

INTERVIEW WITH MILT HINTON -- MAY, 1995

Milton John Hinton was born in Vicksburg, Mississippi on June 23, 1910. A living legend, he has played bass with virtually all of the jazz greats, including Lester Young, Eubie Blake, Clark Terry, Dizzy Gillespie, Count Basie, Erroll Garner and Duke Ellington, to list just a few. Milt played at Cezanne with Dave one memorable evening, on Saturday March 26, 1994.

It was a great pleasure and honor for me to play with David Catney because I found him to be so tremendously talented. I hadn't really heard too much about him before I got to Houston, but it was such a great honor for me.

The music director over at the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, Bob Morgan, recommended that I should go by and sit in with him. I really had a wonderful time at the school and I was impressed with his teaching at that school. The music education department was just wonderful.

I'd known Harry Sheppard, the xylophone player, for many years, and he was there at the club. When I sat in and played with this piano player I just couldn't believe the sensitivity he had. The remarkable part about it was he allowed me to play anything I wanted to play. He said, "Whatever you want to play, Milt..." So I suggested we do *My One and Only Love*, a ballad, where we could both show our sensitivity, and he was just amazing. I don't know how to explain it to you except that I was just amazed to find a piano player there that was that much of an artist. He was not just a pianist. He was an *artist*.

The club was filled that night. The young people who came in there seemed to be very much jazz oriented, and looked for some sensitivity in the music. It was just great.

I didn't get to talk with him very much because it seems like he was part owner of the club, and in between playing tunes with me he had to go to the bar and take care of some business or something. I was only there for an hour or so but I played at least forty minutes with him and that was enough for me. He and I played a couple of tunes together, and I was just flabbergasted at his ability, being there in Houston. He's done a great deal down there and he's been very successful there.

It was a beautiful club. The people were warm there, and everybody seemed to know about it. I hadn't been too much playing around Houston for many years.

I'm sure with his ability the people would come in to hear him. It wasn't just a joint to come in and jam or to have a drink, but with that piano player it was a place to come in and listen to some beautiful music. Because the place was jammed; the night I was there it was just absolutely jammed. And when he and I played up there it was just as quiet as anything. People really listened, which was very intelligent. Because usually in a bar people are drinking and talking and romancing, and the music is sort of a sideline thing. But not there, and it was mainly because of him.

When I heard that he passed away I didn't even know that he was ill. I was so sorry to hear that. He didn't show that he was that thin and he was moving around pretty fast. He didn't seem to be someone that was falling apart. That's the amazing part, because he certainly didn't show it in his playing, that it was debilitating him.

The only thing I can say is music lost a very sensitive and great musician and a great person there. It was a shame to go so soon; it seems he had a lot more to achieve, but he had contributed so much.

I enjoyed his sensitivity. And that's the important thing with a piano player. Especially the smaller the group, the more sensitive you have to be, because like we say, "All the covers are off of you." And it was just beautiful to hear him and be able to accompany him, to add something to what he was doing. It was very beautiful.