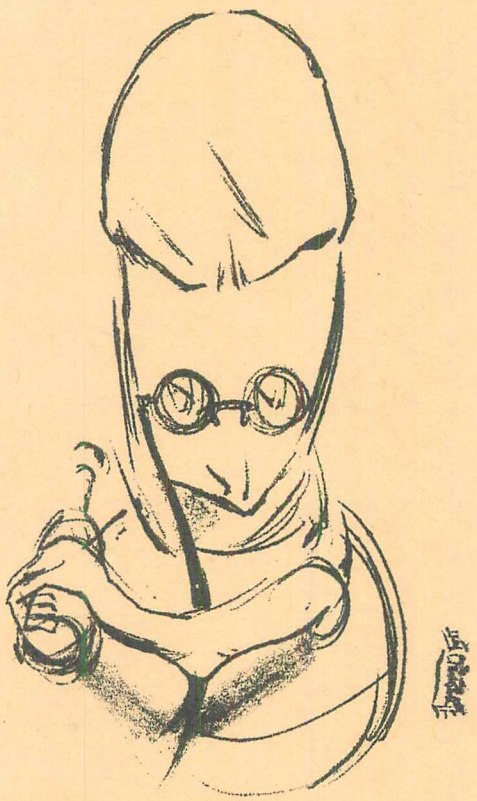
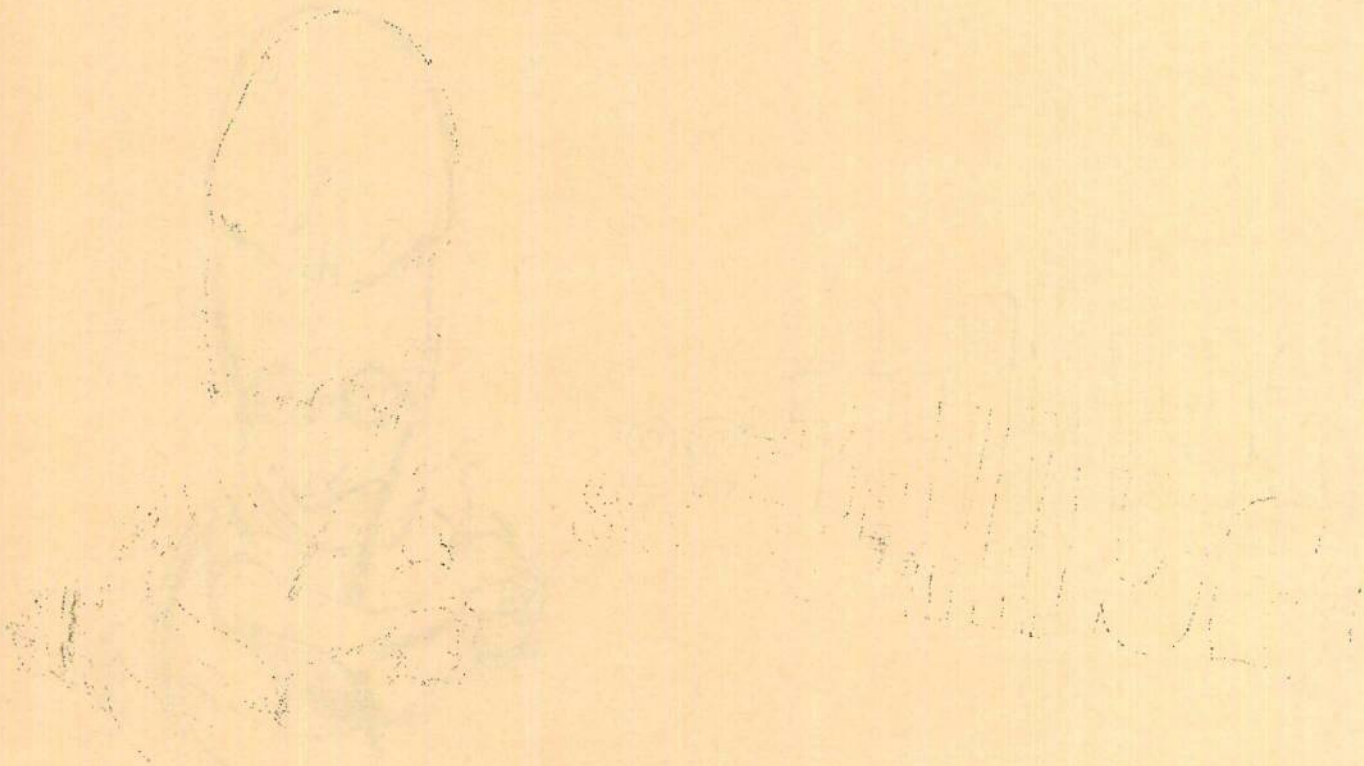
null-f 38





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4: THE INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY -- UTOPIA, OR REALITY?
11: NOTED: FAPA 109
16: CHARLES MINGUS -- AN APPRECIATION AND REAPPRAISAL

all written by your humble editor & publisher

UFFISH THOTS

THISH OF NULL-F is easily the most ambitious one in the last couple of years. This was largely accidental, but I hardly regret the fact. Inasmuch as this is the first time in many years that I've been required to have activity in a mailing (at least five pages), I may as well celebrate the fact with a surplus of material.

The article which begins on the next page was originally written for Sandi's TURNING ON (the second issue of which I put through FAPA a year ago this mailing), and has been on stencil for three-quarters of a year or more. I spoke to her on the phone recently and asked her if she still planned a third issue of the zine. "I do," she said, "but it'll be very different in orientation." My article on "intentional communities" won't fit into her new scheme of things, so it is seeing print here, and for the first time. (I considered doing a postscript on John Peltz Presmont, whose name has been in the papers of late, but decided it would neither add to nor detract from the article as it stands. Presmont was simply a peg upon which I hung the piece, anyway.)

The second article, on Charles Mingus, was stencilled by Larry McCombs and is appearing more or less simultaneously in his personalzine, SANVRTTI-SAT. I don't need the activity credit for this, so I won't raise the question of whether or not it qualifies as a "reprint."

WRITTEN ANY GOOD BOOKS LATELY? It finally dawned on me that despite my struggles against the urge, I'm destined to be a writer. Writing the first draft of Invasion From 2500 was what started me off. More recently I finished by first solo effort, a science fiction novel for Ace which has the working title of The Murder Machine. I'm pretty happy with the book, despite my multitude of anxieties over my characterization and dialog -- both of which are pretty rudimentary, I fear. But it's a story that made me happy, and has enough twists in it to satisfy my urge to write a fast-paced book that keeps the reader jumping. I think at the bottom of it all, I'm an adventure-story hack.

In any case, I've since begun two more, Phoenix Prime, and The March of Chaos, and am collaborating with Dave Van Arnam on When In Rome. My goal is at least four books a year, and I expect I'll be getting an agent soon.

This has interferred somewhat with my fanac, I'm afraid, but I don't regret it. I think I've pretty well done with my fanzine publishing days -- I've accomplished most of what I set out to do in the genzine field since that summer day, eleven years ago, when I decided to publish my first fanzine -- and I find the same enjoyment now in writing science fiction that I did then in publishing fanzines. But since I invariably run in cycles of enthusiasm, I'm sure this is far from my final turning.

LATE NIGHT FINAL: I'm pleased to announce that Lancer Books bought Phoenix Prime. The March of Chaos has become The Agents of Chaos, and Lee Hoffman and I are working on a joint effort presently known to us under the code name of Probe Into Yesterday. We invented a wholly new, paradox-free method of time travel for this one... ## See p.15, second paragraph, pliz, for the latest Idiocy In The Administration of FAPA. *sigh*

TED WHITE

Last fall I joined a small but spirited MANAS Discussion Group at the home of the Kerista Institute in New York City. The topic was "The Problems of the Intentional Community," taken from the lead article in the then-current issue of MANAS, and the announced speaker was John Peltz Presmont, a man who has devoted his life to founding intentional communities.

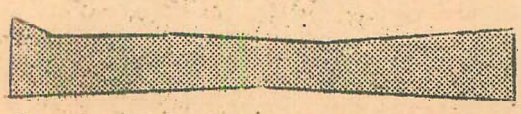
The "intentional community" is another name for an idea which is far from new, but which is receiving a renewed wave of interest: the Utopian Community or the "communism" of the nineteenth century. (Nowadays, the word has changed to "communalism"...) It is an experiment in interpersonal relationships applied at a community level.

The discussion group turned out to be quite small: it included Presmont, organizer Steve Gennes, two other members of the Kerista group of that time, Sandi and myself. And in the discussion which ensued, it developed that the concept of "community" among us was so elastic that it could be used to describe a group no larger.

Presmont, an impressively maned man of some mana, described his own experiences briefly and informally. He had first been part of a communal marriage consisting of four men and four women, which had lasted only a short, albeit rewarding, time before external opposition (largely from the women's parents and relatives) broke the group up. (While this menage was described to us in idealistic terms, it is not hard to imagine that it might've been viewed otherwise by the less than high-minded.)

There followed, he said, a series of menages and larger communal efforts, culminating in the West Indies. On the island of Dominica Presmont hoped to establish Sparrow Village, an orphanage named in honor of an island singer whom Presmont likes. Unfortunately, despite the support of at least one local newspaper, rumors began spreading against Presmont, among them one (as I found out later) to the effect that he hoped to "experiment" upon the children of the orphanage with drugs of various sorts, and the British Colonial government ordered him deported as an "undesireable alien." Upon returning to New York, Presmont set up the Kerista Institute, and began working for the reestablishment of his island community, waiting for the day when Dominica will be granted independence.

One thing which continually struck me during my initial meeting with Presmont and the following discussion that night was the elasticity of the word "community." Like many others, I had always applied the word to a fairly large number of family units --no less than ten, say, and perhaps a great many more; a small village of people at least. Still in my mind were visions of Onieda and similar efforts on a larger scale, with their goal in mind of self-dependence: communities indeed which might comprise a whole town.



the Intentional Commun

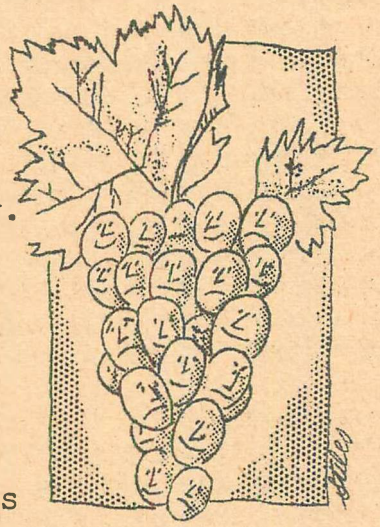
Obviously Presmont envisioned this as the ultimate goal of Kerista; indeed he spoke of literally running the island of Dominica: taking over political control through the establishment of a political party, and effectively turning the entire island into an experiment in planned communities.

But at the same time, he applied the "community" concept and label to a single group of eight individuals and strongly implied that the Kerista group, occupying one large one-room apartment just off Central Park West in Manhattan and comprising only a handful of individuals, was also an "intentional community."

In applying the concept more broadly in this fashion, I think he has possibly made it more viable, but he's also brought it out into such a wide area that it begins to lose any special meaning and can be applied indescriminately into any sort of bohemian apartment-sharing.

Perhaps, however, this is not a bad idea, for while few of us may ever feel the urge to leave open society for the cloisters of a community in the West Indies or the fastness of the Adirondacs, many of us, if only during college days, haved shared close quarters with others, and perhaps wished we could introduce a little more workable structure into an often irritating set of circumstances.

A frequently used synonym for "intentional community" is "planned community." -- and "planned" is a word I object to. By way of example, several years ago a friend of mine joined the efforts of a man who was attempting to set up an extremely ambitious community. The basic idea, as I remember it, was to admit only the very cream of the cream: the high-IQ, artistically and intellectually creative types who might be expected, once freed from the muck of mediocrity, to establish a new utopia. Unfortunately, the founder of this plan died, but in the long run I'm sure it would've made no difference.



Since I did not measure up to the MENSA-like standards of the Plan, I wasn't asked to join it, but even if I had been I'm afraid I'd have refused. It was obvious that the Planned Community envisioned would never get

ity — UTOPIA or REALITY?

off the ground.

Why? Because inevitably the structure of the community is planned first and built around an idea. It may be, as with the Shakers, abstinence from sex, or, in more modern times, the reverse. Or it may be a utopian intellectual community based on the ideals of technocracy. In any case, such communities are always based upon the preposition that the society makes the individual -- that if one can just set up the "ideal" societal framework, everyone will become healthy and productive. Planned communities inevitably boil down to this search for an ideal society

I am by no means opposed to the notion of an ideal society, although I do firmly balk at the idea that existence in such a society would guarantee mental and emotional health. But my own conviction is that any ideal community is going to have to take into account the diversity of the people who populate it, and avoid rigidity. And this none of the planned communities has done.

Significantly, none has succeeded, either.

The standard, prototypical planned community is built around a single idea. It may be a religious approach, an intellectual approach, a sexual approach, or a combination of these, but it seeks to impose a single set of standards upon those within its bounds. The people are asked to qualify to rigid standards for what amounts to a rigid plan for living.

People don't fit rigid molds. Even the most slothlike of us change our own patterns, although this change cannot always be called "growth." When you add this factor to the amazing diversity in individual personalities, you end up with complexity growing out of complexity.

Most such communities founder early in their lives. The very problem of selection is difficult. I've not yet heard of any screening or test series which can give one an accurate idea of how an individual will meet or conform to certain standards in a continuing life situation. And while a group of people may look just swell on paper and individually, they will not automatically hit it off successfully together. The larger the group, the less likely there'll be unanimous accord. Of course if a group is large enough, this doesn't matter as much, since one can avoid those one does not care for or does not get along with well. But this is possible only in the largest closed communities, and is much easier in open society. A community of the size normally planned for is small enough that contact between all its members is a foregone conclusion, and often the idealistic, utopian planned community ends up a natual breeding place of friction and conflict.

Communities of the utopian sort are almost always planned to be closed from regular intercourse with outside, open society. In fact, it's hard to imagine the more libertarian among them surviving from the censure of general society on any other terms. They're usually planned to be as self-sufficient as possible, and are considered by their proponants as refuges, islands of freedom, of sanity, or whathaveyou. Their members take as an essential point of faith the "fact" that general, or open society is evil, insane, or dictatorially constrictive. They must escape; they cannot live their lives in the poisonous atmosphere of society at large.

For my part, I cannot help thinking of these people as ostriches, unsuc-

cessfully burying their heads in the sand. They seem unaware that general society is not a sentient collective creature, a They which wars against Us, a vengeful and punishing sort of Old Testament image of God. These people not only believe that Society is opposed to their way of life (which is usually compounded of Happiness, Sanity, Love, and many other fine ideals which they rarely practice themselves), but are paranoically convinced that Society is actively bent on destroying them, warping them, fitting them to mediocre molds, and much, much etcetera.

"Society," of course, is just us. Nobody else here, Charlie. The responsibility is ours, and we can't shuck it all off on a Themtherethose monster who represents everything bad and holds us back from our own realisation of Everything Good. We can't run away from it, because it's us.

As far as I'm concerned, anyone seriously interested in a Better Life Here On Earth should be looking for ways it can be brought to society at large, without negating the base of humanity, without finding cloistered ways of ignoring society. This means moving in the society of one's fellow men and not locking oneself up in a small closet labeled "intentional community" somewhere off in the woods where reality can be ignored. It means teaching one's children to cope effectively with the real world instead of creating for them an artificially sheltered environment. It means not dodging issues.

If I have one major objection to the planned or intentional community, it is this attempt to deny the sins of the world and the problems they pose by retreating from them.

The MANAS article which started this whole thing off came to a similar conclusion in stating that it did not seem likely that the intentional community was the path to sanity; that sane individuals seem to have little interest in communities set apart from general society. A.S. Neill's Summerhill graduates have confirmed this finding.

My own definition of sanity includes the ability to "master the form," the "form" in this case being the world we all live in. It doesn't seem likely that sanity will result from an artificial environment where pressures and the more unpleasant apects of reality have been shielded or removed. A man afraid of the dark may be able to live happily in a house which is always lit, but it makes him no more able to cope with the darkness outside, and he cannot always be assured of staying in that house -- or that some night the fuse won't blow.

The isolated type of community then, is far too artificial, unnatural, to appeal to me or, I think, offer any real hope of success. But what of a different sort of "intentional community"?

The Kerista Institute when I first visited it was simply a communal dwelling place in the middle of a large city in which most of its members worked and played. It was clearly not isolated in any normal sense of the word. It was not even able to do without a source of outside income: the rent had to be paid.

Frankly, it strikes me as little different from an apartment which I shared in Baltimore some years ago with two male friends, my first wife, and another girl. The essential difference is that the Kerista Institute had an "intentional" character to it, while in my case it was simply

a matter of three somewhat offbeat friends saving on the rent together.

What broke up our happy little menage? Basically the instability of the relationships involved, the unequal stresses placed upon us all by close proximity, no previous experience in dealing with the normal intensification of friction in such circumstances, and the fact that none of us were above normal jealousies and petty deceits. A little grit in such a close grouping of relationships can cause a lot of friction. One of us was a stickler for neatness, while another tended to let dirty dishes pile up until all needed washing. Each got on the other's nerves. Little things like this and the fact that we observed widely different habits of sleeping and rising, as well as differences of opinion over the division of the budget and each person's necessary contributions (a common problem even in "communities" which recognize it in advance) led to a flaring of emotions and antagonisms which have taken years to die.

When two people live together in close physical proximity a great many minor irritations are given a chance to flower. As a friend once remarked, after the departure of a roommate, "We were good friends, and I knew all his good points before he moved in. Afterwards I found out all his bad points." And another friend says he won't share his apartment, despite its high rent, because "The only thing that makes living with someone else bearable is sex, and so far no girls have taken me up on that."

That's an extremely conventional point of view, but it highlights a much overlooked fact: love is the oil which reduces a great deal of interpersonal friction in this world. Sex is or can be an outward manifestation of love, and certainly can be by itself a mitigating factor in an otherwise stormy relationship, but for two or more people to live together in real harmony for a period of more than a month or two, love is certaibly an essential.

So is privacy. We raised this point at the Discussion Group meeting, and met with strong disagreement. Presmont seemed to feel that the need for privacy is a conditioned one, and neurotic at best. I can't answer as to that last, but even without Maslow's findings on the desirability of privacy for B-cog individuals, I don't believe it is true. And certainly none of us is free enough of neurosis to rule the question out of any discussion of communal living. (In fact, my private assessment of the advocates of communal living whom I've met is that they tend to be if anything more neurotic...)

Significantly, both Presmont and Gennes later told me on separate occasions that they'd reversed their stands on privacy -- this, I imagine, after their own desires for privacy had been abused once too often.

Privacy is essential for every individual. Bee-hivism has always repelled me, and while I've known some who were attracted to it, this was usually due to an escape from restrictive or lonely circumstances, and the attractions seemed to wear off after a short honeymoon. Certainly I could not write this article in the midst of a busy room filled with laughing, jabbering people -- my powers of concentration simply aren't on that order (although there are several such people in the room next to this one as I write this...). Many acts of creation require privacy for the creator, and solitude. And even for those who make no great pretentions to artistic talent there is often the need to "get off by myself for a while," or at least the need to know that the opportunity

for privacy exists even if never called upon. People need to know the escape hatch is there.

Privacy also enhances company. When one is not forced to be in the company of others he usually prizes it more. Like almost anything else, too much of a good thing can destroy many a friendship. The need for privacy is the result of the unfortunate fact that continual proximity breeds irritation as well as possible contempt, and as I've pointed out, it isn't the big irritations (which usually lead to an immediate attempt at solution or compromise), but the little ones, which like water on granite, can drip by drip erode a relationship until it is no more.

Significantly, the Kerista Institute, while it still hosts parties, is no longer a communal living quarters; Presmont and his wife live there alone now, in privacy...

Some time ago we received a copy of the AMITY CIRCULAR, a short-lived publication by a simularly short-lived community in the west. Its main feature was a long article detailing the community's attempts to find the proper financial structure which would meet two demands: fairness to all the members of the community, and support of the community.

Since those days in Baltimore when some of us thought we ought to divide the apartment rent equally between all of us who lived there, and the opposing side wanted to divide it on the basis of rooms occupied, I've been aware of the problems of budgetting and finances in a community effort. Amity's attempt at solution is a very earnest and eminently fair one, in which each adult has apportioned responsibilities, clearly defined, and while all support the group, private income is not abolished. I don't want to bother with its details here, but I was impressed by the amount of careful thought, as well as trial and error, involved.

My own reaction, after Baltimore, has been, when faced with a house-guest for a period of time, simply to let things ride. I've developed a small horror of rigidity, and of any proliferation of rules and requirements. Usually I left the others' contributions to their consciences, or simply put it to them that I can't carry them financially and their help would be required. On one instance, when a young couple moved in with us for a while, I found myself insisting on a lack of binding rules, while they in turn insisted on making themselves sub-tenants at a fixed rent. My feeling was that such tight lines tended to make for petty annoyances and arguments over totally unimportant fine-points, while they wanted the security of a spot of "their own." In the end my stand was unfortunately vindicated; having given in to their demands for specific agreements over this and that, I had to put up with endless sessions of haggling when they wanted something more or different from what they'd first asked for and agreed upon, and because they didn't have it, in the end I never got any rent (which bothered me more because, having agreed to it, I'd figured it into my budget).

It's been my observation from these experiences and others I've read about, that one can approach the communal-living situation from two separate directions. One way is to draw up a set of specific rules and understandings, every one spelled out as elaborately as the constitution of the neighborhood women's club, in half a dozen pages and a dozen clause The other way is simply to agree informally on a few basics, subject to momentary modification, and then let things develop spontaneously and organically. Ideally even the first way should leave room for modification,

but I've found that when one begins spelling out petty details -- as one inevitably must if one begins drawing up formal rules at all -- one multiplies the potential areas of dispute, and friction is made all the more inevitable.

I personally can envision myself in only one type of "community": one in which the structure evolved naturally out of the personalities who made up the group, and which accomodated the diversities of each person involved. I'd demand flexibility, and an informally organic approach.

It seems to me that such a community would inevitably start small, and with no greater immediate goal than that of harmonious living. It would probably not matter whether it was located in the midst of a city or out in the mountains -- both have their advantages and disadvantages, and I suspect location would be purely a matter of aggregate desires. The community would probably grow slowly, as new members found themselves fitting into it, and it might take generations for it to grow to the size (in population) of a small town or village.

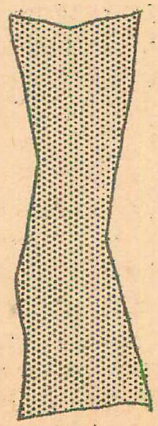
I can see one distinct advantage in such a community: the possibility for developing, under optimal circumstances, ones ability to live with his fellow men. It seems to me that such a community might become a worthwhile organic lab for human growth and development. But not by postulating a Plan For Sanity and attempting to rigidly adhere to it. (No prohibitions against jealousy, private ownership, or other human desires as they're found in open society today.) Instead, the discovery -- undoubtedly slow, possibly painful -- of ways to accomodate each other with more openness and love than we generally allow ourselves to express.

Such a community could be of great positive value, because by virtue of its independence of artificial values, it could propagate itself under diverse circumstances, could, once successful, become a point of contagion in open society, affecting all those who came into contact with it, and in itself remaining in contact with society at large.

But, I reiterate, such a community cannot be postulated into existence; it cannot spring up fullblown. There is no masterplan. There cannot be -- we simply aren't at the God-like stage, yet, where we can take all needs and circumstances into account. But it could be evolved. From small beginnings, such as a communal apartment in a city, or a communal farm group, something could develop. It may. And if it does, we will all, in some way large or small, be enriched by it.

Perhaps the roots exist even now. It would be pleasant to hope so.

-- Ted White



NOTED: 109

HELEN'S FANTASIA: Wesson - It certainly is a wonderful thing, Helen, the way you've finally decided to unleash your wrath and fury upon those dolts who illegally kicked Ed Martin out ...but, aren't you just a trifle late? Where were you in 1961 and 1962, not to mention 1963? One gets the feeling that the Breen Affair was all that galvanized you -- and you seem so far out in left field regarding that, that one wonders if you usually bother to read the mailings, or whether, one bright summer's day in 1964, you picked up an HORIZONS or one of my older NULL-F's and said "Heavens, Sheldon, they've thrown old Edgar out! It seems they want to let a child-molester in instead!"

"At least Martin did publish for FAPA but I don't remember any zine published by Breen." Well, first off this is pretty circuitous logic inasmuch as Breen has only just been admitted to membership with the repeal of the blackball against him. However, had you actually been reading your mailings you would've remembered that he has had mailing comments in FAPA since 1961, most of them in NULL-F, one set in PROXY-BOO, and one bound with Marion's DAY*STAR after their marriage. This in addition to his column in WARHOON.

Your upset at the line on Marion's parody of Speer's insulting questionaire, "We know who you are" would make more sense if it didn't reveal the extent to which The Fourteen seem ashamed of their actions. FAPA being what it is, the notion that the Entire Foundations of Democratic Process Will Be Shaken To The Bones if secrecy does not prevail strikes me as outstandingly silly. However, simple process of elimination, going by who voted for that Egoboo Poll, and who signed the reinstatement petition, pretty well gave away the show anyway. Most of The Fourteen did have the guts to admit their part in the blackball; a few have had second thoughts. I see no reason why they should not wish it to be known that they were among the fourteen if they have the courage of their convictions. And I feel no shame in admitting that I was one of those who voted to blackball the entire waiting list this time. So much for the "secret ballot."

VANDY: Coulsons - Juanita: Since getting a car again -- a '61 Chevy Greenbrier -- I've been doing a lot of driving. In fact, since taking possession this September I've already put over 8,000 miles on the poor beast (it's currently in the process of getting a newer and larger engine and a new transaxle package; one of these days I'll add a Judson supercharger to the whole works), and a fair amount of that mileage has been in two round-trips to Chicago. Since I seem to have acquired an interest in a young lady in that city, odds are I'll be seeing even more of it. Used as I am to driving in New York City -- a city which scares hell out of a lot of drivers, I don't find Chicago so bad, but its eight and ten-lane expressways do require a high level of awareness at all times. (And what really amazes me is that these vast expressways move no faster than our two and three-lane expressways here in NYC during rush hour. Sheesh!)

I've watched "The Man From UNCLE" twice, and both shows were absolute stinkers. The first one had a far-fetched plot with lots and lots of gadgets the likes of which no one could take seriously, and was literally idiot-plotted (if everyone hadn't behaved like idiots, there'd have been no plot), but the second lacked even the saving grace of the

gadgets. In that one Solo did everything wrong, was rescued every time by his friend and companion, and literally served no function whatsoever. I kept thinking, "Surely he's got a rabbit up one sleeve -- he'll pull something clever sooner or later." But he didn't, and there wasn't. What I hold against "UNCLE" is that it is simply badly written. As a would-be tv writer I may be more sensitive to such things, but the dialog in "UNCLE" is trite and draggy. For a good comparison, try "The Rogues." The plots are clever, and the dialog crackles. "The Rogues" is sort of what "The Saint" should've been.

Interesting that the Swingle singers turned you onto Bach. Their forerunners, Lambert, Hendricks & Ross, turned me on to Count Basie with their first album, Sing a Song of Basie. (I don't think any of their subsiquent albums were up to that one in quality, though.)

Buck: Yes, several of the high-priced ~~spreads~~ cars offer only automatic transmissions, but there's a big resurgence of interest in stick-shifts, particularly the new four-speeds. For my money, you can have stick-shifts, though. I've driven a lot of different cars, including a Jaguar with four-speed and an Austin-Healy with a weird three-speed-and-overdrive, and when I put a new transmission into my Chevy, it'll be a powerglide. My reasoning is simple: first, tremendous strides have been taken in the automatics -- almost all transmission development in the past twenty-five years has been concentrated upon automatics, and they're nothing like the clinkers and slush-pumps of the late forties and early fifties now. Second, I do two kinds of driving: start-stop city driving and long-distance turnpike cruising. For distance travel it doesn't matter what you have; you stay in top gear 95% of the time. But for city driving, particularly in rush hour, I'm tired of constantly shifting up and down, especially when it comes at the end of an already tiring day. It was a particular drag in the Jag, which had quite stiff pedal pressures. I see nothing wrong with a car with a Go pedal and a Stop pedal. There's a third reason, peculiar to my car and probably of the most practical importance: my car is powered by a light-weight, air-cooled aluminum engine which delivers most of its torque in the upper ranges. When loaded (with say, eight or ten people, or ten cartons of books, or a refrigerator, or any of the other items I frequently find myself hauling), this requires a fair amount of clutch-slipping to take off from a standstill. As a result, the car is a good deal of the way through its third clutch. A clutch repair costs about $120. I can't see putting up with that every year or two. The powerglide, on the other hand, is a two-speed unit with a fairly high-rev shift-point, and will make constructive use of the engine's torque. It is actually the best suited transmission. (All the same I wish it had more speeds...)

My car also has a hand choke, as did my '53 Ford. I like it.

Fireworks are illegal here, too, but you should've heard the noise on the 4th. In some parts of the city it was a constant din.

DIFFERENT: Moskowitz - I contest this as being suitable activity requirement for the renewal of Moskowitz's membership. Only two pages are clearly non-reprint, one of these an old drawing. Inasmuch as the material was not even stencilled or mimeod by Sam, I think he's stretching it too far to allow it to be counted.

CADENZA: Wells - Eric Blake's tears for the "Many hotels and restaurants in the South" that "have already been forced to close by /the public accomodations section of the Civil Rights/ law" leave me unmoved. The truth is, very few if any places have actually closed their

doors because of this law, and those which have, have done so voluntarily -- pretty much a matter of cutting off the economic nose to spite the face.

One wonders how Blake and his racist ilk get into fandom. They must find it a sorry place for their propaganda, since most fans if not politically Liberal are certainly generally liberal in their thinking, and the very field of science fiction tends to be oriented against racism. Does Blake's conscience ever turn when he reads stf, I wonder? Probably not; racists are wonderful at rationalization.

SYNAPSE: Speer - In referring to a "futurian who prostituted himself to a gyp agency," are you referring to Blish's article in GRUE some years back?

After Pete Graham's Willis Death Hoax, Boob Stewart complicated things a bit by claiming the hoax was the work of Terry Carr, and that Terry Carr himself was a hoax, Stewart having visited Terry's supposed San Francisco address and finding only a vacant lot. Someone in an early OOPSLA, presented with this wealth of misinformation, concluded that Boob Stewart was the hoax and did not exist.

There is a whole paragraph missing from the first page of THE BNF OF IZ. I caught it in reading the runoff pages, and smote my brow in anger at Ted Pauls, who'd typed the stencils. He protested innocense, and when I checked back to the revised ms., I found it missing there, too.

I believe contraceptives are tested by the FDA or somesuch. I know they are safeguarded by some federal agency. But no contraceptive has yet been guaranteed 100% effective. The best claims are only in the 90's...

I challenge you on the statement that "His conduct has been such as you might analogize to someone else's pursuing fannes there /at conventions/ and not getting anywhere." To the best of my knowledge, which is superior to yours in this respect, you are dead wrong. On the other hand, the fan in question had rather good luck in the pursuit of the fannes...

You persist in flogging a dead horse, and I think it says a sorry amount for your own character. You appear (by your writings on the subject) to have a conventionally shallow and dirty mind. But I wish you could keep this aspect of your character to yourself. You are destroying a respect I'd held for you since my entrance into fandom thirteen years ago.

"...a substancial minority of FAPA..."? I haven't a lawyer's cunning with figures, but the last time I checked, 42 out of 65 was not a minority.

ANKUS: Pelz - You left at least one name off that list of former Cultists who'd be ejected from FAPA: another of the amendment's co-signers, Sylvia Dees. Or had you forgotten she was once a publishing member?

Why FAPA? I suspect inertia is the largest part of membership these days. Even when mailings come and are left unread, one does not hastily abandon his membership -- not when it takes at least five years to get back in. Inertia too, when one has been a member for ten years, as -- I realize to my surprise -- I will be as of this very mailing. It becomes a fixture, a minor fixture but nonetheless real, in your life.

Ten years... FAPA brackets a large part of my life -- from the age of seventeen, a junior in high school, to the age of twenty-seven, somewhat older, possibly wiser. The group has changed a great deal, too.

We've lost two real stalwarts in the group at the time I joined: Vernon McCain, who died in 1958, and whose BIRDSMITH was a major item in each mailing; and Bill Danner, whose LARK was consistently one of the best sets of mc's in the mailing. It's amazing how much the tone of the group depends on the regular mailing comments of a few members. There used to be a regular, dependable group of mc's which one could trust to represent mc's at their best: literate, interesting, conversational (in a semi-obsolete meaning of that word), and communicative. Of the original group, only Warner is still at the old stand. We're fortunate in having the Coulsons and those others who've filled in the gap, but it isn't the same, of course. Truthfully, I don't think FAPA has been nearly as interesting for the past five years or so; we seemed to hit a peak around 1958, and we've not regained it, although we appear to be recouping this year.

Well, that doesn't entirely answer your question. Perhaps the only answer is, "Because I'm a fan."

SPINNAKER REACH: Chauvenet - There may be an "oversupply of sf," but if there is, it isn't reaching the magazines. We are, of course, constantly deluged with material ranging from mediocre to completely unpublishable, but it's not easy to find enough <u>good</u> material to fill a magazine every issue. And of course sometimes we can't. I am awfully disillusioned by the proportion of bad material being turned out by name writers. For instance, when we get a story in by a writer whose work I recall fondly, I'll take it home to read with anticipation, and -- by now I know I can count on it -- four out of five times I'll be disappointed. I don't know whether this is a condition that has always prevailed, or whether our name writers are getting tired, but it's a sad thing. And every time a substandard piece by a name writer is published -- because an editor can find nothing better, or wants that "name" on his cover -- the name-value of that writer slips a bit, his reputation diminishes another notch.

I am also becoming cynical about author discoveries. I cannot understand why Fred Pohl has pretty much ignored the one valuable new talent to appear in the last couple years, Alex Panshin, and has promoted a second-rate writer like Larry Niven, whose work I myself have rejected dozens of times. Pohl praises this fellow to the skies, touts him as a major discovery. Why? Anyone can read his stories and see that he's a long way to go yet. Ah well... I'd best not pursue this subject.

MASQUE: Rotsler - I have no checkmarks in the margins, but I want to go on record as having thoroughly enjoyed this, Bill. Your recent resurgence of FAPA activity is one of the happiest events of the year.

GANG BANG: Rotsler - When I drove out with the Breens, we cut through Reno, and I had a chance to confirm your judgement of its inhabitants. I don't recall Las Vegas too vividly, since it's been seven years since I was through it, but Reno seemed a far meaner place.

Yes, indeed, Steve Stiles is worth appreciating. He's developing into a fine writer and humorist as well, and his contributions to the local APA F mailings are usually the highpoints each week.

THE RAMBLING FAP: Calkins - If you took Marion's poll seriously, you missed its point entirely. It was a deliberate satire on Speer's, complete to the "Have you stopped beating your wife yet" phrasing of the questions. To take it seriously and then carp

at that very phrasing is being pretty dense about it all, Gregg.

I'm surprised at you; you fail to see how the Constitution was overridden by the Martin ejection, and then quote the pertinent portion yourself: "...Reprints do not count unless they . . . represent substancial work in rewriting..." Okay, 1: No one has yet shown the Martin material to be reprints (i.e., no one has said "Here: this is the original from which Martin reprinted -- see? They're the same." or even "I remember reading those stories somewhere else, and this stuff is straight reprint."). 2: The best anyone has done is to say that his stories were based on jokes they'd heard before. Now a joke is a word-of-mouth thing; you can't reprint it unless it's one of the rare ones published in a magazine's joke section or somesuch. Mostly I think Martin used old gag punchlines for stories he wrote. It is clear from the context of those stories that they were "substancial work in rewriting," and to refer to them as "reprints" at this date is absurd on the face of it. Why don't you simply admit that when FAPA's officers think they can get away with it, they flout the constitution? That would be more honest.

Speaking of which, our latest Sec.-Treas. is Doing It Again. Over ten FAPAns voted, under proper constitutional provisions, to blackball the entire waiting list. The Veep counted these votes and instructed the Sec.-Treas. to act accordingly. Possibly annoyed by the thought of notifying some 50-odd people that they'd been blackballed, the Sec-Treas has refused to follow through. His explanation: his is the constitutional duty to "maintain the waiting-list."

This is one of the most transparent outrages yet committed by an officer of FAPA. One wonders what he would do if there happened -- as once or twice in the history of FAPA -- that no one presented himself for the waiting-list and there was none. Would he interpret the constitution in such a fashion as to allow him to willy-rilly pick a handful of names from fanzines and make a waiting-list of them, that he might have something to "maintain"? This is a farce.

I'm unbelievably cynical. I'll go along with Morse's explanation of the Boondoggle motivation. And you? I'd say you're being awfully naive or awfully simple...and the trouble is, you keep doing things that make me wonder if it's possible you are.

SALUD: EBusby - Avram was right; you are naive. It used to be one of your more ingratiating traits.

DEADWOOD: Locke - You made your name a little hard to find in this one, but it was worth hunting for. This is an auspicious debut, and I particularly enjoyed the description of the German convention. I'm looking forward to London to meeting some of the German fans as well as people like yourself.

SELF-PRESERVATION: Hoffman - One of the gems of the mailing. I love the casual way you move from subject to subject, never saying more than necessary, never appearing terse or clipped.

Your shaft of Dan McPhail with his own words is brilliant. I'm not entirely sure whether I've drifted away from "square" attitudes, or they've simply grown a little more hypocritical with the years, but it's good to see them pulled out into the withering light of day.

I already told you, but I'll repeat it for the audience: The World Beneath The City covers not only the history of NYC's subways, but the water, gas mains, electrification, sewer systems, and etc. And does it well: illuminatingly and amusingly. As one who loves this city, I found it an entrancing book.

- Ted White

TED WHITE

CHARLES MINGUS - AN APPRECIATION AND REAPPRAISAL

The following piece was written in the fall of 1962 for JAZZ Magazine. For reasons best known to its editors, the piece was never acknowledged or published. I came across the carbon in cleaning my files, and, at the risk of hitting you with one too many pieces on Mingus, present it here.

When, in the summer of 1962, RCA Victor finally released the 1957 recording of Charles Mingus' Tijuana Moods, there was a great rejoicing and critics shouted from the housetops. Down Beat gave the album a rave "Spotlight" review, and John S. Wilson used the pages of the New York Times to add his enthusiastic appreciation to those already heaped upon the album Mingus was modestly quoted as assessing "the best record I ever made."

-- Few remembered that Mingus had been producing music on a level with this album since the middle fifties, and an album only just previously released from Atlantic, Oh Yeah, had been virtually ignored, receiving a disgracefully inept "three star" review in Down Beat, and little notice elsewhere (Wilson compared it unfavorably with Tijuana Moods). And almost entirely lost in the shuffle was an album released three-quarters of a year earlier, the Mercury Pre Bird.

I'd like to try to deal with these three albums and their music within the contexts of Mingus' recorded contributions to jazz, and jazz itself.

Jazz is today seeking to find a place for itself in the field of "serious music" - that is, music which exists for its own sake and not as a prop to extra-musical considerations: music to be taken seriously as music. Jazz no longer holds as its raison-d'etre the captivation of dancing couples, much less the entertainment of off-hours prostitutes. That some may still dance to jazz, that prostitutes might enjoy it yet, is immaterial. Jazz is no longer tailoring itself to such functions, and is no longer dominated by them. Jazz is now music worthy of a listener's undivided attention; jazz has taken upon itself the burden which befalls all serious music; to wholly captivate and hold its listeners in complete beguilment.

However, much as this may be true for the jazz field as a whole, one must immediately admit that it applies to few practicioners of the art in particular. Legion are the jazz musicians "just making the gig, man," and totally unconcerned with esthetics,

posterity, or anything at all beyond the job at hand. These are surmounted by the more gifted musicians whose musical introversion has led them to concern only with esotericisms within the techniques of their work. They may be likened to any artist who is overly preoccupied with the form of his work, and careless of the content.

For such musicians, the extension of harmonies, the subtlety of configuration, the intricacies of solo construction have become the obsession. Style is the preoccupation.

Such musicians may be admired as technical virtuosos, and worshipped for their brilliant solutions to technical problems of musical construction, but theirs is too often an essentially empty wit. One marvels at their pyrotechnics (executed on a far less accessible plane than in the days of the crowd-pleasing one-note honk artists), but is inwardly unmoved.

In simpler words, they put no soul into their music.

This lack of soul (by which word I mean the genuine communication of oneself - not a glib compendium of current gospel-funk cliches) is responsible for much of the depressingly brittle quality of modern jazz. The drive, the funk, the excitement is a manufactured gloss on a paper-thin product of no durability. In the process of reviewing jazz records, which I have done since 1957, I have often lost heart in jazz and turned, depressed, to my collection of Bartok and Sister Rosita Tharp - both of whom are far more refreshing and communicative than is the average jazz record.

But then, by Sturgeon's Law, 90% of any field is mediocre; we do not judge it by its worst but by its best. And this is why, whenever I listen to Charles Mingus, I am drawn back to the very real values of jazz.

I said jazz was "seeking to find a place for itself in the field of 'serious music.'" And what sort of place? The answer is obvious. Jazz is virile, earthy, immediate, spontaneous in its expression of loves and hates and all the emotions which range between. Jazz offers us an uninhibited expression of emotional release which is enthralling and gripping. When I spoke in Metronome of Max Roach's We Insist! that it "literally pulls the listener out of his chair, charges straight to his emotions," I was referring to a particularly powerful example of this quality in jazz. It is a quality particularly manifest in the blues; and, I am convinced, when men of great talent and soul play jazz it will always be present in their best work.

In this sense jazz fills a needed gap in contemporary music, for only a few of the giants of modern musical expression - early Stravinsky, Bloch, Bartok - have ever dared to approach so intimately the emotions of their audiences. Jazz brings with it to contemporary music - to "serious" music - a youthful vigor which may well rejuvenate the moribund state of contemporary classical music.

By this roundabout introduction I can now approach Charles Mingus. For it seems to me that Mingus' work, more than that of any other, speaks for the best of jazz: for the shouting enthusiasms

and emotional vividness, and also for the forms, techniques, and virtuosities unique to jazz. Here is a man who has mastered the bass as has no other individual in the history of jazz, and who is now well on his way to developing a unique conception of the piano as well. Here is a figure whose solo constructions are broad with complexities, studded with subtleties; and yet a man who is not afraid to bare his soul in his music, and who will, if moved, lend his voice in instrumental shouts or falsetto keenings to the music of the moment.

And his music! How magnificent it is to encounter in jazz music which exists as an organic whole, enveloping the solo constructions of its performers. Not a "blowing chart," nor yet another tired paraphrase of standard cliches, but real, honest compositions. Each has a flavor, a wholeness, an identity. And Mingus' music spans so much of jazz, from the simple hollers and chants of early blues to pan-tonal pieces which forcibly remind us that Mingus has roots, exists in the mainstream, and yet still leads the avant-garde of experimentalists. He is of whole jazz, hiss a music of no narrow classification or pigeon-hole.

It always annoys me to see Mingus fragmented in discussions into "bassist," "composer," "combo-leader" or whathaveyou, as though these were separate niches in his existence having no bearing upon each other. How can one discuss his instrumental virtuosity without going into the music he evokes, or discuss the groups he has led without inevitably speaking of their effect upon him, and his upon them?

It would be extravagant to refer to Mingus as a genius, and yet I like to think of him thus. Mingus is a man one cannot neatly pigeonhole and be done with; he defies boundaries and limitations. This is reflected in his music as it is in everything about him. Like all great men of arts, he has not confined himself to any one narrow form or area of expression. His music sprawls across all boundaries, including those extra-musical.

So I say Mingus is pure jazz, despite the fact that he has sometimes bridled at the application of the word "jazz" to his work - but this is only a semantic quibble. (He dislikes the use some others have put to the word, and rather than contest it with them he has simply removed himself from their province, leaving them title to a word now empty.)

The three albums I mentioned in opening are no longer his latest, but are still among his most important.

Tijuana Moods is the oldest of the three. It dates to the year 1957, when he recorded The Clown for Atlantic, and East Coasting and A Modern Jazz Symposium for Bethlehem. Significantly, the personels are approximately the same on all four albums, except that a different pianist has been used on each date.

This particular group, the nexis consisting of Jimmy Knepper on trombone, Curtis Porter (Shafi Hadi) on alto and tenor, Clarence Shaw on trumpet (except for the album, The Clown, and one track of

Symposium), Danny Richmond on drums and Mingus on bass, has always seemed to me one rather thin in texture, possibly owing to the predominance of brass and lack of deeper reed coloration. Unlike the tenor-alto combination on Pithecanthropus Erectus, this group had an over-precise attack, and lacked the lightness which might have compensated for its lack of texture. Only the recent Dolphy-Curson quartet had a flatter and less pleasing sound in ensemble. Mingus has the gift for eliciting thick-hewed textures from even the most unpromising combinations of instruments (usually by virtue of creating separate lines and countermelodies for each instrument, and often by harmonic juxtapositions extremely reminiscent of Duke Ellington's 1930s work), but this particular group seems to me to carry a waspishness which reduces the depth of its music, and coats much of it with a Harmon-muted sheen of surface brilliance.

This is undoubtedly prejudice on my part, but despite several quite significant pieces dating from this period of Mingus' career (such as Haitian Fight Song), I find the music less memorable than that produced both earlier and later. Tijuana Moods is not a record I can rank as Mingus' best, although it is perhaps best among those produced by that group. Nor is it a lengthy record; the first side is only a little over 15 minutes long, the second about 18 minutes in duration. By contrast, the modern 12-inch LP is capable of up to 30 minutes a side, and it is unreasonable to expect less than twenty.

Thinness of sound, shortness of record, both are joined with the fact that the first side of the album has only two pieces, Dizzy Moods and Ysabel's Table Dance; while the second side has only three, Tijuana Gift Shop, Los Mariachis, and Flamingo; to produce in me a feeling of sparseness when I listen to the album.

I suspect that Mingus' evaluation of this as "The best record I ever made" is strongly tempered by the fact that it is closely tied to a strongly emotional period of his life, and one he sought to recreate with the music contained in the album. Unfortunately, to one who cannot hear the music as an echo of past experiences emotionally charged, the emotion in the music itself seems mechanically induced. I can feel it in Mingus' throbbing bass and urging screams, but there is no answer from the other musicians. Possibly the Latin-American nature of the music has made it hard for them to identify with (although considering the current Bossa Nova fad, perhaps the release of the album is not so ill-timed).

Despite this, Hadi takes his best solos on record here (what has happened to him?), Shaw is quietly lovely, and the music itself takes several fascinating turns in its complexity.

Pre Bird was recorded on May 24 and 25, 1960, after Mingus rehearsed a big band and a "big small band" on several of his older charts. A great deal of confusion surrounded the recording session, and some acrimony; we are fortunate to have the album at all (it was released almost a year and a half later), and doubly fortunate in the program Mingus chose.

After the album came out, I called Charlie and asked him if he could remember the dates of composition for these pieces which

supposedly date from before the advent of Charlie Parker.

Mingus was vague about several, but told me that both Half-Mast Inhibition (an eight-minute "symphonic" work) and Mingus Fingus #2 were written in 1939. I can believe this of Inhibition: despite its musical excellencies it has an ingenuous naivete quite appropriate to the work of an eighteen-year-old composer. It is highly compressed, containing a succession of melodies, each growing out of previous ones or harkening back to yet earlier ones, and the result for the listener is that the piece appears subjectively to be much longer than it actually is. The piece is not strictly jazz; there are no solos or improvisation and strings are employed in it. But the sound of Duke Ellington is there, blended with church music both Fundamentalist and middle-ages in antecedents.

Mingus Fingus was first recorded by Lionel Hampton's band (in which Mingus then played bass) in November of 1947. The piece carries echoes of Ellington in the voicings, but its phrasings give it the sound of a highly superior big band bop effort. If Mingus wrote this in substantially its present form in 1939, we must conclude that in anticipating the developments of the next five to eight years Mingus definitely revealed his genius, and must be ranked among the founders of bop. It's rather like discovering an Ornette Coleman solo tucked away on a Louis Armstrong Hot Five record.

Eclipse is dated by Mingus at 1944 or 45; it was first recorded in a different version for Mingus' own Debut label in the early 1950s. Like Weird Nightmare (1943), it is a song; Mingus has supplied highly sophisticated lyrics as well as music. I have not penetrated the lyrics to Nightmare, but I am indebted to Nat Hentoff for having pointed out some years back the social significance of Eclipse, which actually comments on racial mixing.

Weird Nightmare has its own curious history. It was first recorded by Mingus in 1946 for an obscure West Coast label, with a band which included Henry Coker, Willie Smith and Lucky Thompson. The version used here is substantially the same, and another version minus lyrics was recorded for Candid in late 1960 as Vassarlean and released as part of the Jazz Life anthology. A fragmentary version was also used on Langston Hughes' Weary Blues album on MGM.

Bemoanable Lady is the most Ellingtonianish of all the pieces on the album written by Mingus and probably dates to around 1940 or 41, when, Bill Coss tells me, Mingus competed in a West Coast contest for Ellington-like writing. It serves as an excellent vehicle for a side of Eric Dolphy seldom revealed since the Warner Bros. Chico Hamilton albums: a passionate, sweetly pungent, singing Dolphy.

The album as a whole, however, must be considered a coming out for Yusef Lateef, whose tenor solos on Prayer for Passive Resistance and Nightmare, as well as shorter breaks elsewhere on the album, mark him as having finally, under Mingus' tutilage, achieved a real maturity of conception and expression. It has been extremely heartening to me to see how much he has augmented his neo-Eastern and extremely limited melodic conception of the middle-fifties Savoy

sides since his periodic work in 1959, 60 and 61 with Mingus. The Bill Evans who blew tenor in Dizzy Gillespie's 1940s big band has come a long way. I caught him several times with Mingus at The Showplace in 1959, and the improvement in his work was already amazing by the time he appeared on this record. I caught him with Mingus again at Birdland in 1961, with the group which included Roland Kirk, and he was a joy to hear. I was saddened by the fact that he was replaced by Booker Ervin when that group made the Oh Yeah album.

It seems to me this is one of Mingus' great gifts: by playing the stern taskmaster, often bullying his men unmercifully, inspiring and egging them on, Mingus has provoked them into greater efforts than they ever before made. In a way analogous to that of throwing a child into water to sink or swim Mingus has thrown the challenge at the men who have worked with him, and most have profited enormously.

Mingus demands not merely technical brilliance, but also a strong emotional involvement. He sucks his men, as an undertow, down deep into the music; submerges them in it and then allows them to break surface changed men. He did this for Yusef, he has done it for Roland Kirk (whose best recorded work to date is with Mingus) and for countless others. He irritates, stimulates, prods, provokes; always pushing his men for the talent he senses buried within them. Some hate him for it; others respect him greatly and a few love him.

To return to Pre Bird, I should remark upon the sheer variety of programming. Like the two Columbia albums which preceded it and were also programmed with variety and contrasts, this record has a "thick" feel, as though crammed with hours of music. In terms of actual length, however, it plays for about as long as the Victor album. It is simply that more has been said and done within that time. Most of the pieces, charts dating to the days of the 78s, run only three minutes or a little over, but as is true of many sides recorded before the advent of the LP (Duke Ellington's, especially), this has led to greater compression and shorter and more meaningful solos. It is a discipline often rewarding and badly needed in this day of countless over-drawn-out solos.

Oh Yeah dates from the group Mingus formed around Roland Kirk, the blind multi-saxophonist, in the fall of 1961. The instrumentation is the same, with Mingus playing piano, Doug Watkins on bass, Richmond on drums, Jimmy Knepper on trombone, Kirk on a variety of reeds, and Booker Ervin substituting for Lateef on tenor sax. This was a shouting group, and one of the finest Mingus ever put together. The album is also significant for the depth and breadth of feeling Mingus has plumbed from the blues and church music.

This is, make no mistake, one of the best albums Mingus has ever made. It is a criminal shame that it has been so completely ignored and clumsily reviewed. The Down Beat reviewer ignored entirely the basic spiritual conception of the album to carp at Mingus' vocalizing, and in general the blues nature of the release has given it an unclean caste in the minds of most critics. (Joe Goldberg is an exception; he gave it a perceptive review in HiFi/Stereo Review.)

In my own mind, I cannot help contrasting this album with Mingus' previous Atlantic release, Blues and Roots, where bitter feelings among the men and constant chart changes led to some surface excitement but little profundity of feeling. Here the format is nearly the same, but the personel and results quite different.

Kirk is featured throughout. I marvel over and again as I listen to this album at the simplicity and ingenuity of his melodically constructed solos. Kirk never "fakes it." He is never reduced to running a scale or resorting to a flurry of notes to cover a momentary confusion. He could be influenced by Lucky Thompson - I hear similarities in their playing - and he speaks clearly, simply, eloquently, in an immediately accessible but deeply meaningful language. His is a rare gift, and coupled with Mingus' the resulting musical product is a marvelous stroke of luck for us all.

The most significant pieces on the record - Hog Callin' Blues, Devil Woman, Ecclusiastics, and Oh Lord Don't Let Them Drop That Atomic Bomb on Me - have been ignored for the most part as "just blues." They may indeed be "just blues" but they are among the most profoundly moving blues I have ever heard, and the religious ecstacy of Ecclusiastics puts the fashionably funky pseudo-gospel work of derivative jazzmen to scarlet shame. When I first heard this piece at Birdland, Roland's solo brought tears to my eyes; here I am still moved by the conviction and fervor of the piece. To type-cast it with Dis Heah and others of that ilk is insulting and degrading.

Mingus' solos on piano are extremely interesting. I am reminded of Tristano and some of Mal Waldron's solos for Mingus. There is a rhythmic subtlety and devious complexity of line which is a delight to hear again and again. I for one was glad when Mingus laid aside his bass (which, in recent years, I think he has been growing bored with, for at times he often seemed to toy with his solos in elaborate burlesque of himself), and I hope he will continue to extend his talents into the piano. His only previous piano work on records is to be found on the 1954 Period Jazzical Moods sets repackaged and re-released by Bethlehem (The Jazz Experiments of Charlie Mingus) and Jazztone (Jazz Experiment).

Eat That Chicken, billed as a tribute to Fats Waller (Mingus has written several other pieces dedicated to Fats as well), is a marvelous burlesque very much in the Waller spirit, but also mindful of Ellington's rarely dug satires, such as the low bow to dixie in Controversial Suite, and bop in the TV version of A Drum is a Woman. Some have called Chicken a rehash of Jelly Roll Blues (as it was recorded for Columbia; Atlantic recorded an earlier version as My Jelly Roll Soul), but this is nonsense. There are similar uses of slap-bass and cornball effects, but the melodic lines are different, and the singing is Wallerish.

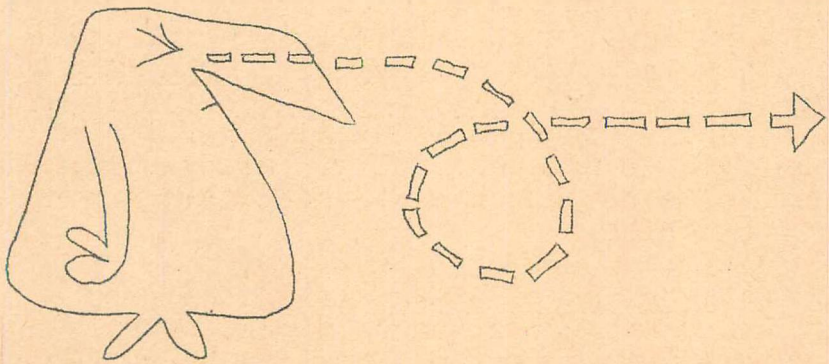
I am left unmoved by Passions of a Man, in which, over a background of suspended tones and eerie sounds Mingus chants in a variety of overdubbed voices meaningless pseudo-African gibberish with occasional words like "Bomb", "Russia," and "America" thrown in. The stereo is enhanced, but I find the performance generally

trying. There are a few lovely melodic fragments of musical themes (left undeveloped), but the general effect is simply embarrassing.

In listening to modern 12-inch albums, I tend to find an overall gestalt in the music presented which suggests to me the personality and basic quality of the album. Sometimes an album will have one or two highly striking pieces in it but still make a poor impression on me due to the general mediocrity of the remaining tracks. In listening to any album I am reminded that the average record-buyer will listen to it straight through, treating each side of the album as a complete unit. Under the circumstances, programming counts a good bit with me. An album where each track sounds like every other, no matter how distinguished the tracks are heard alone, will not rate as highly with me as one which offers some variety and contrast in programming.

Mingus' music offers many contrasts, often within a single composition. He has been writing music for better than twenty years, and in that time he has amassed a tremendous library of highly distinguished compositions. The three albums here provide an interesting contrast to each other, and rather than attempt to rate them against each other I would rather recommend them as illumination of the vast musical proclivities which form the Mingus genius. Taking the three albums - Tijuana Moods, Pre Bird and Oh Yeah - one finds amazing contrasts coupled with a thread of continuously developing familiarity. The diversity between Ecclusiastics and Half Mast Inhibition is as great as the 22 years separating the two compositions. But both are imbued with a devout and highly meaningful religious sincerity, both are melodically ingenious and ingenuous, and emotionally appealing. One is scored for a small orchestra, while the other is predominantly built upon the individual solo efforts of two highly talented improvisors. Both are successful; both are uniquely illustrative of the Mingus talent, the Mingus genius.

And this is what I admire in the Mingus music; that Charlie does not stand still, does not limit himself; that he has given us all the finest elements of the jazz tradition, and more. He has negated nothing but the mediocre, and his work stands as the outstanding contribution of this decade.



--Ted White