DOC EVANS
DIXIELAND
CONCERT
WALKER ART CENTER
COURTYARD

HISTORY OF JAZZ SERIES
VOL. 3
There is almost as much of the white American Midwest across the New York-Hollywood of the poet Yeats, the Midwest of the Mississippi river and its tributaries (pushing people to the entertainment industry) has been the nesting-place of jazz.

Its songbirds have been of all colors, but the music they have made has been one integrated chorus — as revealed in the present recording of excerpts from the last two of six open-air concerts played at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the summer of 1957 by Dixieland cornetist Paul "Doc" Evans and his Twin Cities band.

These final concerts underline that moment in the history of traditional, or classic, jazz when fully-developed white artists began to emerge from the elm-shaded streets of the river towns of Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. There were leaders among them, notably the cornettist Frank Teschemacher of Chicago, both of whom died in their twenties, but not until they had established an ideal of personal attainment (as opposed to the group ideal of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings).

It was an ideal largely based on the music of New Orleans, but with certain subtle ethnic changes starting to creep in. For Bix and Tesch could no longer rid themselves completely of their common German ancestry than the Negro could completely rid himself of Africa; and thus a 19th-century European concept of melody and harmony, of "art" music, of the virtuoso instrumentalist, enters jazz with Bix and Tesch — enters, to be assimilated (if in such a short time as they accomplished that assimilation for themselves) by an act of will and talent, of sensibilities strained to the breaking point.

But not all broke; followers of Bix and Tesch carry on, as does Doc Evans, one of those white jazzmen whose careers also began in the 1920's. The first great artist on the first side of this record is Frank Chase, young Chicago bass saxist and clarinetist in the style of Tesch. Dick Pendleton, regular clarinetist of the Evans band, plays the alto and tenor saxs heard.)

**Notes on Doc Evans' History of Jazz Series - Vol. 3**

**Young Men with Horns: Bix and Tesch (1927)**

Not a great deal remains to be said of Bix: his playing, the music he wrote, even his fatal alcoholism, have been unduly idolized, unduly attacked. A best-selling novel of the 1930's, Dorothy Baker's *Young Man With a Horn* (later made into a boked-up movie), was inspired by his life. In more recent years, some critics of jazz have called him second-rate.

His was a special gift, a lyrical approach to jazz that was heavily tinged with the French composers Debussy and Ravel. His cornet tone was unique, pure — it has been said that it was as though the notes were struck with a mallet, not blown — and jazz cornetists such as Red Nichols, Doc Evans, and Bobby Hackett have paid tribute to this style in their apprenticeships.

The best of Bix is to be found in some of his collective improvisations with C-melody saxist Frank Trumbauer (as in the presently-recorded *Singin' the Blues*), and with a pickup group of many of the best white jazzmen of the time, "Bix and His Gang" (commemorated here by At the Jazz Band Ball).

The saxophone was new to jazz; Bix and his Gang used it in its bass form, replacing the usual tuba or string bass, as was the fashion in white "New York Dixieland"; while in Chicago, the practitioners of white "Chicago style" — following the example of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings — used tenor sax, and as one of the melody, not rhythm, instruments, which appreciably altered the balance of the old traditional ensemble.

For there was a style in Chicago now, a "school," and its nominal leader, philosopher, and most original musician was dead-serious, thin, bespectacled Frank Teschemacher, soon to be killed in an auto accident. Around him clustered that group known as the "Austin High Gang," who conceived of jazz as something of the joyous free-for-all, driven by a hell-for-leather 4/4 beat, that is heard here in the favorite and typical Chicago tunes, Sugar and JUMPED A N E S H Y.

So they had, and stuck with her — as witness in our time the direct, legitimate heir of Tesch, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, for whom time has stood still and who has made it stand still for others. One man, one horn, one ghost epitomize Chicago style: eccentric, wailing, uninhibited. It is like Chicago, where the men of Storyville came to plant their music amid the aspirations of another race.

**The Classicists: Doc and Knocky (1957)**

Paul "Doc" Evans and his friend, pianist John W. "Knocky" Parker, are atypical jazz musicians of the old school. They are college-educated: Doc earned his B.A. at Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota, in 1928; Knocky has an M.A., is working on his Ph.D., and is presently chairman of the English department at Kentucky Wesleyan College. Doc taught high school English for a year after graduation. Knocky played with hillbilly bands before going to college.

Both have played with the great and near-great in jazz; both are walking encyclopedias of jazz lore; both are stylists, who can recapitulate other styles. In persuasion, both are classicists.

As applied to jazz, "classic" is a relatively new term. In brief, it means the kind of music that Doc and Knocky play: traditional jazz, Dixieland. It denotes a way of playing: faithful rendering, in the manner that the music was intended to be played. It means always a music of the group, band and audience together, rather than a music of the individual for the individual alone; or as a New Orleans jazzman put it, "I always want people around me. It gives me a warm heart and that gets into my music . . ."

There is a warm heart in the music that Doc and Knocky play:

*Clifford Rag*, an assertive stepchild of the Mauve Decade, introduces Parker here as an acknowledged master of the sleeve-gartered stock-in-trade of the honky-tonk "professors."

*Cool Cat Blues* is a loving retrospect of the New Orleans environment that gave us Louis Armstrong.

*Bugle Call Rag*, with its last series of interpolated breaks, has always been a great crowd-pleaser for Evans, as it was once for the New Orleans Rhythm Kings.

*Gin Mill Blues*, a Joe Sullivan composition, is the tune that made Knocky's reputation when he was playing in his home state of Texas. It is a tune reminiscent to Evans, too, evoking the days of his first fame when he was playing at a now-vanished Twin Cities roadhouse with the great Sullivan himself. It is heard in Sullivan's style . . . here is the meaning of the blues for which white jazzmen so long hungered.

Because the blues are jazz, the warm heart of jazz. And jazz is warm life itself.

Notes by Russell Roth