contradiction and dichotomy and everything. On TV last night, for example, when this country was first started, the United States of America, 'It's okay to – talking about religion – but you can't do this and you can't do that, but you can have slavery! You can't do this, you can't do

that but you're going to take that Indian village anyway!' This is a clear case of prejudice and bias, which is in full overload at the Lincoln Center. There is definite prejudice and bias going on there. Prejudice, bias and bigotry.

Q: I am dismayed, of course, that that is happening, but what effect do you think it is having on the way that jazz is perceived in the wider world

WS: I don't think its having any effect really. The people who buy into that are the people who allow cash funds to go in there, the million dollar donors and all that just to build a structure, and I think what might come out of that is the mere appearance – the appearance has no depth. It is measured in terms of superficial measurements, so it's a shell, a surface, a superficial shell. Capital 'F' for F-O-R-M-A-L-I-T-Y, its very formal, like a robe, a robe with nobody in it! [laughs] I know there's lectures going on in different universities, but it's not having, it's not effectual

Q: So it's the actual playing, the actual doing of these ideals

WS: Yes, the opposite of the Lincoln Center is happening at the Thelonious Monk Institute, and also some inner schools I visited in Los Angeles, they call it South Central in Los Angeles, there are people from the commercial world, there's one Jackson Brown. He came along at the same time as Joanie Mitchell. He was signed to Elektra Records, and all that, Geffen records with Billy Joel when he first came out, and Jackson Brown is a very prolific and sensitive lyricist, at a higher level than James Taylor, you know James Taylor he's always getting the airplay and visibility thing, but you don't see Jackson Brown, he was just inducted into the Rock n' Roll Hall of Fame. He's not making a big thing about that, he's going around doing benefits and a programme where he's supporting the creative process under privileged children, children who don't have mothers and fathers but live in foster homes and stuff. So that's where I was last week, with him for a day and then over at the Thelonious Monk Institute, which is on the University of Southern California, not the UCLA. You'll probably be hearing one of the graduates of that school, her name is Gretchen Parlato, people are writing about her now,

she's a singer she graduated from there, and the African guitarist Lionel Loueke, he's from Benin, Nigeria

Q: He's playing with Herbie Hancock

WS: He's playing with Herbie Hancock and also Terrence Blanchard, and Lionel and Gretchen have been doing things together, in the clubs around New York and some concerts, so there are musicians coming out of the Thelonious Monk Institute, and heads are turning now, its just that Lincoln Center – anything creative that came out of the Thelonious Monk Institute, not musically, a teaching process or something, not even teaching if they had really learned something from the Thelonious Monk Institute, they wouldn't be as they are. But structural – if they heard something about how a room, how people are seated or something maybe that the Monk institute has a competitive event once a year they would take that idea and try and make it their own, because they have more cash flow – there's a sucker born every day!!!! [laughs] Sophie Tucker used to say, 'Hello, suckers!' when she walked into a club! She used sing that song, 'Some of These Days' [laughs].

Q: That's going back a bit!

WS: See that's what I mean. *They* don't know about Sophie Tucker, some of the things that John Coltrane played were written by one of the Russian composers. There's a piece called 'This Is New.' Dee Dee Bridgewater did an album called *This Is New*. But she does it in this flamboyant way, it doesn't have that depth, take-your-time taste, and everything, like a real discovery thing about it, its blared out – 'Okay, where's the garter belt and the silk stockings and the dancing goils!' And it's kind of show-timey to me, if she reads what I said, that's what it is, but anyway! I'm not jumping on her. But one thing she captured that it existed, and it had a lot too it, but when you do it you gotta – its hard to match what you like about it and what you do with it. What you like about it is hard to match what you do with it.

Q: The perennial problem of interpretation

WS: Yes. Trane was the one who put some stuff in there, he put some real stuff in there. Another one that's like that is 'Lush Life.' You gotta know what you're doing with that one! But you can take it out, if you know what you're doing. I have a tape of someone talking to Trane, and they're saying, 'When Coltrane played with Thelonious Monk at the Five Spot and he went far away from Thelonious Monk's structure of the song and stuff like that, he was asked how did you feel when you were doing that. What transpired? Coltrane said Monk would get up, leave the bandstand and go sit in the audience, as if he was being entertained by what was going on, what Trane was doing and Wilbur Ware played the bass there for a while, and so the interviewer, going that far out as you went did you feel that it was doing – I knew what he was trying to get to, interviewers want to know if it is 'valid' – what you did, was it valid? And Coltrane said 'You know when it's the truth.' That's all he said. *That's* why Monk went outside and sat down to listen, because he was being entertained. And I would say, no-one entertains the entertainer! [laughs]

Q: Did you know they discovered some more tracks with Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane?

WS: Oh yeah?

Q: The Monk quartet was one of several bands performing at maybe Town Hall, as I recall. I think there's about eight or ten new numbers that's been discovered

WS: Yes. And what's interesting I have a CD of Charlie Parker giving a saxophone lesson to a young student

Q: Good God!

WS: Yes! That's something! The trumpet player Wallace Roney, his brother Antoine sent it to me. It's Charlie Parker talking and playing his horn, and the young boy says, 'Mr. Parker, you mean I have to memorise all those scales?' And Charlie Parker – its hard to kind of hear

because its an old transcription and it goes up and down – but Charlie Parker says [imitates Charlie Parker] ‘Yes. But if you can play what’s in your mind...’ He stopped right there, then you hear Charlie Parker playing something, it was really fresh and rich sounding, and the boy plays his scales. Then there’s an interview with Charlie Parker talking with an interviewer which is more audible, and the interviewer asked Charlie Parker who he liked, and he said he liked Béla Bartok, and Shostakovitch, he didn’t have to say Stravinsky because I know he liked Stravinsky, but then he started talking about other musicians. He liked Lee Konitz, and he liked Stan Kenton. He said he liked Stan Kenton’s ‘House of Strings,’ he probably liked the other one, what was it, ‘Hall of Brass.’ This an orchestra! But the interviewer said Leonard Bernstein wrote an article putting Stan Kenton down, speaking negatively about Stan Kenton’s attempts to be ‘modern.’ Leonard Bernstein was saying something to the effect of ‘You don’t write music and record music which is saying look how modern I am.’ So Charlie Parker said ‘I think Stan Kenton has contributed greatly to the cause.’

Q: Isn’t that interesting. We were talking earlier about classical musical influences that float in and out of your music, and Charlie Parker liking Varèse. To me, in many ways, jazz has become too codified, its too self-referential, particularly in the hands of many young American musicians who have learned the Jamie Aebersold, Jerry Coker methodologies like *Patterns for Jazz* and so on

WS: I think that the human element that is wide open, like jazz should be wide open to the elements, some comedian wrote in London when we were there, he said there’s not enough humour in jazz. Not all jazz, but at this time, the clinical and medicinal taste of jazz was all pervading throughout the performances as of late. And that clinical, there’s such a thing as posturing, when someone plays, posing and posturing and all that stuff, as if there is reeking with dedication and the audience says, ‘Uggh! This is like medicine!!!’[laughs] I want to have a good time, I don’t want to go to the doctor! So do you remember the Mitchell/Ruff duo?

Q: They went on State Department tours and stuff didn’t they?



WS: Yes, the French horn player and the bass player, when they first came out I was 17 and I saw them, we used to be glad they were on the bill, they would like open, and somebody would have a big band, Birdland and all that, and we enjoyed those two instruments frolicking through the music, they were funny to us and we welcomed that. And that attitude they had is missing today, its been missing for so long. The Modern Jazz Quartet, we'd say, 'Here comes the Smith Brothers!' [laughs] That very somber approach, good work, and very well needed and everything like that, but I am glad they all moved on. If you see us in person – that's one thing you get from the audience, they say they see a joy and a genuine interest and support flowing too and fro, right and left, all around the stage. We don't have to have any tambourine or black face to do that! [laughs]

Q: Your performance I saw in London, it was awe inspiring. I treasure that memory

WS: It's even more now, more happening now, because we don't rehearse!

Q: Well, thanks so much for your time. It's been so interesting to speak with you

WS: My pleasure/WIND UP

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