

SUBURBAN JAZZ 2: BLUE EYES

Jazz from Battlebridge with the 52nd Street Swingers (resident band at the Dog and Duck):

Teddy Boyes - piano

Ernest Hicks - vibraphone

Christian Charles - guitar

Albert Day - bass

Dru MacHine - drums



Another celebration of the music of Ed Lee

Wat Balls (Secretary Battlebridge Jazz Club, President Battlebridge and Denton Buddy Bolden Society, Founder member, Battlebridge Field Holler Group) writes:

When Suburban Jazz 1 (*So Much Spring*) was released, I thought that it was the final adieu to the work of that failed jazz genius, Ed Lee. All his later work was produced after his fatal encounters with James Gordon, a rock singer (what a contradiction in terms!) and Graham Vulliamy, a drummer with Ed's CamTech Big Band, but another who deserted real music for rock thumping.

But the dedication of Teddy Boyes to the music he loves was rewarded. Lee allowed him to trawl through old manuscripts and tapes on what are now considered by the modern generation of thumb twiddling tweeters to be archaic media. And so Teddy was able to find that a few of Lee's jazz themes had still not been released. This album brings to the public this hitherto unknown music and also allows the world to judge my lament that Lee's defection to the barbarity of rock "music" was one of the great losses to the pantheon of jazz greats. At Lee's request the album is called *Blue Eyes* after one of the themes - it was written for his daughter, Sarah, when she was born.

Most of these themes were in fact put out by Lee in a book called *Gross Ideas* - rare but fortunately still available from www.elmvillearts.co.uk. The title was a pun on the fact that there are twelve 12 bar themes (in pre-metrical England $12 \times 12 = 144$ was called one gross).

This album draws our attention to the fact that, since the beginning, Lee has had a rare and unusual ability to rework the 12 bar form in innovative ways. He has said himself that his deep commitment to the form was given breadth by variants such as Stan Kenton's *Intermission Riff* and Stan Getz's *Gladys*.

Certain of the pieces in *Gross Ideas* are not included here because Lee says that they are to be released commercially (the right word!) in albums presenting music of his period after the Fall. This means that you will not hear such classics as *Bolero Blues* and *There Was a Mon*.

Less to my taste is that Lee only permitted the release of these pieces on condition that they were given the rhythmic backings specified by him. This means that his weakness for

playing around with Latin American "instruments" such as the tambourine and the claves has had to be indulged. But Teddy Boyes manages to surmount this potential obstacle to give convincing performances. They are performed, as on *Suburban Jazz 1*, by the Battlebridge Sixth Form College Latin Percussion Group

Sadly there are no more Lee classics to be heard, but maybe this album will one day be seen as one of the great moments of rescue and preservation, to be considered alongside the famous recordings of Bunk Johnson, and that legendary Buddy Bolden wax cylinder that lovers of jazz still hope one day to find.

Suburban Jazz 1 was recorded live with guest musicians at the Dog and Duck, Battlebridge - as deep in the suburbs as you can get - where Teddy has kept the cause of bebop alive every Monday since 1955. This album uses the core group and was recorded in the Beat Music Studios, Battlebridge, who were keen to encourage this historic musical moment.

The tracks:

Joy - Lee says "This was an idea that just came to me one time while I was travelling to work in the 80s. I don't think anyone has ever heard it till now."

December Blues - So called because that is when it was written (in 1958). It dates from Lee's earliest period, together with *Coffee Bar Waitress* (recorded on *Suburban Jazz 1*) and shows Lee's grasp of bebop harmony

I'm Imprest with You - The spelling is not a mistake - it's a pun on an accountancy term - the imprest is the name for the "float" in a petty cash system. In 1991 Ed collaborated with the noted accountant (Professor) Robin Jarvis, to create *Financial Record Keeping*, a work which did not make any money, but which won a prize. Lee wrote two pieces inspired by the venture. It illustrates the fact that the subject matter of a work is not the same as its dedication. This piece was inspired by the Editor (Catherine) but in Lee's words "it is dedicated to my good friend and fellow boozier, Robin Jarvis".

Winder's Blues - An early piece showing Lee moving towards modal music. Written for Tony Winder, a clarinettist neighbour in college and a regular member of Lee bands. He is to be seen on the cover of the *Suburban Jazz 1*, His name is pronounced like the movement of air, and not like what you do to old fashioned (that is, real) clocks.

Light Blues - All lovers of the Boat Race will know that the Light Blues are Cambridge crew, But Lee was educated at Oxford... The mystery is explained by the fact that it was inspired by a visit generated by bassist Tony Febland to the rival University, which he had been obliged to leave because he had spent too much time on jazz and not enough on work. Tony had the unique distinction of being the only man ever to be sent down by both universities !

Physiology - Written while Lee was studying Music at Oxford, for his friend, trumpeter John Bannister, who worked in the University Physiology Department. They used to play it while baby Sarah slept peacefully on .

Blue Eyes - This was written after the birth of his daughter Sarah, and shows Lee's capacities both for lyrical themes and for creating swinging beats in 3 /4 time. (Compare *Isis*) Listeners may also choose to compare Toots Thielmans' *Bluesette* .

Silver Wedding (Frances' Theme) --This is the other piece written for the *Financial Record Keeping* project. It is one of Lee's last jazz pieces but arguably one of the most beautiful. Lee comments: "My wife, Frances, noted that I had written many pieces whose title was a girl's name, but had never (apparently) written anything for her, So, Frances, here is one of my best pieces. The title seemed appropriate as the piece was composed fairly close to our anniversary, and I think the piece captures some of the variety and richness of emotions involved." Teddy Boyes gives us an insightful interpretation of the piece in this track for piano, bass and drums.

Blues for Anne - Though written early in Lee's career, it looks ahead to his later style. The Anne of the title is the same person as the one for whom *Coffee Bar Waitress* was written (see *Suburban Jazz 1*)

Isis - The Isis is the name given to the part of the River Thames where it flows through the city of Oxford. It has been argued that the name dates from pre-Roman Celtic times, and referred to the river from its source until it meets the River Tame, which was then the "Tame-isis" (from which the Roman (Latin) name Tamesis is derived). The piece is so called because it was one section of the *Isis Suite* which Lee wrote for a student big band when it took part in the Inter-University Jazz Competition of 1960. It is another piece in 3/4 metre.

Recorded and engineered by Beat Music Studios, Battlebridge.

Engineer Thomas Edison writes: "*Suburban Jazz I* was recorded live and so had all the excitement of jazz club night. Teddy decided that, since this was to be a final tribute to Lee's jazz gifts, we should go into the studio to get the best results possible. The band rose to the occasion, and I feel that I was able to capture the vitality they created. So much recording these days aims for perfection, but I think there is also something to be said for capturing all the little flaws - and the inspiration of the passing moment".