

The Neon Jazz Poems - Volume 3

Legends Know How Forever Sounds & Their Gift Is Giving You the Sounds of Now

Junior

he wasn't quite
ready to speak with me solo,
because the years have caught up
to him and he
isn't quite ready to let old age
taint the
jazz road worth telling.

so his wife
gloria sent me a fat package
of music
and i
made a promise to
profile his rich life in music.

after it was all done,
i sent over the
program
and
it lit
up junior's face
as the show went on to make his day.

the happiness spread over
his soul
after a lifetime of
giving
the world his music
and
blend of cool.

and
at the end of
that day
and the beginning of
many more,
i know it's about
giving
junior a reason
to smile

just like
he has done
a thousand times
or
more
over.

KC Thunder

for two weeks in
a row
during the
big KC week
of charlie parker
tunes,
the world
said
again
that it
was
a genius in
jazz
that made the most music
trembles.

and for those weeks
on a friday off 18 and vine
at a blue room,
i caught
cats doing their damned jazz best
and getting the crowd
roared into
a fervor
of
being completely alive.

while the rain and thunder
boomed,
much like the night that
with baroness panonica
with the thunder clapping like
a hollywood bowl crowd,
these cats on stage
swayed with the
wind beaten trees out front
and killed it.

one night,
a lighting bolt took out the electricity
for a 15 second interval
and george kept singing
as the piano played,
the bass plucked,
the drums slapped
and the trumpet screamed ..

there was no stopping the live
train
and
the music
was
almost an addendum
to the
magic
in that
electrical
soup of living.

The Best of Another Random Jazz Tale

he said
when
paul simon
comes in the room,
he's
rides in on
a
storied whim,
that will be the best you
will ever
hear.

alan retold the jazz
tale of how
paul took away
some liners a cat worked on
for a long time,
because he didn't feel it.

and he wouldn't ..

so,
as the tempo
of improv
mystifies the world,
it makes paul
anxious as
he

waits around the corner
with a circle of vinyl in one hand
and a tenor sax in the other
to
murder your ears into
the best afterlife
jazz
will save you into.

Phil Lives

in the
town of bird
from Cincinnati,
he was on the blue room floor
weaving around magic origami fingers
over jazz originals as
the crowd kept
accumulating the charge
from a lightning storm outside.

as i shook his hand
and got some music,
he went out front under the
rain pelted awning to talk
about this jazz music and
kansas city town around.

and as he finished his summarization of
charlie parker and
the lore
he spun over our
infant brains,
phil stopped me
and said,
'this is where it all happened, huh?'

and as we both strained through the
dark night
and rain cleaning away the fingerprints of
memory,
we both said
'uh huh'
and
went back in
to create
more jazz imprints for
mother nature
to try and wash away.

Calls from the Jazz Legends

these late summer
days of
work include a duality of
making sure my ringer is on
to catch the
errant jazz legend
that may call me
whenever they want
and it's in those tiny
vignettes of talk
that i get
some of the best
unrecorded material of
my
life.

and as those sweaty,
matted words of
interview questions
rest in my back left pocket,
i know that one
day at
the right
hour these
masters of improv
will
get the
juices of gumption going
and

the
best recordings
i may ever
make
will
pour
forth in a
jazz font
for
the
god damned ages ..

adrienne

said
she wasn't going
to learn what she needed
in new zealand.

putting all the
charm
and beauty of every good
poster on the worlds walls
away,
she came to the midwest to learn jazz.

was gonna do the hammond b-3 swagger
all on her own
as she listened to the masters
churn it out
with more soul than half of the
southern united states
jammed together
in one album.

and it's these days
that she is
getting
the world
to listen
as she moves those fingers over
the keys as though
she is a medial healer
sending out pulsing jazz waves
to heal
the heartbeat
and
migraines the world will
never have again
as
long
as
her
hammond can
wail the truth.

Waiting on Ira

I stepped outside
as the jazz legend
said he was Ira from Chicago
and asked
if I was from Kansas City ..

I said yes .. the home of charlie.

from there,
he lit into a story of
his latest album
and playing with everyone
from miles to coltrane
to anyone who was ever
on the scene.

he spoke with gusto,
wise old man bravado
and a soul getting ready to
depart florida
for his home of chicago.

as we talked about the cubs
going for the world series,
he said he was playing a charlie parker festival
in the windy city and he cracked
with little kid ooze.

he told me he would call me later in the week.

and i'll be waiting again
in the vortex of a loud potential
for yet another jazz legend to feel the urge
and pull me straight into their
glorious blend
of
straight up improv.

the 92 year old vibes legend

shouting a bit into
the phone from his LA abode,
asked where i was from.

KC.

The home of Bird.

at that,
I said Charlie must have
been some kinda alien creature.

Mr. Gibbs laughed and said
he still doesn't know how he developed his sound.

genuinely confounded at how
he found his niche in life
and
how the invented bebop.

no theory up to this point
in life made sense
and he marveled at
the beautiful mystery.

as we wound down the
talk,
he said i needed to buy his book
and get to know him before we would talk.

after that,
we talked in a way that
was like a few old sailors catching up
decades later.

from there,
he laughed
and i wondered how
he held in for so long
still playing the vibraphone live like a master.

and in the timbre of his voice,
i already got all
the good answers i will
seek sometime
down
the jazzy future pipeline.

The Vibes Call

In the shuffle
between salads,
beans,
cheese,
eggs and
the salami,
i missed a phone call
from los angeles ..

and when i looked down,
the numbers were a
stretch of numerals that
felt like a new math class ..

as i click on to listen to the
message,
i had a feeling it was
either the political solicitor call
or a jazz legend ..

always wishing for the latter,
i hit play
and it was
the vibes legend
t. gibbs
check back on an
inquiry i sent
late on saturday night
so see how many jazz
legends i could
talk with before
we all get too old
or the stories change ..

and the reality is,
the stories only
get better

while the jazz
keeps
on
wrapping is in
that 'alive' tide.

Jazz Jewels

he was the
cousin of slide
and the nephew of lionel
and in the heat of a KC afternoon,
we decided to talk
about an upcoming gig
on 18 and vine ..

he marveled at the
first cornet his dad ever
gave him
and with that,
he summed up
the gusto he
had in life.

the pride
and
love
flowed like
the
whiskey from the
lost
jazz barrels.

he talked about a family
steeped in jazz riches
and
they were called 'entertainers' back in the day.

not jazz musicians.

and he toured the world in the
military jazz bands
to earn
the label of bonfire cat.

Cool with a soft edge,
he has the whole world ahead of him
as he said retirement was in full swing.

and that's all he does.
swing.
swing.
swing,
baby.

Rich – The Cool Cat

i caught rich in
one of those
rare time zone calls
that were botched on
both of our ends.

but, since we were on
the phone,
we would talk about his latest
avant garde, impressionism
album full of
open,
innovative collaborators
with easy to pronounce names.

he was laid back oregonian
who used to study rattle snakes,
yet loves the jazz so much
he's always done it.

but,
field biology and information technology
fed the family and made
the music sound right.

so, as
he talked about cairo, egypt
and the trips to chicago
and gives with latino bands
in the deep dark of the night,
he kept
the meter humble
and the flow real.

another straight up song
from the annals of jazz interview
that will
one day
be a
testament to

how jazz
changed the world
and
woke up the kids
for good.

magic mike

piano fingers in
vegas
misses boston.

he's a realist,
with that tragic cool of karma on his side
and
he was discovered by a magician.

neil gaiman loves him
and
pen and teller hired him.

yet,
he's decades deep into this jazz gig
and folks still ask if his latest album is his
very first.

confounded with a laugh,
he good with his
world the way it is.

if they discover you for the first time,
it's better than never
being heard at all.

and at the end of the day
he has the best magicians in the world
cheering him
on

and with that at hand,
mr. mike jones
has all the orbs of harry potter
in his back jazz
pocket

with the future
ahead of him
like all the ivory keys
in the best solo

the world
may just hear ..

if they are lucky ..

vegas lucky.

these days

the mystery numbers i get
calls from are either
telemarketers
or
jazz legends

and yesterday
mr. dizzy reece
telephoned
and said he was
willing to interview with me
after years of denying request.

in the beginning,
i was fettering through
the thick jamaican accent
and didn't realize who it was
until i asked him again.

when he repeated his name,
he asked if i even knew who he was.

as i laughed and said it was an honor,
i told the 85 year old legend
that jazz was going to
come back around to
a
carousel ride to prominence again.

at this,
he muttered low,
i sure hope
it happens before
i'm gone.

and he went on to tell me
that he would call to talk when
he felt inspired.

and as the phone call ended,
i felt
all the inspiration i
could use
for the rest of this week,
month or until
jazz roars into
the american minds
again.

The Carla Sorry

she simply said
sorry
after my question ..

i thought she didn't hear
what i asked,
but she did ..

and after a pause,
she said,
they said sorry that
the didn't get it
and now they do.

they love her music now.

and in all the beautiful,
calm,
patient,
brilliant,
mid-morning,
exact,
floating
wisdom of
ms. carla bley
in her jazz palace

she made it clear
that the best
thing anyone has ever said
to her about
her

long,
brilliant life
is sorry
and i think that
may just nail it for

most artists that
have ever walked
the earth.

jazz
or
other-
wise.

The Final Pictures

he paused and said that
the pictures were in
a shoe box under his
bed for over thirty years.

it wasn't until recently
that they were put
into an exhibit.

and mr. manny talked
in a stern,
humble
sort of sentimentality
about
a hero
the world needed.

he took the final
pictures ever
of terry manning the final shots of martin luther jr.
on april 3 1968 ..

without knowing that it
would be anything more than another
day in memphis.

another good shot from
a legendary lens.

but it was
more than the world would believe.

and in those moments that terry,
the jazz man,
record producer,
photographer
and stellar cat described

this moment
it was
the hair raising moment
when
i knew

i wasn't dealing with a mere mortal.

i was dealing with a master memory maker.

Best Medicine

when the good doctor
of drums
began,
he started saying he was
on the road
and jackie mcclean wanted
to get an ice cream.

so michael said OK.

as they went out to
get the cone
in portugal or spain,
jackie turned into a kid.

dr. carvin laughed and
laughed as he told the tale.

and it was when he said that he didn't get any,
but admired the legendary jackie
as he ate his.

he said that
the soul of a man comes out of him
and his instrument onto stage.

and jackie was
a studious sort,
yet playful and
full of ice cream excitement.

what you hear is who you are.

and that dynamo duo of
Michael Carvin and Jackie McLean getting a cold hunk
of ice cream somewhere in the world
is
the
vision of
hope
in a world
waiting to
finally get saved
by
good,
solid jazz.