



# Hawk Talks

By Leonard Feather

Although by no means inactive on the present-day jazz scene (currently he is playing numerous college gigs and jam sessions, as well as frequent record dates), Coleman Hawkins is wrongly viewed by many as a sort of professor emeritus of the tenor saxophone.

It has occasionally been pointed out in these pages that as one of the first and foremost of the jazz soloists, he is taken too much for granted, though there seems to be little chance that history will neglect or belittle his contribution as the most vital exponent of them all in the tenor field.

Hawkins' *Blindfold Test* gave him an opportunity to catch up on some fairly recent records, most of them featuring tenor men in various old and modern styles—not that Coleman doesn't do a great deal of listening anyway, for his enthusiasm and interest in jazz developments of all kinds will never be quenched.

Coleman was given no information before or during the test about the records played.



## The Records

1. Zoot Sims. *Pegasus* (ABC-Paramount). Zoot Sims, alto, tenor, baritone (multitrack).

Well, I sure don't know who it is, I can tell you that! Well . . . only trouble is, Leonard, these cats get ornery if you don't . . . I mean, they all want five stars, don't they? Now for instance, that sounds *fair* to me. Fair is two stars, huh? I liked the theme all right . . . Actually there isn't any arrangement, but the chorus that's fixed up is all right.

The changes are familiar, but I don't know the piece. Outside of that first and last chorus, it's the usual thing—just one solo after another. That's the kind of thing I'm going to try to get away from, if I can, on my next date. More like we used to do back in the 52nd St. days—at least get two things together, because with three horns you can have like a little arrangement, you know?

The solos are average, nothing that you don't hear every day, all day. Well, I think I'll give it three, tentatively; it's the first thing I've heard today.

2. Oscar Pettiford Orchestra. *Smoke Signal* (ABC-Paramount). Gigi Gryce, alto, composer, arranger; Art Farmer, trumpet; Jerome Richardson, tenor; Jimmy Cleveland, trombone; Osie Johnson, drums; Janet Putnam, harp.

That sounds good! They've got a good-sized band there. I like the arrangement very much. That part with the harp at the beginning . . . yeah, a real interesting record. Solos were good, too. I might give that one four.

3. Ruby Braff. *What's The Reason?* (Bethlehem). Sam Margolis, tenor; Ken Kersey, piano; Milt Hinton, bass.

That's either Buck Clayton or somebody stealing from him! . . . That sounded good for what it was. Was that one of them Columbia things—was that Buck? The tenor sounded a lot like Pres, but he don't sound too much like Pres plays himself today. That's the reason I thought it was somebody else, like maybe Paul Quinichette or somebody. Piano was all right; bass sounded like a good bass player. May-

be Oscar; but a few things about it sounded an awful lot like Milt Hinton. Three stars.

4. Jelly Roll Morton. *Grandpa's Spells* (Label "X"). Morton, composer; recorded, 1926. Morton, piano; John Lindsay, bass.

Well, I suppose those fellows did the best they could with that piece . . . That's strictly Dixieland fellers . . . I really don't want to rate that at all. You know, all that Dixieland sounds alike to me. They're pretty precise, usually; take that boy Erwin, Pee Wee Erwin; he's correct, he's real precise in his playing. . . . This is a lot of hodgepodge; I wouldn't even be particular about listening to that any more. You know? (Feather: Do you hear any musical value in it?) Actually, no. The piano? I didn't notice—wasn't that like the rest of it? The bass sounded like Pops Foster—was that Pops Foster? He's the only one I can even come close to identifying—because of that popping sound. Well, Dixieland is a type of music, you can't get away from it; if it's good, it's good—but I've heard a lot better than this. Fair is two? Well, give it two.

5. Bud Freeman Trio. *Perdido* (Bethlehem). Dave Bowman, piano; George Wettling, drums; Recorded, 1956.

It might not have been, but it sounded an awful lot like Bud Freeman to me. I don't know who was on the piano; the drummer could have been George Wettling. Do I like that tenor style? Well . . . hm . . . no, not exactly . . . Is that new, or an old record? (Long silence) . . . I didn't hear any bass. I'd say pretty fair; two.

6. Duke Ellington Orchestra. *Cotton Tail* (Bethlehem). Paul Gonsalves, tenor sax; recorded, 1956.

Well now, I know all about this record. I know who it is and everything. I think it's lost something by being played too fast. I liked the original version . . . If Duke had even struck a happy medium, a tempo somewhere in between the original and this one, it might have been nice. This way, it's just notes bouncing off notes.

There are some pieces that seem to be written for a fast tempo; but this arrangement is not right for this treatment. I don't know how to rate that. Two or three stars tops. The tenor is the boy from Providence, you know—Paul. At first I thought it might have been Lucky. He could have been a little more expressive at an easier tempo, but he did a very good job considering.

7. Sonny Rollins and Modern Jazz Quartet. *Almost Like Being in Love* (Prestige). Kenny Clarke, drums.

That's tough; I don't know who that was. I'd say it was good. An awful lot of tenor players sound exactly the very same, and I'm wondering if this was the boy that plays with Max—Sonny Rollins. In fact, I wondered whether it was Max, too. But Max doesn't have a vibes player, he uses trumpet. Three is good, huh? Oh . . . three is good enough for that.

8. Dave Pell. *Can't We Be Friends?* (Atlantic). Don Fagerquist, trumpet.

That's another of these peculiar records . . . sounded a little like Chet Baker on the trumpet. Tenor a little like Getz . . . I liked this all right, but you know, the harmony of this piece is very pretty the way it was written; they didn't have to change it. You lose more than you gain. The record Bird made on this was very nice, because they stayed right with the piece. Three.

9. Al Cohn and the Natural Seven. *920 Special* (RCA Victor). Joe Newman, trumpet; Freddie Green, guitar; Nat Pierce, piano.

The rhythm was very nice, like the old Basie rhythm a bit. I wasn't too awfully impressed with the solos. I guess it's good for two or three.

10. Count Basie. *Let Me See* (Epic). Buddy Tate, Lester Young, tenors; recorded 1940.

Well, that's another very familiar thing, with a bigger band. There were two different tenor players. One was playing like Pres used to play; I don't know who the other one was playing like. I'd rate it about the same as the other one; two to three.