

ENCORE



ROGER GLENN

A FLUTE AND VIBES LIFER
BY MARILYN LESTER

To identify polymath Roger Glenn as a vibraphonist or flautist alone would be only a fraction correct. He's proficient on 18 instruments, plus he composes and sings. Also a licensed pilot who volunteers with the Civil Air Patrol, Glenn recently added to his CV a new leader album, *My Latin Heart* (Patois), with eight original tracks (recorded in 2012), timed to celebrate his landmark 80th birthday this past June and arriving a mere 50 years after the release of his leader debut, *Reachin'* (Fantasy, 1976).

Fielding the inevitable question of what took so long for the debut follow-up, he cites, with good humor, a kind of "life happened" response: commercial/financial issues, and music business hurdles—and perhaps a move in 1973 away from the epicenter of New York to contentment in the San Francisco Bay Area. But Glenn was also just plain busy gigging, including as a sideman on over 40 albums. Jesse "Chuy" Varela, music/program director at Bay Area radio K-CSM Jazz 91, relates in his liner notes, an ongoing conversation with Glenn: "You have any new records coming out? And with his wide grin he would answer, 'I'm working on it.'" With that box now checked, Glenn says, "I knew it was the right time to make my own musical statement."

Those in-between-leader gigs were many and varied. Among his collaborations are years in Cal Tjader's Latin jazz group playing flute during the '70s and early '80s. That alliance was serendipitous. Walking down Market Street in San Francisco, he ran into Tjader, whom he knew and had previously played with. Tjader invited him to bring his flute to a recording session the next day. Glenn is featured on Tjader's GRAMMY-winning *La Onda Va Bien* (1979), and one year later his original "Roger's Samba" appeared on Tjader's *Gozame! Pero Ya*. His "Cal's Guajira", a tribute to Tjader found on the new *My Latin Heart*, pays homage to him as well as his former bandleader's centenary birthday earlier this year (Jul. 16).

But even before Tjader, Glenn was very busy, including with percussionist Mongo Santamaria, and before Mongo with pianist Mary Lou Williams. Fellow polymath David Amram played several concerts and recorded for Williams with Glenn in the late '60s. "That's when I first met and heard a young flute player who could really *play* the flute," recalls Amram. "He was among the gifted players chosen by Mary Lou." The project was Williams' *Music For Peace* on Williams' Mary Records imprint (later reissued on Smithsonian Folkways as part of *Mary Lou's Mass*). Amram, who played French horn, penny whistles, percussion and bansuri (a wooden Pakistani folk flute), still remembers how "original and spirited he was...he was a joy to play with." Glenn also performed with his father, legendary trombonist-vibraphonist Tyree Glenn (who famously worked with Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong) in an all-star ensemble that included pianist Wynton Kelly and drummer Papa Jo Jones. In addition to spending several years with Cuban conga drummer maestro Santamaria, he worked with flute player Herbie Mann and trumpeters Donald Byrd and Dizzy Gillespie, among others. His first album as leader, the eight-track *Reachin'* (reissued in 2010), came about from his session work with producers Larry and Alphonso Mizell, who worked with artists including Byrd, Bobbi Humphrey and Johnny Hammond.

Germany-based brother Tyree Glenn, Jr. says of Roger, "My 'kid brother,' whom I love very dearly, is one of the most talented multi-musicians that I know, and I am proud to say that." The Glenn brothers were raised in near-NYC, Englewood, NJ. While Tyree senior might take the boys to an Ellington rehearsal, their mother, Gloria, passionate about Latin music, imbued that love in Roger. The brothers were literally surrounded by music. Tyree, Jr. reports: "There were always many musical instruments laying around the house and Roger and I would play different ones from time to time. Roger went on to master all of them." Yet, asked why he gravitated to the vibraphone, Roger jokes, "My father put one next to my crib; it was inevitable." Seriously he adds, "My father always told me to 'create your own sound.'" And thus Glenn regards himself not as a specialist but as a complete musician who can "select the best instrument for each song I play."

In more recent years, he has worked with GRAMMY Award-winning jazz singer Kurt Elling; led an organ trio on the West Coast, opening for Steely Dan; and toured New Zealand and Australia with the

Count Basie Orchestra as a tribute to his father. Glenn also happens to be a music historian, and is particularly interested in the intersection of cultural traditions. He notes about the slave trade, for example: "The drum... forbidden in this country. Not so in Cuba, where the African rhythms were allowed to develop, and that migration led to a big change in American music." The Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian rhythms on *My Latin Heart* include the number, "Congo Square", which explores the fusion of European and African rhythms. While on tour with Taj Mahal in recent years, he found himself in New Orleans' Congo Square: "thinking about how jazz could only have been created by both African and European cultures at that time and place in [American] music history."

As to future plans, Glenn is self-effacing, an attribute noted by his many peers, especially regarding self-promotion (he prefers to simply be active in his profusion of creative pursuits). For Tyree, Jr., there's a wish: "A few years ago, I arranged to have him come over to me here in Germany for a concert and he, as always, killed it! I hope we can do it again...so that 'The Glenns' will be united once more."

An important honor came last May when the Los Angeles Jazz Society named Roger Glenn its 32nd Annual Vibe Summit honoree. His artistry had long been summed up by the truly legendary Quincy Jones, who once declared: "I love your music and your 'tude'... big time props." Fellow-traveler Amram has observed Glenn's performances online in recent times: "It was a treat to hear and see him...he is playing better than ever." And with the wisdom accrued by this vital, soon to be 95-year-old, Amram concludes, "I just hope young players will hear and see him play and realize that this kind of music, which is built to last, is here to stay because musicians like Roger are LIFERS!"

For more info visit rogerglennjazz.com

Recommended Listening:

- Mongo Santamaria—*Mongo at Montreux* (Atlantic, 1971)
- Dizzy Gillespie—*Bahiana* (Pablo, 1975)
- Roger Glenn—*Reachin'* (Fantasy, 1976)
- Cal Tjader—*Gozame! Pero Ya...* (Concord Jazz Picante, 1980)
- Calvin Keys—*Detours Into Unconscious Rhythms* (Wide Hive, 2000)
- Roger Glenn—*My Latin Heart* (Patois, 2012)

LEST WE FORGET



CHARLIE ROUSE

UNSUNG HERO
BY MIKE SHANLEY

Of all the tenor saxophonists to play with Thelonious Monk, Charlie Rouse (1924-1988) stayed with the pianist the longest—from 1959 to 1970. In some ways, Rouse (who passed away 27 years ago this month) arguably never emerged from the role of Monk's long-term sideman. Appropriately, a compilation of his early work as leader on Epic was released by CBS Jazz in 1990 with the telling title *Unsung Hero*. Weeks before his Nov. 30, 1988 passing, the saxophonist performed in a Monk birthday show, released under Rouse's name as *Epistrophy—The Last Concert* (Landmark). He had also spent the better part of the '80s in Sphere, a group devoted to the Monk songbook. Yet, when Rouse and Monk parted ways, he

continued to produce new music. His son, drummer Charlie "Chico" Rouse, Jr., says his father "was a purist, but by the same token, his feel and his ears were open." For evidence (Monk pun intended), this year alone will see the re-release of two sessions where Rouse took risks, while an unearthed live performance captures the Monk Quartet at a creative highpoint.

Born and raised in Washington, D.C., at 20 he joined Billy Eckstine's Orchestra in a saxophone section that also included Charlie Parker. Stints followed with the Tadd Dameron Sextet in 1947 (with trumpeter Fats Navarro) and a landmark 1953 session with trumpeter Clifford Brown (both for Blue Note). Around the time he was co-leading the pioneering Jazz Modes (with French horn player Julius Watkins), Rouse received a phone call that would forever change his musical trajectory. Sonny Rollins did a few weeks with Monk at The Five Spot, and according to Rouse's son, Chico, "Rollins was not going to stay. Dad already knew Monk, from when they had met in D.C., in early 1958. So, Monk reached out and called dad. Ironically, Monk did not tell Sonny that he called, so when Sonny ran into my father in Greenwich Village, he said 'Hey Rouse, Monk is looking for you.'"

So Rouse gave him a call back and Monk asked dad at that moment if he wanted to be in the band. Dad said "Yeah!"

Their subsequent time together coincided with Monk signing with Columbia Records and embarking on several European tours. *Bremen 1965* (which comes out next month on Sunnyside) comes from a second performance during a tour that took the pianist's quartet to Europe, Japan and Australia. With bassist Larry Gales and drummer Ben Riley firmly in place, Monk and Rouse blend solos and themes around each other in a version of "Criss Cross" that exemplifies the observations from the saxophonist's son about both players: "They were so in tune that Monk would play just a bar up front of one of the tunes, and the whole band would just drop right on tempo...They were breathing like that."

While playing with Monk, Rouse also recorded sessions under his own name. Epic released a split album with tenor saxophonist Seldon Powell with a telling title: *We Paid Our Dues!* 1963's *Bossa Nova Bacchanal* (Blue Note) hinted that Rouse's interests

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