

# Garland: Bop is Back!

By J.N. Thomas

After years of dominance by rock and roll, jazz is again having a resurgence of popularity. The more ambiguous side of this interest has talented jazz musicians transformed into uneasy and transient pop stars; the more promising side has certain uncompromising artists recognized as never before. Like Dexter Gordon and Charles Mingus.

Especially gratifying is the re-emergence from exile, obscurity or

inactivity of a number of great bop pianists, all of whom seem to be playing better than ever. Red Garland is one of the most important and influential playing at the Keystone Korner in San Francisco through Sunday, July 22nd.

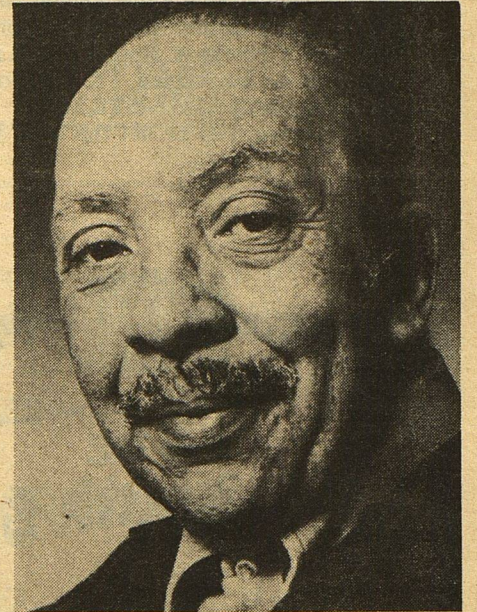
Born in Dallas in 1923, Garland's earliest musical training was on clarinet and alto sax, one of his teachers was the legendary Buster Smith, an altoist credited by no less than Charlie Parker as a pivotal influence. After a period as a professional boxer, Garland emerged from an Army hitch as a full-fledged

pianist. Back in Texas, he was first noticed by trumpeter Hot Lipps Page, an Oklahoman noted for his earthy blues style.

Garland developed rapidly. He was in the great Billy Eckstine Band of the Forties, a hotbed of bop experimentation; later, he freelanced with some of the greatest names in jazz, people like Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins, Roy Eldridge, and Lester Young.

By the mid-Fifties Garland was as ready as he'd ever be. His experience ranged from the steady, driving swing of

Hawkins and Eldridge through the passion and lyricism of Webster and Young to the defiant inventiveness of Parker and Dizzy Gillespie — always with that urgent undercurrent of hard Texas blues. His style found its center somewhere between the percussive power of Bud Powell and the lacy, two-hand chords of Erroll Garner. Right on cue, Miles Davis picked Garland for a group he was putting together. Jazz hasn't gotten over the shock yet.



Garland: Out of exile.

Although he could be as flashy a soloist as anyone, Garland's greatest strength was precisely his unrivaled sense of ensemble playing. No one listened more intently to what the rest of the group was doing — or was about to do. Garland was always exactly where he needed to be; unfailingly he inspired and supported soloists like Davis and Coltrane in some of their grandest flights, not neglecting to take a few flights of his own.

Garland's career had seemed to reach its peak by 1960. An unaggressive, dignified artist like Garland didn't change in the new scene of the Sixties. His records sold less and less, and finally in the Seventies he dropped out.

The irony was that Garland had matured like the finest wine. The piano was an extension of his deepest self. What he was, he could play, without evasion or artifice. When soul singer Johnnie Taylor offered him a job, Garland refused outright, saying "Play rock and roll? I'd wash dishes first."

Luckily for us that proved unnecessary, and the Bay Area can take some credit. In December of 1977 he played his first gig outside Texas in several years at Keystone Korner. There his triumph was extended by a new recording contract with Galaxy, a division of the Fantasy omnibus in Berkeley.

Of the three Galaxy LPs, *Red Alert*, with several horns, was something of an incohesive misfire, but the two trio sets, *Crossings* and *Equinox*, are unqualified masterworks, definitive modern jazz. Matched with players the caliber of Ron Carter and Philly Joe Jones (on *Crossings*), and Richard Davis and Roy Haynes (on *Equinox*), Garland can do no wrong.

## Record Report Look for the Hook

By Michael Snyder

Image. It's what the customer is buying. It's what the record company is selling. The more recognizable the product, the stronger the visual hook, the more memorable the T.V. commercial, ad infinitum!

A strong personality or vivid appearance establishes identity and a vicarious intimacy between the performer and the audience. You know John Lennon when you see him (though rarely) and Cheap Trick, like Kiss, are easy to spot when in costume. How about DEVO's uniforms? It's marketability. (If you think John Revolta in his white suit didn't contribute to the triple-platinum sales of *Saturday Night Fever*, then you're a candidate for the Sweathogs.)

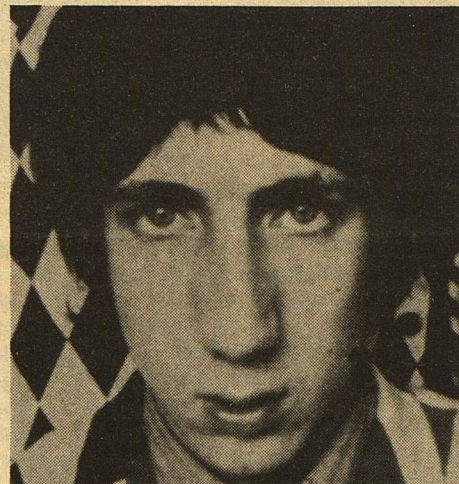
This week's models include two wiggled-out wonders in the B-52's who look like extras from "Cat-Women Of The Moon," and the Flamin' Groovies, a band that resides in the Bay Area while sporting tailored Carnaby Street threads. There's a lady named Peacock and a man named Tchaikovsky with new L.P.'s on the rack, but the award for creative imagery goes to Stiff artiste Lene Lovich and her consort, Les Chappell.

On a recent promotional visit to town, Lene and Les left a lasting impression. She was cordial, yet guarded, in European peasant garb that would have graced a runner-up at the Miss Serbia pageant. Her red braids were long enough to make Heidi envious. He cultivated a typically android-genius persona, from his shaven head to his brightly-colored brothel-creepers. Strolling through North Beach on a Sunday afternoon, they were hard to ignore. The powers-that-be hope Lene's record is as fascinating to the public as her appeal. She's her own best hook.

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**The B-52's** — (Warner Brothers): Georgia Jetsons take New York with inspired silliness to a dance beat. Upon first

hearing the album, I was put-off by the silliness and deaf to the inspiration. I did dance, though there's no bass player proper. (Ah, those devilish electronic keyboards.) On the second round with the disc, I was a goner. Real gone. "6060-842" is certifiably the coolest telephone toon since "Beechwood 4-5789" and "Lava" is hotter than, well...you know. It is rumored that singer Fred Schneider graduated magna cum laude from the Paul Lynde School of Voice, while Cindy Wilson and Kate Pierson, the aforementioned space babies, received their vocal coaching from Robby the Robot. Totally untrue. Their independent label smash, "Rock Lobster" b/w "52 Girls," is here and so's a cute, ass-backwards take of Petula Clark's "Downtown." What have you got to lose besides a fin? Bombs away.



Who?

**THE FLAMIN' GROOVIES** — *Jumpin' In The Night* (Sire): Flame on, rock 'n' rollers! This is the real stuff from the Groovers; merely the best collection of originals and covered classics to be waxed by the current edition of the group. It is also the finest pure playing that the cult band supreme has committed to record. The title track, "In The U.S.A." and "Yes I Am" are astonishing addi-

tions to the Groovies rep. (Consumer Note: The English import has a superior choice of oldies; three different tracks, including a knock-out "19th Nervous Breakdown." They are, of course, the only rock band in the world to do justice to Stones material, besides Mick and the boys.)

**THE KNACK** — *Get The Knack* (Capitol): Screw these contrived bastards and any pretensions to Beatle-dom. Capitol must be desperate if the organization is throwing promo-weight behind such banal, ineffectual bilge. Knuke the Knack!

**LENE LOVICH** — *Stateless* (Still/Epic): Hang on to your babushka! Lene's larynx should be put under observation at the Smithsonian. Born in Detroit, emigrated to Europe, formerly an erotic dancer and professional screamer for French horror movies, Lene Lovich can evoke a love-hungry ingenue, a woman of the world, a touchtone phone or a sound-wave oscillator. Les Chappell's arrangements are a perfect compliment, sometimes frenetic and futuristic, otherwise placid and conventional. Lovich even blows a sweet sax. Unique to the point of eccentricity, she scored a hit single in England this spring with "Lucky Number." Scour the used record shops for the 12-inch "Slavic Dance Version."

**JONI MITCHELL** — *Mingus* (Asylum): Mitchell's infatuation with jazz is no news. Her modified scat-singing, glottal stops and meandering lyrics added fuel to her evolution from folkie to funky. That does not make an attempt at the dubious practice of grafting words onto established jazz compositions any less feeble. Mingus music has been celebrated on its own merits for years. "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat," for one number, needs no clarification by a former rock groupie turned jazz groupie, as tribute to the late bass great. Available Mingus sessions from the '50s and '60s are a better bet than this frizzled fusion.

**THE WHO** — *The Kids Are Alright* (MCA): Soaring soundtrack from the filmed Who-story. Almost as good as being there. You can replay those amazing Keith Moon drum rolls until you believe them. Lightning struck more than twice. The kids were/are/will be alright. (Oh yeah. A cameo appearance by Tommy Smothers is his first on record in a decade.)

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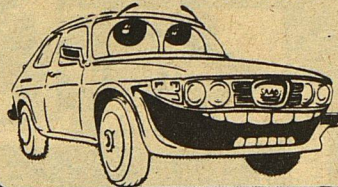


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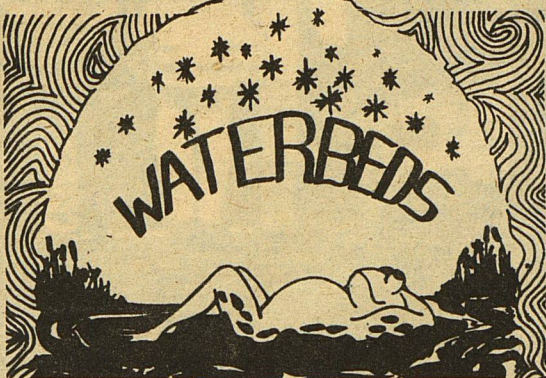
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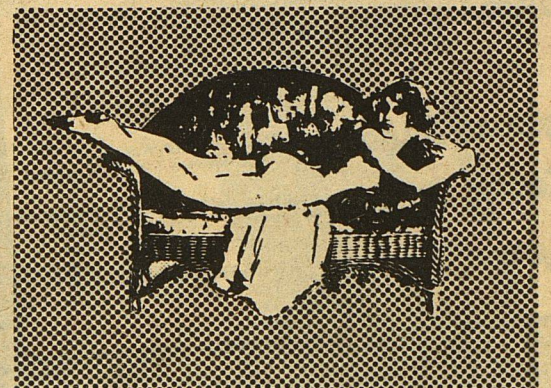
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