

Modern sounds coming from Gastown

I spent part of a recent Saturday in Gastown with eight young musicians intent on putting together a program of modern sounds composed primarily by pianist-vibist Paul Plimley.

Threading through the busy streets, the musical part of my noggin turned over a pair of pithy observations by clarinetist-composer Tony Scott and pianist-composer Thelonious Monk . . . observations that apply to the writing of jazz.

Scott said: "It all starts with the soloist. What he plays today, the arranger-composer writes tomorrow."

Besides himself, Monk was thinking about young musicians, like Plimley, when he advised: "I say play your own way, Don't play what the public wants. You play what you want and let the public pick up on what you are doing, even if it does take them 15, 20 years."

Plimley's troop lines up not unlike the memorable Miles Davis, Gil Evans, John Lewis, Gerry Mulligan group of the late '40s. The missing link is French Horn, but the pioneering spirit is still there.

To most people, jazz occurs when musicians improvise or embellish a different melody curve atop the 4/4 time signature of an infectious rhythm section. Sometimes this happens with Plimley's approach, but it is wise to take your sophisticated ears and attitudes along for more than just a ride.

When I arrived at their loft at 101 Carrall



Street all hands and horns were gleefully hard at work. It is tough work nuzzling a sensitive, dirge-like fragment of music between two thick statements of the main theme.

Speaking from the piano bench about the interpretation of his arrangement, Plimley barked: "I want it loud and aggressive! Then, when you sound off for the end, use your killer instinct which I always recommend."

Then Paul got ready for an instant replay. "Hold on, men, we still want it to be fun," he reminded the group. Paul used a natural gimmick to refine the elusive melody line, hand clapping with occasional chest thumps marking the offbeats. Know something? It works.

If you wonder about the spread and appeal of Plimley's kind of music, take a peek at his report card on a recent informal tour across Canada. It registered hale and hearty particularly from Ontario west. Most major cities have a cell of free-form musicians ready to play for their devoted fans.

Someone hollered "breaktime!" and Plimley agreed. Drummer Al Wiertz, a jazz ambience

friend of mine for almost 25 years sprung for the coffee. It was time to reminisce. We talked about the late '50s through the mid '60s, specifically about times on stage at the Cellar out on East Broadway near Main.

It was quite a Saturday and the credit goes to Paul Plimley and his players: Paul Blaney, bass; Al Wiertz, drums; Graham Ord, alto sac; Coat Cook, tenor sax; Gordie Bertram, baritone sax; Ralph Eppel, trombone and Joe Rzemleniak, trumpet.

● From Vancouver Island, an odd but highly listenable four-track extended play (33½) made its way upstream in search of a friendly turntable not long ago. Well, it found one in mine.

Can it be true that the C. E. Bates group straight or with vocalist Moqui Lund doubling saxophone is relatively unknown?

Actually, if I read the accompanying notes correctly, there are at least two groups involved in the recording. You can find the record and listen for yourself. Don't miss fine tenor saxophonist, Nick McGowan, and guitarist, Ted Quinlan.

You may remember an ironic two-sided disc by Stan Kenton, Blues in Burlesque, with a cunning vocal by the late Shelly Manne. Well, Bates does a similar satire on the blues with an accurate sounding street-scenes background. On record at least, these are professional people. The address to obtain this EP is Tsolum River Records, Box 273, Merville, B.C.

Paul Bob Smith died
while you were away / SP