

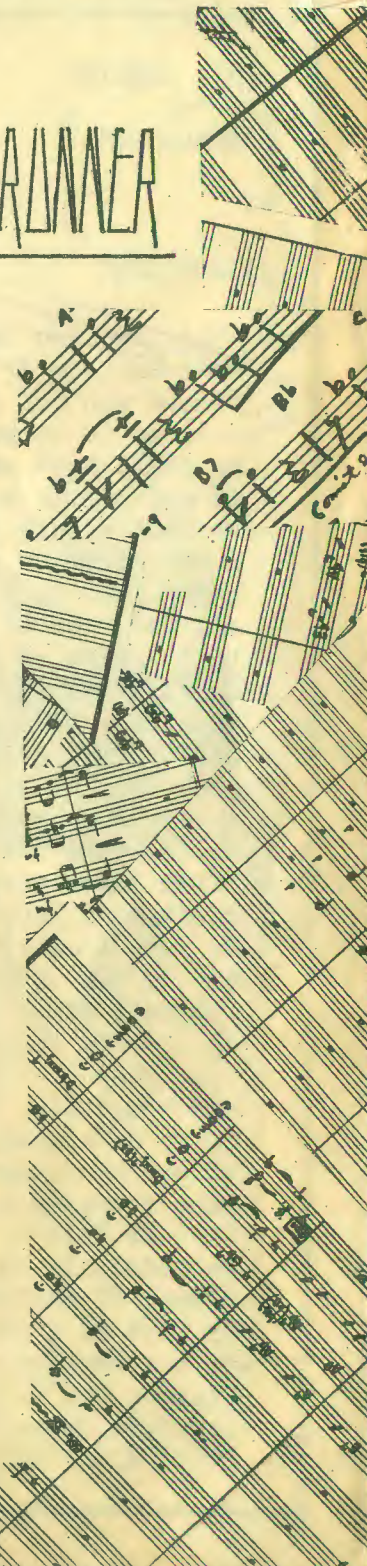
I wish you could get to hear young Will. His articulation isn't always clean, nor is his technique more than average. And although he has never said so to me, I'm sure he worries about his playing. But when he gets into some of the 7/4 or 5/4 or 6/8 things in the book, he plays some tasty stuff. He would remind you of Miles if he used some of Miles' licks. Then again he approaches the line in a way reminiscent of Miles - with that sensitive personal feeling. Now and then he'll trick you up by cutting a fiery percussive like phrase - clean as a whistle. I think he smacks of future greatness. The scope of Colmar's talent is often surprising to me also. I've had occasion to hear him playing behind more than one of those robust-belter styled singers where he could stretch out in that rollicking thing. In the FORERUNNER bag his forte (and he uses it sparingly) is a bell like quality he defines in the upper register of the piano. At one moment it produces an Eurasian like effect, at another it's like light rainfall and still another, languid and nostalgic. Out in the open on the cookers in the book he fires two handed-burning choruses all over the box. Charlie Lewis' chair is good and rough. He has to spell out in intricate little yops all the percussive cross talk and keep it tight. At least eight drummers before him gave it up. They could sound like Elvin Jones' playing four, which for the benefit of the unhip, is the staple meter used in

contemporary jazz - but get into that other bag like problems. Charlie will readily tell you its not all duck soup for him either but he's cutting it and steadily improving.

The pivot man through all of these entangled pergrinations is the quietly firm music master, Jymie Merritt. Whether the band is working or not he calls rehearsal almost daily. He is a tireless perfectionist, resolutely working to improve the critically balanced group rapport. The latitude of his musical excellence and flexibility is so well known that he is constantly sought after by leaders who want the best.

Jymie is unswervingly dedicated to the cause of reflecting a respectable image of the American jazz artist. Hence he has withdrawn from the more lucrative areas of jazz in an all out effort to establish and sustain a cultural level for the art in Philadelphia. Through the influence of his father who is president of the Tuskegee Alumni Of Philadelphia, and a few friends who assist the FORERUNNERS administratively the facilities at the Alumni 'Clubhouse' were made available to him. Ultimately JAZZ BIKINI came into being. And the ensuing planning conferences dotted with pertinent ideas - extending the sessions to other nights - 'Clubhouse' renovation (in progress) - promotion of a visual arts display - develop strategy to effect featured guest appearances of top echelon jazzmen - etc., etc.

THE FORERUNNER



JYMIE MERRITT
AND THE
FORERUNNERS

AT

JAZZ BIKINI

By the time you read this we will have had six JAZZ BIKINI sets. (Thank you for coming.) While we seem to be gathering momentum, we still have problems. Happily we are unlike wandering minstrels we have a jazz home where the great story of modern jazz is being told without compromise to all who come to hear. However that truism is a bit romantic and has nothing to do with the dark side of the ledger which coldly deals with sustenance.

A good many of the young hard cookers have been dropping by JAZZ BIKINI just itching to play. But often times they show so late we can't work them into the program. We want to accomodate everybody but in the interest of avoiding complete chaos we must maintain an orderly format.

If you play or sing or have a group and would like to appear, stop in on a Wednesday and talk to one of our coordinators about a future appearance. Or, drop a card to JAZZ BIKINI, 5046 Market St., Philadelphia 39, Pa. (Tuskegee Alumni Of Philadelphia Clubhouse) Or give us a ding - Sh7 - 9662.

Here are the names of some of the players who have appeared at the sessions in past weeks: WAYNE DOCKERY QUARTET - Wayne, bass;

Pete Rose, tenor; Al Pollitt, piano; Eric Henderson, drums.
NATE MURRAY QUARTET - Nate, bass; Jimmy Turner, drums; Sonny Fortune, alto; Ray Grant, piano. Dot Turner, mirimba; Odean Pope, tenor; Donald 'Duck' Bailey, drums electric harmonica and trombone.
AL THOMAS TRIO - Al, piano; Dave Jackson, drums; Huston Mathews, bass. Chris Powell stopped by on his way back to Syracuse to his radio show. He's a jazz disc jockey up there. TRUE ART QUINTET. Bill Lewis, vibes. Miss Lorraine Harper and her wonderfully warm ballad style is coming to be quite a favorite. Bobby Green sat in and played a nice set. Also Ivan Brill drums; Bill Thorpe, alto; Will Jefferson, alto; and James 'Shang Neal, trumpet.

I'd like to acknowledge all the favorable comment on the first newsletter. And special thanks to the friend in New York who sent one to Ralph J. Gleason, syndicated jazz writer of the San Francisco Chronicle and other publications, all the way out in 'Frisco. Ralph is one of the very few jazz writers who writes about the jazz game with the insight of a playing jazzman. He dropped us a card saying he had received a copy of the FORERUNNER and that he dug it. Thanks Ralph. We are working towards getting this orgin out on some kind of a regular schedule. Our staff seems efficient enough - the trouble is it only consists of one - me.

I'd like to tell you a little something about the FORERUNNERS without it sounding like the usual flowery remarks made by a press agent.

At the moment the FORERUNNERS are a quartet. The instrumentation is trumpet-(WILL LETMEN), piano (COLMAR DUNCAN), drums-(CHARLES LEWIS), bass and leader-JYMIE MERRITT).

As Jymie originally concieved the group, he sought out musicians who could adapt to a 'free thinking' correlation without them necessarily being of the avant garde' gender. The idea was to completely avoid locked in forms and the all to common cliché' riddled jazz fare.

Almost all the original material in the book was written by Jymie. And too most of these charts are played in uncommon meter. Once the rhythmic patterns are set and held long enough that they are discernable to the audience, the percussives introduce subtle variations on the time and at pre-arranged intervals exchange patterns with each other. Of course on these occasions where there are rhythm-pattern exchanges, two separate time signatures are being utilized simultaneously.

In acquiring the services of Will Letmen, Jymie was very fortunate. Will had formerly played extensively with an Afro drum ensemble where he developed an unusually perceptive sense of time. His lines are long and lyrical - generally modal in concept.