



DOUG CARN

BY ANDERS GRIFFEN

Doug Carn is a multi-faceted musician best known as a unique organ player, lyricist and composer. He has performed all around the world, including at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, and he was the face of the Black Jazz record label in the '70s. His four much-sought after classic albums released by Black Jazz from 1971-74 were among the most successful for the label (he added a 5th title released in 2001 when the label was briefly under new ownership). He also worked with, among many others, Nat Adderley, Shirley Horn, Lou Donaldson, Freddie Hubbard, Stanley Turrentine and Earth, Wind & Fire, appearing on the latter's first two albums.

In December 2020 he appeared on *Volume 5 of Jazz Is Dead* with Adrian Younge and Ali Shaheed Muhammad. The "Jazz Is Dead" name may be somewhat controversial, but Carn doesn't see it as the music is dead, otherwise they wouldn't be hiring jazz musicians to participate. He is excited about the release: "The way they made the album, I would never make an album that way. I said, well, I'll try to go along with 'em and listen to 'em, you know? Because I think about, and play with, and work on what I do, you know, but they just want to go in there with their natural ability and do something spontaneous. I went along and it turned out better than I expected. I remember being young myself, and trying to tell another generation to look at the situation a little different, they didn't want to do it. I said, well, look, I'm not gonna be the same way. These kids are clean cut, they stay out of trouble, they got an idea, so I'm gonna pay attention to them and help them if I can."

Born in New York, Carn grew up in St. Augustine, Florida, surrounded by books and music. His mother,

an accomplished pianist and organ player who accompanied services in church, was the music director for the public school system. She also did a couple of gigs with Dizzy Gillespie and was a tremendous influence on her son. The young Carn started performing as early as 8 or 9 when he put together a band for a talent show, but he made his first professional appearances at the age of 12 performing at dances, proms and club dates and held a regular gig at the Edgewood Lounge throughout high school. He was learning all the time, reading and listening.

"After the cowboy show or whatever movie, like *Gunsmoke* and *Paladin*, I'd read the credits. I'd see names like Max Steiner or Norman Dello Joio. You could tell they knew what they were doing, they didn't have but nine or ten pieces. Aaron Copland did a few westerns and I knew he wasn't just an ordinary guy."

After high school Carn attended Jacksonville University and Georgia State College studying oboe and composition. Copland was an Artist-in-Residence at the former. Carn credits a one-on-one conversation with the composer for helping him develop into a fluent arranger. Meanwhile, it was during these years in the mid '60s that he heard all of the great organ players when they traveled to Atlanta to perform at the Bird Cage—Jack McDuff, Jimmy McGriff, Lonnie Smith, Groove Holmes, Shirley Scott, all of them; except Jimmy Smith performed at Paschal's La Carrousel. Carn ended up working those venues and quickly established himself as an organ player with his own voice. He released *The Doug Carn Trio* on the Savoy label. It was also in Atlanta that he met Sarah Jean Perkins, who became Jean Carn when they married. They became musical partners. As he tells it, after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the artists dispersed and they were among many from the Atlanta scene that moved to Los Angeles. Once there, they lived at the Landmark Hotel where their neighbors included Janis Joplin and members of the bands Mandrill, The Chambers Brothers and Earth, Wind & Fire. That is how Doug and Jean Carn came to appear on the first two Earth, Wind & Fire records. Nobody knew how far that band would go, but Carn was focused on his own path.

Preparing to realize his vision, he asked who was the best in town and was referred to drummer Michael Carvin. Carn established a powerful rapport with Carvin and bassist Henry Franklin as they worked for about a year before recording what became the classic album, *Infant Eyes*. Already a veteran performer and well-studied composer, Carn didn't realize how well prepared he was for success while still a young man. He used his ingenuity to conceive of a progressive jazz record with his wife's voice as a focal point, writing original lyrics to music by John Coltrane, Bobby Hutcherson and Horace Silver. The recording was intended to be a demo, but it was so fully conceived that Black Jazz was more than happy to issue it as it was. He continued to develop his concept, composing more of his own music and released new albums in consecutive years for the label, each release building on the success of the last one.

The label was more than happy to have him represent Black Jazz as his albums sold well and were in regular radio rotation. Also, Carn was a self-described Black militant interested in the Black cultural revolution and the label itself was conceived to cash in on that movement and that ethos, so Carn fit their plans perfectly. "I motivated a lot of people through my work, but it didn't have nothing to do with a particular record company; I was just doing my thing like the boys that did their thing and inspired me."

Doug and Jean Carn split up by the time of their third Black Jazz album, *Revelation*, and Jean changed her name to Carne and went on to personal success charting a number of R&B hits. After that, Carn worked primarily as a sideman, taught at Jacksonville University and worked with the restoration commission back in St. Augustine, Florida. In 1997 he appeared with fellow organ players Dr. Lonnie Smith, Reuben Wilson and Joey DeFrancesco on *Bongo Bop* by the Essence All Stars. In the 2000s he recorded and performed with Curtis Fuller, Cindy Blackman and Wallace Roney. In 2015 his album *My Spirit* revisited some of the material originally released by Black Jazz.

In 2010 Doug and Jean Carn(e) started performing together again, appearing at Lincoln Center and Ronnie

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LEST WE FORGET



LEM WINCHESTER

BY JOHN PIETARO

The jazz pantheon is built as much on legend as star power. Lem Winchester, a vibraphonist unjustifiably absent from most historical documents, cast a shadowy oeuvre through a mythic tale. In a career spanning just three years, Winchester magically touched the music of leading figures including Oliver Nelson, Ramsey Lewis, Benny Golson, Jack McDuff, Shirley Scott, Roy Haynes, Hank Jones, Art Taylor, Tommy Flanagan, Toots Thielemans, Frank Wess and more, only to die in an ironic accident.

Born Mar. 19th, 1928 in Philadelphia, Winchester and his family moved to Wilmington, Delaware shortly thereafter. A multi-instrumentalist, he was noted for playing various saxophones as well as piano and vibraphone before focusing on the latter. As Ira Gitler wrote in a later album liner note, in 1957 Leonard Feather received a tape of Winchester and a local trio, leading him to feature the unknown vibraphonist at the following summer's Newport Jazz Festival.

One can imagine the impact the national spotlight may have on a fledgling artist, but Winchester had been a colleague of both Sonny Rollins and Clifford Brown and watched his friends graduate into jazz royalty.

Winchester had pursued a career as a police officer instead of a musician yet maintained a busy musical life, careful to cut the gig in time to walk his midnight-shift beat. Wilmington pianist George Lindamood wrote of Winchester regularly wearing a sport jacket over his police uniform, barely concealing the bulge of his service revolver. A certain Officer Shipp, a co-worker of Winchester's, also spent time in area jazz clubs; his young son Matthew, who'd grow to be an icon in his own right, recently joked about Winchester's "strange sense of humor". Likewise, Wilmington drummer John Chowning wrote of the vibraphonist's impression of Charles Mingus. Winchester told Chowning "It was like shaking hands with ten miles of bad road." Priceless.

After his momentous performance at Newport and the release of the *New Faces at Newport* album (MetroJazz, 1958, a split LP with Randy Weston), Winchester led a record date with the Ramsey Lewis Trio (*Perform A Tribute to Clifford Brown*, Argo, 1958). The following year he recorded *Winchester Special* with Benny Golson, Tommy Flanagan, Wendell Marshall and Art Taylor for New Jazz.

The vibraphonist continued to manage full-time civil service with an increasingly busy music career

until finally leaving the Wilmington Police Department in 1960. He bought a hearse to carry his band and its equipment and they recorded three albums that year alone for the Prestige family of labels. Winchester was also hired as a featured side musician for six more dates in 1960 and 1961 and was seen as an important vibraphonist within a crowded category during the instrument's height.

Among Winchester's most relevant credits is Oliver Nelson's *Nocturne* (1960). "In a Sentimental Mood" showcases Winchester's grasp of the blues, not simply as form but heritage. His improvisations glide over the instrument's bars, blurring blue thirds and sevenths with a certain ease, with Nelson emoting darkly. Winchester's light touch—he trimmed the rattan mallet handles for a closer grip—was akin to a winter breeze drizzling ice. Though he used softer mallets in pursuit of Milt Jackson's sound, Winchester kept his instrument's vibrato motor set to a more traditional "fast" setting. Jackson slowed his down to achieve that hypnotic quality, but Winchester captured the depth, the warmth purely by way of mallet grip and rebound. In retrospect, his playing is more like a woodwind, powered by lightly controlled breathing, sounding eternal.

In contrast, Winchester's was a painfully brief career. 60 years ago this month, on Jan. 13th, 1961 while on tour, he stopped at an Indianapolis bar, requesting

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freeing, not constricting.

I like genres. Some people don't believe in them and want to live their life "genre-free". I have little interest in that perspective. I'm more like, "What is the genre?" If we know what genre it is, then we can fill the container with the right kind of material. In this project, Bud Powell is within the genre of bebop. I take bebop very seriously as a genre. I do things to it that are not pure bebop, but at the same time, I'm aware of the difference.

Everything "new" is a combination of previous things. What matters is how well you know each element you're combining. If you're writing a supernatural detective story, you need to ask yourself how well you know the supernatural genre and how well you know the detective genre. People often know one side more than the other. That's always been an issue in the arts, but here in the postmodern age of the 21st Century, everything's a click away. It's all one big mashup. The question is how well you can control all the aspects you're dialing in to the final product.

Sometimes, a college music student will say, "I don't want to be labeled. Don't even call it jazz; it's all beyond category." I get it, but at the same time, any single phrase you can play on an instrument has a heritage, so what lineage are you in? And if you know your lineage, you can accept it or work against it.

TNYCJR: Does this influence your selection of musicians as well?

EI: I chose the musicians for this project for specific reasons. There's a core quintet of Americans, plus the Italian big band. The result is sort of a concerto grosso. My friend Ben Street plays bass. Ben really believes in jazz and plays with so much personality. There aren't too many bass players you can hear on a record and immediately identify, but Ben is one of those.

Drummer Lewis Nash was suggested by Umbria. I'd heard and admired Lewis my whole life but hadn't played with him before. For a big band you need a drummer who lays down the law. You can't necessarily go in with a really idiosyncratic force like Paul Motian or Elvin Jones for a big band. Lewis is a consecrated bebop master who's played with the Who's Who, so he was a perfect choice.

I'd admired [trumpeter] Ingrid Jensen for years in the context of Darcy James Argue's Secret Society, so she was always in the back of my mind as someone I'd choose if I ever did a big band project. She's got connections musically to Kenny Wheeler, who wrote some of the more durable modern big band music. As for tenor saxophonist Dayna Stephens, I heard about him from Ben when in need of a sub for Mark Turner in the Billy Hart Quartet. Dayna is fast and very creative. Both Dayna and Ingrid get a few expansive solos in this project, but they also have solos in which they need to tell a story in just a chorus or two, like the original Powell session with Sonny Rollins, Fats Navarro, Tommy Potter and Roy Haynes.

It was hard for all of us. We all left with a new appreciation for that genre of pure bebop, where everybody says their piece in three minutes. It was a joy to work within those confines.

TNYCJR: What surprised you the most when you first got together and played?

EI: I knew Lewis was great, but he struck me as very generous in his playing. He's a natural accompanist. I'm not so used to that. I'm used to these people who push me around—and I want to be pushed around. But Lewis was like a beautiful jazz couch that you could just sit on and relax. As for Ingrid and Dayna, I knew they were virtuosos, but hearing them play these high-level, burning jazz solos confirmed that I'd gotten

the right people. It wasn't a surprise, exactly, but sometimes you put things together in your mind and it doesn't always come out that way in reality. But they showed up, they kicked ass and it was great.

TNYCJR: What's next for you?

EI: I expect to play quite a bit more solo piano eventually; that's been coming along. A current commission is six formal sonatas for six virtuosos, which is going great. More formal composition is certainly in my future. The Billy Hart Quartet continues and we're live-streaming at Dizzy's Club to celebrate his 80th birthday. There's also a wonderful singer named Marcy Harriell who I had a New Year's Eve gig with last year doing music of Burt Bacharach and it was a huge success. Fortunately, there's plenty to do. I'm blessed with a pretty sizable list of geniuses who are somehow willing to work with me.

TNYCJR: What would you most like to see happen in jazz that hasn't happened already—or, for that matter, hasn't happened for a long time and should be revived?

EI: Composition is important. Instrumental virtuosity is important. The blues is really important. AfroCuban rhythm is important. Romantic harmony is important. Telling a story is important. When we hear the great jazz records of the '40s, '50s and '60s, it's all in a pretty perfect balance. After John Coltrane passed away, we've had 50 years of great music, but it's seldom been the whole package. I believe in inclusivity. There are so many elements of music and if you can get a passing grade in many of them, you can keep moving it forward. When I talk about Burt Bacharach in the same breath as Bud Powell, I don't see them that differently in the sense that both are the very highest level composers within their respective genres. ❖

For more information, visit ethaniverson.com. Iverson live-streams Jan. 29th at smallslive.com.

Recommended Listening:

- Ethan Iverson Trio—*Deconstruction Zone (Standards) / Construction Zone (Originals)* (Fresh Sound-New Talent, 1998)
- Billy Hart—*Quartet* (HighNote, 2005)
- Ethan Iverson/Albert "Tootie" Heath/Ben Street—*Live at Smalls* (smallslive, 2009)
- The Bad Plus—*The Rite of Spring* (Masterworks, 2013)
- Ethan Iverson—*The Purity Of The Turf* (Criss Cross, 2016)
- Mark Turner/Ethan Iverson—*Temporary Kings* (ECM, 2017)

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Scott's and as recently as 2019, they sold out concerts throughout Europe.

"Most bands don't really play like their records sound, especially from the postbop era, but I sound like my records sound, not only that, I've got the same people...with Jean and Michael and Henry Franklin together, we're the foundation of that sound. That's some powerful stuff!"

Carn is compiling his songbook and while continuing to compose, he's looking forward to life beyond the pandemic. "I'm not the kind of person that's going to retire. I've got new music coming out and I'm playing better than ever." ❖

For more information, visit jazzisdead.co/doug-carn

Recommended Listening:

- Doug Carn—*The Doug Carn Trio* (Savoy, 1969)
- Doug Carn—*Infant Eyes* (Black Jazz, 1971)

- Doug Carn—*Adam's Apple* (Black Jazz, 1974)
- Cindy Blackman—*Another Lifetime* (Four Quarters Entertainment, 2005)
- Wallace Roney—*Home* (HighNote, 2010)
- Ali Shaheed Muhammad & Adrian Younge / Doug Carn—*Jazz Is Dead 5* (Jazz is Dead, 2019)

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aspirin of the bartender, who readily complied. Noticing a pistol within the drawer, Winchester told the bartender of his prior law enforcement work and offered to show him a trick from the job. Winchester emptied the revolver of its cartridges, replacing several. He didn't expect the chamber to load, but the model operated differently than his service weapon and, holding the gun to his temple, fired.

The end came as quickly as had his moment of celebrity and Lem Winchester stands eternal on jazz' walk of shadows. ❖

Recommended Listening:

- Patrolman Lem Winchester—*New Faces at Newport* (Metro Jazz-Verve, 1958)
- Lem Winchester and Ramsey Lewis Trio—*Perform A Tribute to Clifford Brown* (Argo, 1958)
- Lem Winchester and Benny Golson—*Winchester Special* (New Jazz, 1959)
- Lem Winchester—*Another Opus* (Prestige, 1960)
- Jack McDuff (with Jimmy Forrest)—*Tough 'Duff* (Prestige, 1960)
- Lem Winchester Sextet (featuring Oliver Nelson)—*Lem's Beat* (Prestige New Jazz, 1960)