The 7th IAJRC UK Mini-Conference
By Horace Meunier Harris

This highly worthwhile event duly took place on the weekend of 9th - 10th November, 2013, at the custom-
ary excellent venue, the Holiday Inn South, Reading, in Berks-
hire, not far from London. The format was the familiar one of
previous years and the organisers were the usual highly com-
tent pair, Derek Coller and George Hulme, abetted by sound
man, Roy Belson. As previously, Michael Arie flew in from
Vienna, Austria. We were also delighted that former IAJRC
President, Perry Huntoon from Chicago, graced us with his
presence, following a motoring holiday in Northern France.

Twenty eight members attended, plus several
wives/partners
and visitors. One
such was Mark
Berresford, the
publisher and edi-
tor of VJM’s Jazz
& Blues Mart,
which he in-
formed us is cur-
rently the world’s
oldest continually
published jazz and
blues
magazine, now in its sixtieth
year of publica-
tion. I well remember the redoubtable Trevor Benwell founding
it in 1953.

The first speaker was Martin Colvill, who described and
played “Interesting 78s”. These were well chosen, ranging from
Busse’s Buzzards in 1925 to Joe Rushton’s California Ramblers
in 1945. He included singer Teddy Grace, a favourite of mine,
and Ted Lewis’s “Dip Your Brush in the Sunshine”, with a young
Benny Goodman swinging like mad. Sound quality throughout
was excellent.

There followed moving tributes to three stalwart members
lost to us in 2013, concentrating upon their sterling contributions
to jazz. Derek Coller spoke about discographer Bert Whyatt,
responsible, amongst many other quality productions, for the
IAJRC publication, The Jump Records Story, co-authored with
Sonny McGown. Arnie Chadwick described in detail the work
over many years in the sound field of Tony Adkins, much of
them in Cardiff for The British Broadcasting Corporation. Tony
recorded many live jazz sessions, with a recorder perma-
nently installed at the Manchester Free Trade Hall, recording
Miles Davis, Errol Garner, George Lewis and many more.
These would otherwise have been lost to posterity. He was also
a substantial contributor to the IAJRC’s vaults. Brian Peerless
told us a lot about Ken Vail’s work as a graphic artist, plus the
painstaking compilation of his many jazz publications, particu-
larly his highly detailed books describing in diary form the day
to day careers of Duke Ellington and Billie Holiday. These
three contributions, all enhanced by appropriate recorded music,
more than adequately honoured our late friends and colleagues.
We were very fortunate to have with us Bert’s widow, Beryl,
Bert’s son, Chris and Tony’s wife, Jeanie.

There followed a presentation by Tony Shoppee devoted to
the life and career of trumpeter Emmett Berry. He played many
worthwhile examples and, making the point that so much of
Berry’s recorded work was done with a mute, concentrated upon
his open playing, with a gorgeous tone.

Then came Chris Hillman, with a talk entitled “Chicago
Piano”, playing examples by Clarence M. Jones, Jimmy Blythe,
Will Ezell, Roosevelt Sykes, Jabo Williams, Black Bob, Blind
John Davis and Big Maceo Merryweather. These are all
featured in his latest excellent book, Paramount Piano - Chi-
ca-go, 1923 - 1932.

After dinner we were treated as usual to a feast of jazz
films, presented by Alf Keiles, who is Britain’s very competent
answer to the redoubtable Mark Cantor. The main section
comprised music from the movies, featuring Harry James, Artie
Shaw, Jimmy Dorsey and more. One intriguing item was
Carmen Miranda singing with Benny Goodman and his Orches-
tra. Not to be forgotten was the unusual jam session by band-
leaders which terminated the 1941 film, Syncopation. Alf
provided a discographical query in Tommy Dorsey’s version of
“Well Git It”, from Dumbass Was a Lady. Surprisingly there
were two pianists present, swapping choruses!

The next morning commenced with a session presented by
Nigel Haslwood of Sadman Records, with the intriguing title,
“My Name is Johnson”. (His idea came from the 1974 spoof
western film by Mel Brooks called “Blazing Saddles”, where
everyone in a Wild West town has the last name Johnson). Who
were we to expect? Bunk? James P.? Even Robert Johnson?
Instead we were entertained by musicians mostly from the
forties: Buddy Johnson (piano), Lem Johnson (tenor), Clarence
Johnson (piano), Eddie Johnson (tenor). Nigel even put together
the names of fourteen musicians from the period whom he
termed “The Johnson Orchestra”!

He was followed by Malcolm Walker (a name familiar to
you as co-compiler of the regular column in the Journal, Disco-
graphical Forum). His subject was bop drummer and arranger,
Tiny Kahn, who had the misfortune to die aged only 29. It
was an educational talk but the musical illustrations were a
little too advanced for my ancient ears.

Finally, and in contrast, Roy Bel-
son was released from his extremely
competent sound
amplification duties,
in order to present “British Small Jazz Groups of the 1940s and
1950s”. For me it was the perfect antidote, as I grew up with
the music of the musicians he featured: George Chisholm, Lew
Davis, Harry Parry, Buddy Featherstonhaugh, Joe Daniels, Harry
Gold, Vic Lewis, Jack Parnell, Harry Hayes and more. A
delightful wallow in nostalgia.

A raffle was held and £77 raised for The British Legion, as
this was the closest weekend to the remembrance of 1918
Armistice Day. We then adjourned for lunch and the opportu-
nity to praise and thank again our conscientious organisers, before
saying our farewells. Many expressions of hope were voiced for
another get together next year. Throughout, a separate room did
steady business disposing of members’ books and records.
Above all it was as always a great opportunity to keep alive the
friendships brought about by our mutual love of jazz.

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