



# YARDBIRD IN LOTUS LAND

As most collectors know adequate documentation of the changes that took place in American jazz during the early 1940s will never be possible because of the AFM recording ban which took place from 1942 to 1945. As a result the impact and development of such key figures as Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Fats Navarro, Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell has to be taken, in many cases as hearsay. For recorded examples of their musical development the jazz student must rely on bits and pieces — short solos by Monk and Powell in swing groups and for early Charlie Parker, the radio transcriptions made with Jay McShann for a radio station in Wichita, Kansas (available on Spotlight SPJ120). Thanks to the efforts of researchers, collectors and the specialist record labels some of these gaps are gradually being filled.

Even after the recording ban recording dates were often few and far between for many musicians involved in the new form of musical expression. Such was the case with the recordings that appear on this album. None originate from regular studio sessions but from on location recordings, radio airchecks (recorded direct off the air by enthusiasts and musicians) and radio transcriptions, which, thanks to a handful of dedicated fans have avoided extinction for all time such as occurred to many V-Discs which were recorded during that critical period when the ban was in force.

**Yardbird in Lotus Land** collates most of the known non-commercial recordings made by Charlie Parker during his difficult period in California from late 1945, when he opened at Billy Berg's, to March 1947, when he returned to New York. The few recordings made outside the studio during the period immediately prior to his departure back East are of such poor sound quality that their appearance on record cannot really be justified, the only ones good enough being already issued on Spotlight 107 and 103. This album therefore concentrates on items recorded during the late 1945-1946 period. Charlie's commercial recordings under his own name for the entire period are available on Spotlight 101, 102 and 103.

Notably missing from this time are performances with the Billy Berg band, brought out from a lengthy engagement at the Three Deuces club on Fifty-Second Street to give West Coast jazz fans a taste of the new music. This band consisted of Dizzy Gillespie, Parker, Milt Jackson, Al Haig, Ray Brown, Stan Levey and, on occasions Lucky Thompson who either was sitting in for an absent Charlie Parker or increasing the size of the unit from a sextet to a septet. This band minus Parker did make one recording session for Dial which will shortly be issued on Spotlight SPJ132. However the band with Bird in the lineup was indeed a formidable group and one of the great small bands of all time and thanks to the persistence of Tony Williams, one of the world's leading Parker collectors and discographer, four tracks by that band have been discovered and are included here collectively for the first time on one record, some for the first time ever!

Shaw 'nuff and Grooving High are both lengthy cuts, considerably longer than the three minutes imposed on the 78 rpm recordings of the time, printed in England by Clout & Baker Ltd.



and show what the band could do when the wraps were taken off. The players are Bird and Diz in the front line, backed up by Haig, Brown and Levey — the classic-bop combo, unencumbered by any other instrument. Bags joins the group for **Dizzy Atmosphere**. These three cuts are from AFRS sources and were made as part of the Jubilee broadcasts originating in Hollywood and beamed to GIs all over the world just after the end of World War II. The fourth cut by the band is the short version of **Salt Peanuts** with Lucky Thompson added to the preceding personnel. It will be recalled that when the Berg engagement was booked, Gillespie, the contractor, brought Jackson along as an added voice for those occasions, which he had prudently anticipated, when Parker failed to show and as explained earlier Thompson was included for the same reason as an added insurance.

The exact source of **Salt Peanuts** is obscure but in a **Downbeat** interview more than ten years ago Milt Jackson said that the band had been given a two minute shot at the end of the Rudy Vallee broadcast and as the playing time of this item fits this could well be a possible source. Irrespective of where the tapes came from these sixteen minutes of Bird and Diz with the marvellous Haig-Brown-Levey rhythm section present small band jazz of the bop period at its definitive best.

The rest of side one of **Yardbird in Lotus Land** offers three Parker radio/concert appearances made in Hollywood during the same period. Here he shares the medley the solo spot with Willie Smith, heard at length on **Tea for Two**, Benny Carter who plays **Body and Soul**, and **Cherokee**, the Parker speciality which puts other saxophonists to rout. **Ornithology** is probably from the same period and with what sounds like a similar rhythm section. Unfortunately on all versions of this particular recording so far found the piano solo has been chopped out. Quite likely whoever was responsible for the original recording thought the inclusion of the piano solo unnecessary and sought only to take down the altoists performance. A pity, especially if it was Nat Cole for almost certainly a rare treat has been lost for all time. Nat's comping on **Cherokee** gives us just a faint glimmer of how Bird and Art Tatum might have sounded. Norman Granz' attempt to record

these two giants together was stymied some years later when the session could not take place not on this occasion for the non-appearance of Bird but that of Tatum! Nonetheless despite the poor sound quality on this item Bird once more is in fine fettle and the inclusion therefore well justified.

Side two presents a series of recordings taken off the radio straight onto acetate lacquers. As is usually the case with acetate discs of 30 years vintage the surface noise is high due to the drying out process which takes place with such items if not kept under ideal atmospheric conditions. Neither were they well looked after by their various owners hence the added noise level caused by scratches and the like. However the actual recorded sound is good and the noise level has been reduced even further due to Spotlight calling in on John R. T. Davies' expertise in the de-clicking, de-popping department. John spent many hours removing several hundred especially bad pops and bangs, concentrating specifically during Bird's solos. To clean up the whole performances would take up many hundreds of hours and was not really considered necessary in this case.

The Finale was an after hours bottle club, where "members" paid a door fee and brought their own liquor and were served setups by the management. It was operated by the well-known dancer, Foster Johnston and flourished for a short time, three months at the most, in the early part of 1946. It was closed by the vice squad of the Los Angeles Police Department just as it had established itself as the after hours rendezvous for resident and visiting jazz musicians. During its short career the contractor for the house band was Charlie Parker. The personnel varied and included, Howard McGhee, Miles Davis, Sonny Criss, Art Farmer, Addison Farmer, Dodo Marmarosa, Joe Albany, Chuck Thompson, Woody Isbell, Arv Garrison, Vivian Garry, Roy Porter, Serge Chaloff, Red Callender, Russ Freeman, Hampton Hawes, and Jack McVea. Visitor's included the who's who of any band that passed through Los Angeles that Spring.

The tunes played include five prominent in the bebop repertory: **Blue 'n boogie**, **Billie's bounce**, **Anthropology**, **Ornithology** and **All the things you are**. The recordings speak for themselves

and were made shortly after the band had been formed, before much opportunity had been allowed for rehearsals. The band's pianist at this time was Joe Albany, later to be replaced by Dodo Marmarosa, and his performances here are important additions to his solography. They also plug a sizeable hole in the development of young Miles Davis' early career as well as offering yet more previously unissued Charlie Parker performances with a band that never made it to the studio.

Liner Notes: ROSS RUSSELL (Jan. 1975, author *Bird Lives*)  
Production: TONY WILLIAMS  
Sleeve Design: MALCOLM WALKER

For further information for the period during which these recordings were made Spotlight recommend that the chapter "Yardbird in Lotus Land" be read from Ross Russell's excellent Biography on Charlie Parker "Bird Lives" (Quartet Books).

## PERSONNEL

### : DIZZY GILLESPIE AND HIS REBOP SIX:

Dizzy Gillespie tpt; Charlie Parker alt; Al Haig p; Ray Brown bs; Stan Levey d. Hollywood — possibly Saturday, December 29, 1945.

+ add Milt Jackson vibes. Same date.

= add Lucky Thompson ten; Dizzy Gillespie vcl. Hollywood — probably January 1946.

### @ CHARLIE PARKER QUINTET:

Miles Davis tpt; Charlie Parker alt; Joe Albany p; Addison Farmer bs; Chuck Thompson d.

Los Angeles — Finale Club, probably March 1946.

### % CHARLIE PARKER-WILLIE SMITH -BENNY CARTER alto with:-

Nat Cole p; Oscar Moore g; Johnny Miller bs; Buddy Rich d. Hollywood — March/April 1946.

\* CHARLIE PARKER alto with:- probably the above rhythm section. probably Hollywood — c. March/April 1946.

## SIDE ONE (31:14)

|                    |                     |      |
|--------------------|---------------------|------|
| : Shaw 'nuff       | (Gillespie-Parker)  | 4:11 |
| : Grooving High    | (Gillespie)         | 5:35 |
| + Dizzy Atmosphere | (Gillespie)         | 4:18 |
| = Salt peanuts     | (Gillespie-Clarke)  | 2:04 |
| % Medley:          |                     |      |
| Tea for two        | (Youmans-Caesar)    | 2:40 |
| Body and Soul      | (Green-Sour-Heyman) | 2:43 |
| Cherokee           | (Noble)             | 2:45 |
| * Ornithology      | (Parker)            | 3:07 |

## SIDE TWO (21:55)

|                          |                       |      |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|------|
| @ Anthropology           | (Gillespie-Parker)    | 2:50 |
| @ Billie's bounce        | (Parker)              | 3:42 |
| @ Blue 'n boogie         | (Gillespie-Paparelli) | 5:01 |
| @ All the things you are | (Kern)                | 5:08 |
| @ Ornithology            | (Parker)              | 4:55 |

# Spotlite SPJ123

Spotlite Records, 103 London Road, Sawbridgeworth, Herts, England