



DISTINGUISHING HIMSELF ON EVERY REED INSTRUMENT HE PLAYED AND THROUGH EVERY COMPOSITION HE PENNED, JIMMY GIUFFRE BECAME A LEADER IN 1950s WEST COAST JAZZ, WITH ITS LOWER-KEY EXUBERANCE.

on the keyboard produced—similar to the work of Texas saxophonists like Arnett Cobb (1918-1989) and Illinois Jacquet (b. 1922), both of Houston, and David “Fathead” Newman (b. 1933) of Dallas—a sound as big and bright as the wide-open spaces of the Lone Star State.

More of an originator than Red Garland and yet another in a long line of Texas mavericks, Dallas’ Jimmy Giuffre (b. 1921) stood out early on, distinguishing himself on every reed instrument he played and through every composition he penned. Educated at what is now the University of North Texas in Denton, Giuffre studied music there before the creation of the school’s nationally famous jazz program (established by Gene Hall of Whitewright). Like two of his classmates, fellow Dallasites Gene Roland (1921-1982) and Harry Babasin (1921-1988), Giuffre traveled to Los Angeles, where he became a leader in 1950s West Coast jazz, with its lower-key exuberance. As a member of the Shorty Rogers Quintet, Giuffre experimented with various new techniques, such as huffing on his clarinet without vibrating the instrument’s reed. He also employed unusual instrumental combinations in the groups he formed, like his piano-less quartet and trio, the latter featuring himself on clarinet, tenor sax, or baritone sax along with guitarist Jim Hall and bassist Ralph Peña.

Recognized originally for his arrangement entitled “Four Brothers,” written in 1947 for the big band of Woody Herman, Giuffre primarily composed for small groups throughout the 1950s. His greatest success came through his folksy trio compositions, especially “The Train and the River,” a piece representative of a down-home approach that generated a subdued yet pulsing swing in the best jazz tradition.

If Teagarden, Dorham, and Giuffre were indeed mavericks, Ornette Coleman (b. 1930) of Fort Worth, even though a latecomer, trumps them all. Playing a white plastic alto saxophone



Jimmy Giuffre played woodwinds with guitarist Jim Hall (left) and bassist Ralph Peña (right).



Over the years, alto saxophonist Ornette Coleman has added the violin and trumpet to his free-form, harmolodic bag of creativity.

J. GRIFFIS SMITH



The work of University of Texas art professor John Yancey, a mosaic mural entitled *Rhapsody*, at East 11th and Waller streets in Austin, celebrates the history of the neighborhood, which has seen performances by a number of Texas jazz mavericks.

in 1959, he recorded in Los Angeles his second album, presciently entitled *The Shape of Jazz to Come*. With this album, Coleman turned the jazz world on its ear with his unorthodox sound and technique, his odd intervals, piercing saxophone cries, and angular themes delivered in something of a Texas twang. The “hick” riff-theme in “Congeniality” was once described by a friend as seeming to say “I’m goin’ toooooo Foat Wuth.” On the other hand, tunes like his “Lonely Woman” and “Peace” represent the deeply probing nature of Coleman’s music, which belies any characterization of the composer-improviser as either a naïf or a yokel.

At 73, Coleman continues—when he makes one of his rare public appearances—to amaze listeners with the originality of his musical conception. Never one to rest on his laurels, Coleman has tried every imaginable approach, even teaching himself to play the violin and trumpet in an effort to realize the unique sounds that he has heard in his head from the beginning of his career.

As a student at Fort Worth’s I.M. Terrell High School, he was booted out of the band for improvising in the middle of a Sousa march. An iconoclast of the first order, Coleman—whose many Cowtown classmates, including Dewey Redman (b. 1931), have followed his lead into the Free Jazz movement, or what he calls harmolodics—still remains the most avant-garde figure in jazz, a position he has held since he began recording 45 years ago.

Yes, from Scott Joplin to Ornette Coleman, America’s indigenous art form can truly be said to bear, in every period of its evolution, a definite Texas stamp. ★

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