

Extract From Chapter Nine: Now It Can Be Told

Here is a musical journalist writing in *The Sunday Citizen* in July 1963. This was the year that saw the British Hit Parade, the dance halls and the air-waves dominated by the songs of Lennon & McCartney, with solid back-beat support from Lionel Bart, Freddy Garrity, Tommy Steele and Hank Marvin.

‘Do you remember these words – “It’s 10.30, and we take you over now to The Monseigneur Restaurant to join Lew Stone and his Orchestra”? If they mean anything to you, then you must belong to a generation of pop fans for whom there is little left but nostalgia. They hark back to the days when the nightly broadcasts by British dance bands were a dominating factor in entertainment. 10.30 TUESDAY NIGHT is the title of a new LP on the Ace of Clubs label, which will open the floodgates of memory.’

The writer was Humphrey Lyttleton, signalling a modest revival of interest in the genre of dance music, as record companies recognised the value of recycling the historic tapes in their archives, into ‘Best Of’ LP albums and compilations. Humph went on to acknowledge the debt owed by his generation of jazzers, to Lew Stone and his musicians.

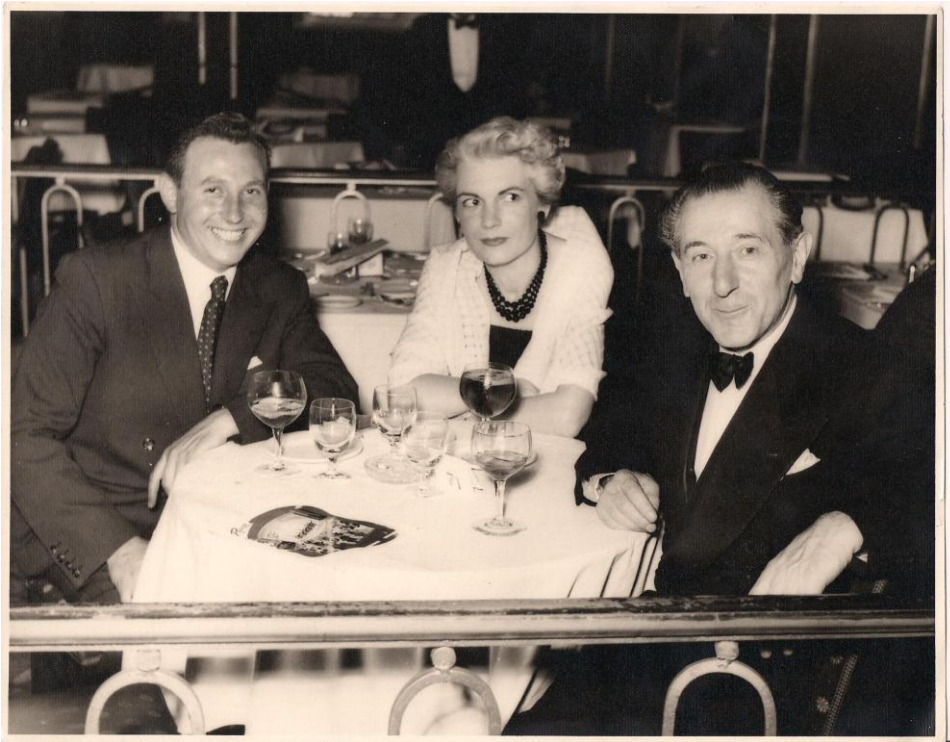
‘There has long been a myth that, when it came to jazz, British dance musicians were a square and clueless breed. You have only to hear the affection with which Nat Gonella flattered Louis Armstrong’s style, or the way in which Lew Davis mastered the ‘plunger’ trombone techniques originated by Duke Ellington’s players, to realise that enthusiasm for jazz was rife in the Lew Stone band. To put the record straight about the growth of jazz in Britain, this LP should be a compulsory item in every jazz fan’s curriculum.’

Perish the thought, that for ‘the dansant’ sessions in the nation’s ballrooms, these classic dance music LPs might one day be used by cheapskate promoters, in place of live musicians. Dance hall managers had already recognised the significant cashflow advantage of paying for only four musicians and a high-powered amplification system, instead of fourteen players and two singers.

Lew Stone was wise to this brave new world, and had already embarked on a new career. Lew Stone Entertainment Services had prestige offices in Regent Street, and offered what would forty years later come to be recognised as ‘corporate entertainment’, with very lucrative possibilities. Ahead of the game,

as always, this canny entrepreneur had seen that busy industrial executives would welcome the chance to sub-contract their wining and dining of clients and customers to one expert, who could fix a package of venues, catering, and entertainment, for a 10% fee.

Joyce Stone worked alongside her husband. Her brother provided the office space.



‘Soon we had contracts with Rover and Shell. We would organise 50 seats for ‘The Black and White Minstrel Show’, then dinner for 50 at The Dorchester, with Arthur Askey doing the cabaret. Lew went to his office every day. I ran around and got the theatre tickets and so on. My pay was coffee every morning at Fortnum & Masons! Retired music publishers and friends from the music business would meet us there. It was like a club. On his birthday we’d go to the St James Restaurant, and they’d always have champagne and a big fat cigar for Lew. We were very spoiled!

Lew recognised that he needed to go on earning. Being Jewish, he didn’t save what he earned. Although we had no children, Lew had his own extended family to look after. He paid for his mother’s flat in Marylebone High Street; he also bought his widowed sister a flat, and paid for her son’s education. When we got married, my father warned me that “Jewish people look after their own”: he told me that if I ever found myself short, he would be there to

secretly help me out. I never had to take him up on that offer.'

Lew enjoyed the new challenge of corporate entertaining. He said 'It's very interesting and I find my showbiz contacts come in very useful. The work is just enough to keep me mentally alert and financially ticking over.' He still had plans for new musical ventures. In 1963, he went into the studios of Universal Records, to record four jazz tracks with a new ensemble. Lew Stone's Barnstormers was a dixieland band, in the New Orleans tradition: clarinet, trumpet and trombone soloists over a rhythm quartet, with banjo instead of guitar. Gordon Langford was the pianist. He reckons that this initiative was Lew being alert to the trad jazz revival of the day, which saw hit records by Acker Bilk ('Stranger on the Shore') and Kenny Ball ('Midnight in Moscow') squeezing their way into the Hit Parade. Sadly, Lew's recordings of 'Turkey in the Straw' and 'South Rampart Street Parade' were never issued.

But he always acknowledged the value that improvisation played in keeping his musicians on their toes:

'During our theatre engagements, there would always be long gaps to fill between the first and second house. Often we'd fill the spare time in the dressing room by having 'jam sessions'. We all relished the freedom of this form of group extemporisation. In fact a whole new arrangement of 'I Ain't Got Nobody' evolved out of one of these sessions. Nothing was ever written down: the chaps played it just as they had improvised it. We even recorded it exactly like that - without either piano or drums, because there hadn't been room for them in the dressing room!'

In April 1963, Lew was rushed to Middlesex Hospital, having suffered a mild stroke.

His wife suggested that his recovery and rehabilitation should be managed by Dr Latto, a celebrated Scottish naturopath, who'd helped Joyce previously when she had suffered back problems. Michael Redgrave and Sir Francis Chichester had also thrived under Latto's unorthodox treatment. Chichester had received dire diagnoses of cancer and spurned the surgeons' advice ('if in doubt, cut it out'), before consulting Latto. He went on to sail single-handed round the world in his Gypsy Moth, provisioned at various ports of call with vegetarian victuals.

Joyce arranged that Lew should go and live with Latto and his family in Reading. It would not be a rest cure:

'Plenty of fresh air, deep breathing and a vegetarian diet were all crucial. Lew had to walk three miles every day. He had to drink some special (and rather disgusting) fluids, and eat raw

salads. He wasn't allowed any drugs, not even aspirin or Eno's. Latto's fees were always less demanding than his treatments!'

Joyce believed that Lew had suffered from malnourishment in his childhood: 'that's why he didn't grow.' But he thrived under the Latto regime, and was soon fit again, although Joyce had strict instructions from the Scottish doctor to protect her husband from unnecessary stress and aggravation. This was not an imposition: indeed Joyce had long ago decided that this was her role in life.

'I gave up my career for him, so that I could look after him and support him in every way. That's why we decided not to have children. When I was 32, we did talk about that, and Lew said "We're so happy now, let's not rock the boat." I lived in his shadow, I suppose, but I was content. If I had married my first fiancée Robin, I suppose I might have had children, as an interest. But with Lew there was so much going on in our life together, that children would only have been an intrusion.

We were so close, it was like we were in tune. Although there was no lovey-doveyness between us. When he was in America, he wrote to me every day, but it was not very romantic - that wasn't in his nature.'

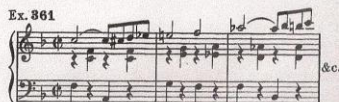
Lew Stone had also been trying to persuade the music publishers Chappells to re-issue his handbook for arrangers, which had been published originally in the 1930s by the Selmer saxophone company. 'Harmony and Orchestration for the Modern Dance Band' had gone on to become an indispensable tool for dance band arrangers. Composer Steve Race, who penned a number of hit songs and melodies in the 1960s, said it was his Bible: 'I knew off by heart every instruction and musical example'. Virtuoso sax-player and composer John Harle has on his shelves Lew's own well-worn copy of the original edition, which includes in pencil some of the author's proposed alterations, for a 1960s readership.

The new title was to be 'A Musician's Guide to Arranging Including Harmony and Orchestration'. 'Modern dance band' was to be changed to 'present day band'. 'Foot cymbal' would become 'high hat'. Lew also offers a useful mnemonic for the sequence of key-names: God Destroys All Earth By Fire, Crikey!

chords by the treatment of the thirds—whether they are minor, major, augmented or diminished.

For instance, the notes E, G, C, and B flat are clearly C seventh, but if the E is flattened, the chord will be Cm7 or E flat 6, and if the G is also flattened and the B doubly flattened (or appears as A natural, a frequent error in musical grammar,) the chord will obviously be diminished.

That part of it is not very difficult, but it very often happens that notes are left out for convenience in playing, and there might be only two notes of a chord to identify it by. In these cases the preceding and following harmony must be taken into consideration. For instance, suppose the following occurred :—



the extracting of the harmony is not so easy—even allowing for its wanderings. The first bar is clearly F major, even though the third of the chord (A) occurs only in the bass. Presuming that this passage is the beginning of the piece, and observing that the key signature is F major, we only need the F and the C to confirm the suggestion of F major chord.

The next bar again shows us only two notes—G and E, which might be part of several chords. But, thinking of the well-worn custom of tonic-and-dominant progression we look to see if the dominant chord of the piece, C seventh, will fit the notes which are given, and find that they do, for the first part of the bar.

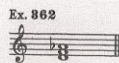
The second part of the bar has E flat, A, and F (bass). The E flat, because it is the minor seventh on the key note, immediately suggests the seventh chord, and we find that the F and A confirm this view. It is also

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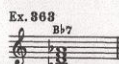
a reasonable continuation of the tonic-dominant-*tonic* seventh progression.

But the next bar becomes a little erratic, and clearly gets away slightly from the well-worn series of chords. The A flat suggests, at first, F minor, but this is immediately rejected as being too remote a progression, and also by the D. Apply, therefore, the placing-together-of-thirds system of chord detection.

We find this :—



but as this makes no likely chord, we add another third underneath, which immediately clears up the mystery, revealing the chord to be B flat seventh, or subdominant of the key of F :—



It would have been easy to deduce this, in this case, if the student had remembered that the F seventh chord resolves on to B flat seventh.

The harmony of the complete three bars, therefore, is :—



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On his 70th birthday (May 28th 1968), Lew was interviewed on Radio 2's 'Roundabout' programme by Colin Bower. He also talked to Peter Clayton on 'Jazz on One' and chided him for insisting on labelling the different genres of music and musicians:

'Don't forget, I was first and foremost a pianist, - I was a band musician. I was bang in the middle of what we were doing. After we finished our late night broadcasts, we used to go, a group of four or five musicians, to a little night club and amuse ourselves with jazz sessions. We lived on jazz sessions. The fellows that I mucked about with - I can't even remember who they were, because as far as I'm concerned those chaps were just my tools – the best tools to present my music.

When you see a beautiful building you don't say: "Look at that carving on the front there – so-and-so did that." You don't say that because what really matters is the whole thing, isn't it? I'll give you another example. Once, when I came back to the flat I was sharing in London with with Joe Crossman, and he had some musicians there with him: I came back with some new records, and I put them on one after the other. And one particular one, I said: "Listen to this, tell me what you think of this"- and all the boys were very impressed. They didn't know who was playing on it, but they said "Isn't that marvellous: those American musicians, they have a real punch and kick to them. You couldn't imagine any English bands playing like this." All that was going on.'

‘So we listened all the way through the track until the last note. I took it off, and showed them the record – it was a white label, a demo record, from a band that had just recorded at Decca. And from that moment, their interest went! Because it was an unknown English band! They couldn’t believe it.’

In the autumn of 1968, the Stones visited Israel. Interviewed on a Tel Aviv radio station, Lew talked about his life in music and played some tracks from a new LP compilation: ‘That’s a Plenty’, ‘Music Maestro Please’, ‘A Brivella der Mama’, and also - acknowledging his debt to the great Casa Loma orchestra - his precise transcription of ‘White Jazz’. Joyce remembers Lew saying that he wanted to come back to Israel the following year, and spend more time in Jerusalem: ‘He felt such an affinity to the place and people.’

That return trip was scheduled for March 1969, but Lew died three weeks before.

On February 11th, Joyce recalls:

‘He seemed fit and well, and in good heart, and we were watching a television programme together about the pianist Artur Schnabel, who had just gone blind and so was no longer able to play the piano. But he told his interviewer: “I’ve got nothing to complain about, I’ve had a wonderful life.”’

Lew got up to go to bed. Then he turned to me and said: “I can say the same thing, Joyce: I too have had a wonderful life.” It’s such a comfort to me, that he should have said that to me, at the end of his life.’

Early on the following morning, Lew suffered a heart attack, and was taken by ambulance to Queen Mary’s Hospital in Roehampton, where he died on February 13th. Forty years on, his beloved Joyce says: ‘I miss him just as much today. In fact, I talk to his photo every night before I go to sleep. He’s always with me.’