As the 21st century began, a small army of jazz artists from Cleveland were making their marks on world jazz stages. Perhaps never before had so many excellent musicians from Cleveland received such widespread recognition simultaneously.

In addition to Joe Lovano, Jim Hall and Ken Peplowski, there were many world class musicians from Cleveland playing and recording. Some traveled extensively; others remained in their hometown and made Cleveland their base of operations.

Here is a closer look at some of them:

John Fedchock

In 1974, when Woody Herman and his Orchestra were in Cleveland for a series of performances, they went to Mayfield High School on Wilson Mills Road to play a concert and conduct a clinic. In the front row was an 11th grader from Highland Heights who was playing trombone in school bands. He was excited about the music and the band, and got the autographs of all the players on a record cover. He began collecting Woody Herman records and Herman became his musical idol.

After he graduated in 1975, the young trombonist, John Fedchock, went to Ohio State University where he got a degree in music and education and began studying for a masters degree at the prestigious Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. At Eastman, Fedchock met alumni who were on the Herman band. He sent a tape to Gene Smith, Herman’s lead trombonist.

In the summer of 1980, while still studying at Eastman, Fedchock received a call at four o’clock in the morning. He got a leave of absence from Eastman and joined the touring Herman band in Chicago. For the young trombonist from Highland Heights, it was a dream come true.

From his record collection, Fedchock already knew most of the Herman band’s book. “I even had some of my parts memorized,” he said. Reading the arrangements was no problem.

By the second night, Herman started calling the 22-year-old Cleveland “Too Tall John” and began featuring him frequently on solos. At the Concord Jazz Festival in August of 1981, Fedchock soloed with the band on “North Beach Breakdown.”

Fedchock was touring the nation with the Herman Orchestra, playing concerts, dances and radio broadcasts.

“Woody never told us in advance what tunes we would play,” said Fedchock, “but the band would know what the upcoming number was after a couple of words of the little rap he gave the audience.”

After touring with the Herman Herd for a couple of years, Fedchock wrote his first arrangement for the band, a tune called “Fried Buzzard.”

In 1985, when Woody was doing a small group tour, Fedchock returned to Eastman and finished up his masters.

Five months later, he returned to the Herman Orchestra and became Herman’s music director and an arranger. He did 16 or 17 charts for the band. Looking back, Fedchock said, “Woody didn’t like to do the old stuff.”

In a radio interview, Herman said, “We try to find new material and try to find things that are reasonably new and different. I think that I would have lost interest a long, long time ago if I had been very stylized and stuck to a particular sound.” In fact, according to Fedchock, Herman was bugged when people requested the old tunes. One time at a dance hall in Iowa, a customer complained to Woody that he wasn’t playing his old big band hits. Fedchock said Woody asked the man, “What did it cost you to get in here?” Woody whipped out a twenty dollar bill, gave it to the man, and said, “See you later, Pal!”

In Herman’s autobiography, Woodchopper’s Ball, Fedchock said, “Woody would ride on the bus occasionally, but he didn’t interact too much with the guys. His only rule was to get on the stand and swing and play great. That was it!” On the bandstand, he wouldn’t say anything, but the Clevelander remembered, “You could tell from how he was looking at someone in the band if he wasn’t digging it.” If he wasn’t digging a solo, “he’d bring forward a second guy to play it, just to show the first guy, ‘Hey, you’re not making it.’ He didn’t have to say anything.”

Fedchock was “making it” and remained with the Herman band for seven years, from 1980 until Woody’s death in 1987. The Clevelander later toured with Gerry Mulligan’s Concert Jazz Band, Louie Bellson’s big band and the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band.

In 1989, Fedchock and fellow Eastman graduate Maria Schneider formed a band together.

In the 1990s, Fedchock formed his own band, the New York Big Band, and began recording with it in 1995. One of the tunes on the band’s second CD, On The Edge, is titled “The Chopper,” one of Herman’s nicknames. Fedchock wrote “The Chopper” to honor his boss at a Carnegie Hall concert. John said he tried to “evoke the feeling of some of the great medium-groove charts we played with the (Herman) band.”
In the 1999 *DownBeat* magazine Readers’ Poll, Fedchock’s New York Big Band was voted number five in jazz. As a trombonist, he was voted number five. And, as an arranger, he was voted number four. There were similar results in the 2000, 2001 and 2002 polls.

The Cleveland area native who first saw and heard the Herman Orchestra when he was a 16-year-old 11th grader at Mayfield High School, had become a major player in the world of jazz.

**John Fedchock Discography**

As a sideman:
- 1978 - Live at Carnegie Hall & Montreaux with Herman
- 1979 - Best of Woody Herman and his Big Band
- 1979 - Concord Jazz Heritage Series
- 1980 - Farthest Corner of My Mind
- 1981 - Live at Concord Jazz Festival with Herman
- 1982 - World Class with Herman
- 1983 - My Buddy with Rosemary Clooney
- 1989 - Treasure Island
- 1986 - Woody Herman’s 50th Anniversary Tour
- 1987 - Woody’s Gold Star with Herman
- 1988 - Ebony with Richard Stoltzman
- 1989 - Fired Up with Lew Anderson Orch.
- 1989 - Feelin’ Good, Yeah! with Lew Anderson Orch.
- 1989 - Straight to My Heart: The Music of Sting
- 1990 - Treasure Island with Bob Belden
- 1992 - Turandot with Bob Belden
- 1993 - The Best of Woody Herman
- 1994 - Voices in Standards
- 1994 - The Third Degree
- 1994 - Forced Air Heat
- 1994 - Evanesence with Maria Schneider Orch.
- 1994 - Passion Dance
- 1994 - Live at Newport & the Hollywood Bowl
- 1996 - Under the Influence
- 1996 - Vintage Year
- 1996 - Loyalties
- 1996 - Friday Evenings at Sardi’s
- 1996 - Planet of Tears
- 1998 - Currents
- 1998 - In Good Company with George Rabbai
- 1999 - From Broken Hearts to Blue Skies
- 1999 - Blues for an Old New Age
- 1999 - Gallery
- 1999 - Live in London at Ronnie Scott’s - Herman band
- 1999 - Music of Sting with Bob Belden
- 2000 - Things For Now

Leading his New York Big Band:
- 1995 - New York Big Band
- 1998 - On the Edge
- 2000 - Hit the Bricks
- 2002 - No Nonsense

**Ernie Krivda**

Unlike contemporaries Lovano, Peplowski and Fedchock, tenor saxophonist Ernie Krivda decided to make Cleveland his base of operations and won wide praise for his music.

Krivda, a native of Garfield Heights, was also exposed to jazz early. His father played tenor sax and frequently listened to records by Coleman Hawkins and Benny Goodman. He started his son on the clarinet. One day, when Ernie was in eighth grade, he later recalled, “I suddenly discovered I really enjoyed practicing. I couldn’t put the horn down.”

He didn’t begin playing the saxophone until he was 16, but he learned the instrument quickly and was soon playing jazz gigs around Cleveland.

Shortly after he graduated from Holy Name High School, Krivda went on the road (in 1963) with the Jimmy Dorsey ghost band. He returned to Cleveland in the mid-1960s, enrolled in Baldwin-Wallace College and played in the bands of two Cleveland jazz legends, organist Eddie Baccus and guitarist Bill de Arango.

From 1970 to 1975, Krivda was the leader of the house band at the Smiling Dog Saloon where he shared the stage with such national touring artists as Chick Corea, Elvin Jones, Ahmad Jamal, McCoy Tyner and Freddie Hubbard.

Krivda won the *Scene* magazine poll as “The Top Jazz Musician in Cleveland” in 1972 and ’73. Critic Bernard Larait wrote, “Ernie Krivda should be ranked with the top musicians in jazz.”

In the mid-1970s, he became a soloist with Quincy Jones’ last orchestra which included Frank Rosolino and Sahib Shihab. They toured the U.S. and Japan and, in 1976, recorded an album, *Mellow Madness*.

Krivda moved to New York in 1976, signed a contract with Inner City Records and made three albums for the firm.

At one point, Miles Davis was quoted as saying, “I want that white boy in my band.” But Krivda declined the offer. Davis at the time was using three loud electric guitars in his group and Krivda didn’t want to live and work in New York. In an interview with *Northern Ohio Live* (January 1990), Krivda said, “In New York you have to do all sorts of things to keep your life together. I played in discos and worked at a bank during the day, and I still couldn’t pay my rent. I didn’t have time to concentrate on my stuff, which is why I went there in the first place. The emphasis there is on making cash. It is not a contemplative environment.”

Krivda returned to Cleveland in 1978 and began
concentrating on his stuff—a number of albums with his own groups, soloing on albums with others, writing serious music, playing at a variety of Cleveland area clubs and, from time to time, traveling to Toledo, Detroit and Buffalo for gigs. He was also teaching at the Willoughby School of Fine Arts.

An intense saxophonist with a dramatic style, Krivda in the 1990s was considered one of the jazz leaders in Cleveland. Following the 1992 release of his 15th album, *Ernie Krivda Jazz*, by Cadence Records, Andrew Sussman wrote in *Fanfare*, “If Krivda lived in New York, he would almost certainly be universally recognized as a major talent.”

In 1993, Krivda formed his Fat Tuesday Big Band, originally as a rehearsal big band and later as a concert and dance orchestra. The band played regularly in Cleveland and recorded. At the same time, Krivda toured with small groups, performing in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York. In 1997, he also formed Swing City, a seven-piece group consisting of Cuyahoga Community College music teachers. He also served as artistic director of the Cuyahoga Community College Jazz Studies Program and as assistant director of the Lakeland Community College Jazz Festival.

### Ernie Krivda Discography

**As leader:**
- 1977 - *Emie Krivda and Friends* (Inner City Records)
- 1980 - *The Alchemist* (Inner City Records)
- 1980 - *The Glory Strut* (Inner City Records)
- 1983 - *Live at Peabody’s* (North Coast Jazz Records)
- 1983 - *Live at Rusty’s* (North Coast Jazz Records)
- 1985 - *The Fireside Sessions* with Kenny Davis (North Coast Jazz Records)
- 1986 - *Tough Tenor Red Hot* (Cadence)
- 1986 - *Well You Needn’t* (Cadence)
- 1989 - *Lee’s Keys Please* (Timeless)
- 1991 - *Ernie Krivda Jazz Krivda Quartet* (Cadence)
- 1993 - *So Nice to Meet You with Paula Owens* (Cadence)
- 1996 - *The Art of the Ballad* with Bill Dobbins (Koch)
- 1997 - *Sarah’s Theme Krivda Trio* (Cadence)
- 1998 - *Perdido* Fat Tuesday Big Band (Koch)
- 1999 - *The Band That Swings Fat Tuesday Big Band* (Koch)
- 2003 - *The Music of Emie Krivda* (Cadence)

**As a sideman:**
- 1970 - *Textures* with Bill Dobbins (Jazz Orch. Advent)
- 1976 - *Mellow Madness* with Quincy Jones Orch. (A&M)
- 1983 - *Live at Peabody’s with Bill Dobbins Quartet* (North Coast Jazz Records)
- 1988 - *Tonal Paintings* with Cliff Habian (Milestone)
- 1989 - *Manhattan Bridge* with Cliff Habian (Milestone)
- 1996 - *Galleria* with Pete Selvaggio (Koch)
- 1998 - *Even the Broken Letters Spell Earth* with Daniel Thompson (Bottom Dog)

### Dan Wall

Pianist and organist Dan Wall came to Cleveland after making a name for himself playing and recording with guitarist John Abercrombie. Wall quickly became one of Cleveland’s most respected jazz pianists.

A native of Atlanta and a third generation pianist, Wall established a reputation in the Georgia city before going to New York in the 1980s. He played in a number of New York City clubs and recorded with Steve Grossman, Eddie Gomez, Jeremy Steig, Joe Chambers and accompanied such singers as Dakota Staton and Sheila Jordan.

In 1992, Wall began playing organ with a trio that included Abercrombie. He made several recordings with Abercrombie and drummer Adam Nussbaum and toured throughout the United States, Canada, Japan and Europe.

Wall, who frequently played at the Cleveland Bop Stop and recorded with the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra and Ernie Krivda, is married to singer Carol Veto.

### Jack Schantz

The music director and featured trumpet soloist of the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra, Jack Schantz, who has recorded with legendary pianist Oscar Peterson, grew up in Orrville, Ohio, on the edge of Amish country.

“My parents were in the pipe organ business,” recalled Schantz. “It’s been in the family since 1870. My father and mother weren’t necessarily musical; my father was the businessman and mechanic. My uncle was the musician. He went to Oberlin and one of his classmates was Al Haig.”

It was his uncle’s record collection that first got Jack interested in jazz. “One of the first recordings I remember,” said Schantz, “was a Stan Kenton album with a trumpet solo by Conte Candoli on ‘There’s a Small Hotel.’ I played that record so much that I couldn’t give the worn-out disc back to him.”

Schantz began playing trumpet in junior high school. His band director at Orrville High School was a former big band saxophonist who formed an excellent student
jazz band which went to the Montreux Jazz Festival in France and toured Europe for two weeks. “I remember I was in a hotel room in Belgium and I said to myself, ‘Now this is for me! This is what I want to do!’”

After a year at Otterbein College, Schantz (in 1974) joined a big band called the Akron Jazz Workshop. It was led by Roland Paolucci. Other young members of that band included Mark Gonder, Gary Apriie and Paul Ferguson – later all key members of the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra. When Paolucci became the director of the University of Akron Jazz Ensemble, Schantz enrolled at Akron and played in the band. He also played his trumpet anywhere he could.

“Every place I could sit in,” said Schantz, “I would go. There was a place where I really learned how to play, a place in Stow called the Village Pump. There was a band there every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night and I would go and sit in. I just totally made a fool of myself every night. But then, I went home and practiced.”

His persistence and practice paid off. In 1980, as he was about to tour Europe with the University of Akron Jazz Ensemble, Schantz was offered a job playing with the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra, then led by trombonist Buddy Morrow. “About three days after I got back from Europe, I hopped on a plane and went to Minneapolis and joined the Dorsey band. I absolutely loved it! I had a ball for the first three or four years! I was happy and proud to be doing that.”

Schantz’ roommate on the road with the Dorsey band was clarinetist Ken Peplowski. Later, after Peplowski became world famous, he was a featured guest soloist with the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra. “After the concert,” said Schantz, “we went to the Bop Stop and had this jam session. It was one of those magical nights! We just burned the place down!”

In addition to touring with the Dorsey Orchestra, Schantz played with the Glenn Miller ghost band. “Whenever they were doing a gig and needed somebody,” said Schantz, “I would go out and fill in for a couple of months. I also played with the Artie Shaw band for awhile and did a couple of gigs with Woody Herman’s band.”

Schantz left the road in 1988 and joined the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra, then led by his old college jazz band director. Schantz was named music director of the CJO in 1993.

He also performed with smaller groups. In 1993 he recorded an album called *Speechless* with pianist Chip Stephens, bassist Jeff Halsey and drummer Val Kent.

In 1995, Schantz was selected to play trumpet solos on Oscar Peterson’s Christmas compact disc. When Peterson chose Schantz for the album, Schantz said, “I felt like I had won the lottery! It was one of the greatest things I have ever done. It was an absolute thrill!”

Schantz also formed an experimental 14-piece group called the Jazz Unit that played Monday nights at Ron Busch’s Bop Stop in Cleveland. Schantz said, “I thought it would be a good opportunity to establish a Monday night tradition in Cleveland much like they have in New York with Monday nights at the Village Vanguard.”

Bassist Dave Morgan soon joined the group and began writing for it. Schantz said, “Morgan’s writing and playing transformed the band to one with a unique voice and a unified concept.”

The trumpeter described the little band as “a forward-looking, modern jazz ensemble that utilizes different instrumental timbres unlike a conventional big band and uses soloists to a much different degree than conventional big bands.”

Morgan said, “We’re not trying to be esoteric in any way, just showing that jazz can move forward without getting more and more out.” Schantz’ Jazz Unit released its first compact disc, *Choices*, in late 1998.

In 2001, Schantz became the director of jazz studies at the University of Akron.

### Jack Schantz Discography

- 1992 - *The Cleveland Jazz Orchestra* - *Greatest Hits* (Telarc)
- 1993 - *Speechless* - Schantz Quartet (Azica)
- 1995 - *An Oscar Peterson Christmas* (Telarc)
- 1998 - *Choices* - Schantz Jazz Unit (Bop Stop)
- 1999 - *Swingin’ Together* - leading and soloing with the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra (CJO)
- 1999 - *Traditions* - leading and soloing with the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra (CJO)
- 2001 - *Friends* - Paul Ferguson Jazz Orchestra
- 2002 - *Night and Day* - Barbara Knight and the CJO

### Neal Creque

Pianist, composer and teacher Neal Creque called Cleveland his “musical utopia.” That’s a big statement from an artist who had been Carmen McRae’s musical director, recorded with dozens of top name artists, and had his compositions performed by such well-known jazz artists as Ramsey Lewis and Grant Green.

Creque, who came to Cleveland in 1973, was born and raised in St. Thomas, the Virgin Islands, the son of a classical piano teacher and poet. Creque recalled his father “was also involved the political arena. He took a seat in the government, but devoted most of his life to teaching. My father had all eight of us in the family learn how to play the piano. In classical music it’s important to get an early start. I was very fortunate.”

Creque was not exposed to jazz until he was a teenager. “I have a brother who spent some time in New York,” he said, “and when he came back home, when I was about 14 years old, he introduced me to jazz. I think I just took a liking to it immediately. When I first
started with jazz, I was emulating people like Dave Brubeck. Why Dave Brubeck? Because he was also classically trained and I could relate to that. In fact I think I could credit him with being partially influential in my making the transition. I said to myself, ‘If he could do it, I guess I could also.’”

Creque continued to study classical music, but got more and more interested in jazz. When he left St. Thomas in 1956 to attend Thiel College in Greenville, Pennsylvania, he formed the school’s first jazz band.

When he left Thiel, Creque went into the Air Force for four years and played in a series of service jazz bands. “Of course, we had a marching band,” remembered Creque. “At that time I also had to play bass drum or cymbals in the marching band. It was intriguing because to play for an entire troop means you had to have the strength to hit that bass so that troops can hear it a mile away while you’re marching, but I enjoyed it.”

While Creque was best known as a jazz pianist, he never considered it incongruous to play classical music or even to beat a bass drum in a marching band. “I don’t look at it from the prospective that I’m a jazz musician. I’m a musician. I love classical music. I love jazz and I march to the beat of my own drum.”

After four years in the Air Force, Creque’s personal drum beat took him in a completely different musical direction. “I went to Miami and immediately got involved with a rock ‘n roll band. I played the Hammond B-3 organ and traveled from Miami to New York.” He called it his initiation into the music business. “Paying his dues” had an almost literal meaning. He bought a new Hammond organ to play on the rock tour and remembered, “We had these go-go girls and I was unaware that they would get up on my instrument and, with their shoe heels, carve the heck out of my brand new Hammond organ! Oh, it was a learning lesson for me!”

After Creque had established himself as a talented, reliable pianist in New York, he began working with singer Carmen McRae. “She immediately liked how I played,” he recalled. “I toured with her and then became her musical director. It was very interesting because she was very demanding. I was very fortunate because I have seen Carmen McRae make a musician feel very small, but I did my homework and I never had that problem with her.” McRae wanted Creque to go with her to the West Coast, but, Neal and Nina had a young daughter and decided to stay in New York.

In 1971, he made his first album as a leader, Creque, Creque (later reissued as Black Velvet Rose). It was the first of three albums he recorded for Muse Records. It included eight of his own compositions. One was called “Nina.” Looking back at that first album, Creque said, “It had a conglomeration of different styles of music. It was not pinpointed at one particular style.”

By 1973 Creque had tired of the big city. “Nina and I decided, ‘Let’s leave New York.’ Apartment rents and things were skyrocketing. Crime was increasing and my daughter was in the second grade. We said, ‘Let’s make the move so she can have a fair shot at life.’”

Creque came to Cleveland where his wife’s father...
was living. He almost got out of music. "I started to study the real estate business. That's what Nina's father was into. I studied it and was about to take a test, but I got a call from Leon Thomas and he asked me to come back and do a tour with him."

By the 1990s, Creque had become an acknowledged leader of Cleveland's jazz community with his obvious artistry, class, and style, doing what he loved doing - making music. He played with almost everyone here in small groups and with the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra. He and former Roland Kirk bassist Chink Stevenson were a Saturday night institution at the Boarding House in University Circle. In 1991 Creque recorded with guitarist Bob Ferrazza on Ferrazza's first album *Personal*.

Besides playing tasty jazz in Cleveland, Creque was a prolific composer. He wrote literally thousands of songs. He told me he didn't know how many. "I stopped counting at about 3,000 about eight or ten years ago." Some days, more than five new songs poured from Creque's creative mind into his piano. He said, "I have reel-to-reel tapes in my basement. When I listen to some of them, it's amazing the number of things that I put on tape, songs that I didn't realize I composed. I didn't bother to write them all out. I have a tremendous volume of music that I have to take account of some day. I have to catalog the whole thing."

Some of Creque's songs were recorded by guitarist Grant Green, pianist Ramsey Lewis and singer Leon Thomas. Green included two of Creque's compositions, "Dracula" and "Windjammer" on his 1970 Blue Note album *Green Is Beautiful*. Creque played organ on "Windjammer." Green's recordings established Creque as a composer. "Ramsey Lewis had my biggest hit," said Creque. "He recorded a tune called 'Wandering Rose' (on a 1977 Columbia album, *Tequila Mockingbird*). I still get royalties on that. It was marvelous. I'm thankful to him for that and whenever he comes to Cleveland, he plays it for me in his concerts here."

Creque was almost always thinking of new songs. The day of our interview he said, "Last night, as soon as I got home from playing at Night Town, I sat down and started writing. I was up until two o'clock."

In addition to composing and playing piano several nights a week in various Cleveland clubs, Creque was also busy teaching at Oberlin College, Cleveland State University, the Cleveland School of the Arts, and giving private lessons. He said, "I get such a great satisfaction seeing what you can extend to another person." He saw his teaching as an extension of his teacher father.

Creque said philosophically, "The best thing to do is to follow your heart. You cannot say, 'I'm going to make a lot of money in this business of the music of jazz.' So, follow your heart!"

Looking back, he said he had no regrets about leaving New York. "I think it was the best thing I could have done." Music was Creque's life and he said he was happy doing it in Cleveland.

He told me, "Every musician must find his utopia. For me, I see this as my utopia because I enjoy the teaching part of it. Cleveland has more to offer in jazz than New York, Detroit or California."

After battling kidney cancer for several years, Creque died December 1, 2000. He was 60 years old and never did get around to cataloging all his compositions.

**Duke Jenkins**

Pianist, singer and leader Duke Jenkins was one of Cleveland's leading jazz performers for more than half a century by practicing a simple philosophy - perform melodic music that people understand and can relate to. His philosophy carried him through an endless series of musical revolutions.

He told me, "I don't understand what's happening in music. It used to be so great with Sinatra, Nat 'King' Cole and Tony Bennett and the great music they were doing."

Jenkins' family moved from Alabama to the Canton area when he was five months old. He began playing piano in Canton when he was nine. He recalled, "I had an
uncle that could play by ear. He played ‘Pinetop’s Boogie Woogie,’ and I used to watch him play. He said, ‘Want me to teach you how to play this?’ He started teaching me, note for note, how to play Pinetop’s ‘Boogie Woogie.’ I used to play that thing all day. My mother would run me out of the house, ‘If you don’t go out and play, I’m going to go crazy.’"

By the time he was in high school, Jenkins and his brother, Fred, had their own radio program. They were on the air every Thursday morning for 15 minutes on WACT in Canton. “They called it The Jenkins Brothers Show,” he said. “We used to sing. I played piano and we sang duets together and Fred would tap dance. We got to be the kings of the school. Everybody got out of class to hear us every Thursday.”

After high school, Jenkins went to Miami University in Oxford, Ohio and for a brief period sang with the college big band, the Miami Campus Owls.

He was making a bigger name for himself performing with a small group on campus. “I was playing for the fraternities down there,” he said, “and they started calling me ‘The Duke.’ Almost every week, my picture was in the campus newspaper.”

Jenkins’ parents were hoping he would become a doctor, but he was developing a reputation on campus as a musician. “One day,” he recalled, “the dean of the school of music saw me and said, ‘Jenkins, what school are you in?’ I said, ‘I’m in liberal arts.’ He said, ‘What are you doing in liberal arts?’ I said, ‘I want to be a doctor.’ ‘You’re going to be a doctor?!’ And he asked, ‘Do you want to be a doctor?’ I said, ‘My dad wants me to be a doctor. I want to be a musician.’ The dean talked me into changing over to the music school.”

But, in the early 1940s, America was at war. Jenkins, at the age of 21, went into the Army and played with an Army band at Camp Wallace near Galveston, Texas. He played glockenspiel in the marching band and clarinet in the Army concert band. He and his wife, Christina, were married in 1943 shortly before he was sent to Europe. When he went overseas, the Stan Kenton band was on the same ship and all the musicians joined in jam sessions. In Europe Jenkins was stationed at La Havre, France, where he played with the Army band and helped guard German prisoners of war.

When he was discharged, he returned to Canton and quickly got a job playing with a group in a small club. Before long, the group became “The Duke Jenkins Orchestra.”

Jenkins left Canton in 1948 and went to Chicago with a five-piece band to perform at Chicago’s Brass Rail. With him in Chicago was his wife who was going to school to learn how to make hair pieces. She developed a new technique of weaving artificial hair to real hair. “So we right away got a patent on it,” said Jenkins, “and

formed a company called ‘Christina’s Hair Weave.’” As the hair weave company grew, Duke and Christina decided to move to Cleveland.

From 1952 until 1957, Jenkins led the house band at the Majestic Hotel and hosted the now legendary Rose Room Blue Monday Party jam sessions early Monday mornings, jam sessions that attracted such traveling artists as Joe Williams, Nancy Wilson and Erroll Garner. As a result of his popularity at the Rose Room, Jenkins got a regular television program in Cleveland in 1955 and 1956.

In 1959, Jenkins decided to leave Cleveland for a job in Miami Beach. He was playing at the Theatrical one night when Mushy Wexler, the owner, asked him, “Duke, have you ever been to Miami Beach?” “No.” “How would you like to go?” Wexler called Harry Musselman, the owner of of the Eden Roc, and said, “I got a group here that’ll just fit your room!” Jenkins and his trio played six nights a week for three years at the Eden Roc. The night he opened, actor Rock Hudson came to the show. Frank Sinatra and Nat “King” Cole were both performing nearby. Sammy Davis, Jr. stopped in one night and sat in on drums with Jenkins’ group.

Jenkins returned to Cleveland in 1961 and became a mainstay of area jazz rooms by practicing his simple philosophy of performing melodic music that people understand and can relate to.

Chuck Israels

His family moved from New York City to Cleveland Heights in 1946. His step father, Mordecai Bauman, taught voice at the Cleveland Institute of Music and booked jazz concerts at Severance Hall. While his son was attending Coventry Elementary School, old Roosevelt Junior High, and Cleveland Heights High School, jazz giants like Louis Armstrong and Jack Teagarden came to their home on Washington Boulevard near Cottage Grove for dinner. The family remained in Cleveland Heights for six years, until 1952.

Chuck Israels went to MIT to study engineering, but switched to Brandeis University to study music. He progressed quickly. At the age of 22, he was playing bass on a recording with John Coltrane.

In 1959, Israels went to Europe and played with American jazz expatriates including pianist Bud Powell.
Israel later told an interviewer, “It was heaven! I got to know movie director Nicholas Ray and beat poet Gregory Corso.” He came back to the United States in 1961. Israel replaced Scott LaFaro, who was killed in a traffic accident, in the Bill Evans Trio. For five years, Israels toured with Evans. He later said, “Playing with Evans was the best job in the world for a bassist.”

Also in the ’60s, he performed with such diverse jazz artists as Benny Goodman, Kenny Clarke and Lucky Thompson.

By the late 1960s, Israel decided to concentrate on composing and arranging. He studied with Hall Overton while playing bass in the studios and theatres of New York City. Before long, he was conducting orchestras for Broadway shows.

In 1981, when his wife, soprano Margot Hanson, got a job with the San Francisco Opera Company, Israels moved to the Bay Area and spent much of his time writing arrangements for big bands, many of them in Europe.

In 1993, the former Cleveland was invited by the North German Broadcasting Company to write for and conduct a production with the Hanover Radio Philharmonic Orchestra. He hooked up with the Metropole Orchestra, an unusual orchestra in the Netherlands. The Metropole Orchestra was a big jazz band with a medium sized string section, extra woodwinds, one horn, extra percussion and a harp. Within this framework, Israels brought in trumpeter and flugelhornist Claudio Roditi to play a concert in April of 1996 at the Frits Philips Hall in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. Israels said that instead of concentrating on the fiery aspects of the Brazil-born and Berklee-educated Roditi, he wanted to provide vehicles to show the trumpeter’s ability to “get inside a piece of music and explore it.” A recording of that concert was released by Cleveland-based Azica Records. The record company was headed by Bruce Egre who also grew up in Cleveland Heights. The compact disc was called the Eindhoven Concert: Recorded Live in the Netherlands. It included an unusual Chuck Israels arrangement of “Nature Boy.” The arrangement, set in a framework of a string orchestra, included a jazz flugelhorn solo by Roditi. The concert was recorded live, with no re-takes, no edits, and no inter-cuts.

A few months after recording with the Metropole Orchestra, Israels came back to Cleveland to play at the Lakeland Community College Jazz Festival. From the airport, he had friends drive him up Cedar Hill to Cleveland Heights, his old stompin’ ground, where he had first been introduced to jazz as a school kid. He said, “We drove up Cottage Grove, Washington Boulevard, Cedar and Lee – all over. The streets looked the same,” he said, “as they did almost half a century earlier when Louis Armstrong and Jack Teagarden and others came to their home on Washington Boulevard for dinner.

### Chuck Israels Discography

**As leader:**
- 1976 - National Jazz Ensemble
- 1997 - Eindhoven Concert (Azica)

**As sideman:**
- 1956 - Jazz Showcase (Original Jazz)
- 1957 - The Jazz Year (Black Sun)
- 1965 - The Complete Riverside Recordings [1956-63]
- 1958 - Coltrane Time (Blue Note)
- 1960 - Herbie Mann Anthology
- 1960 - Stratusphunk (Original Jazz)
- 1961 - Copenhagen Concert
- 1961 - Eric Dolphy in Europe, Vols. 1-3 (Original Jazz)
- 1961 - A Day in the City (Original Jazz)
- 1961 - Nirvana
- 1962 - The Best of Herbie Hancock (Blue Note)
- 1962 - How My Heart Sings! (Original Jazz)
- 1962 - Moonbeams (Original Jazz)
- 1962 - Compact Jazz: Bill Evans (Polygram)
- 1962 - Complete Blue Note Sixties Sessions (Blue Note)
- 1962 - Vintage Dolphy (G.M.)
- 1962 - Circle Waltz (Original Jazz)
- 1963 - Bill Evans Trio at Shelly’s Manne-Hole (VC)
- 1963 - Jazz ’Round Midnight: Bill Evans (Polygram)
- 1963 - Time Remembered (Prestige)
- 1963 - My Point of View (Blue Note)
- 1963 - New Jazz on Campus
- 1964 - Compact Disc: Stan Getz (Polygram)
- 1964 - Getz Au Go-Go (Polygram)
- 1964 - Judy Collins Concert
- 1964 - Trio Live
- 1965 - Bill Evans Trio with Symphony Orch. (Polygram)
- 1965 - Time to Remember (Live in Europe)
- 1965 - Trio ’65 (Polygram)
- 1965 - 5th Album (Elektra/Asylum)
- 1966 - Here and Now (Original Jazz)
- 1966 - Bill Evans at Town Hall (Polygram)
- 1968 - Herbie Hancock
- 1968 - Playback
- 1969 - The Best of Judy Collins (Elektra/Asylum)
- 1974 - Phoebe Snow (CDD Compact Classics)
- 1977 - Libby Titus
- 1978 - Baltimore (Sony)
- 1984 - Monk Suite
- 1984 - Complete Landmark Sessions (Jazz Records)
- 1985 - Sings Ballads (Concord)
- 1990 - Times Like These (Artifex)
- 1991 - Too Marvelous for Words (Valley Entertainment)
- 1991 - ’Round Midnight (Milestone)
- 1991 - Blues for McVeyty
- 1992 - The Art of Coltrane (Blue Note)
- 1992 - Jazz ’Round Midnight: Big Band
- 1992 - Jazz ’Round Midnight: Chanteuses
- 1993 - I’m All Smiles
- 1994 - Verve Jazz Masters 5: Bill Evans (Polygram)
- 1994 - The Best of Patti Austin (Sony)
- 1995 - The Best of Verve (Polygram)
- 1997 - The Complete Bill Evans on Verve (Polygram)
- 1997 - Riverside Records Story (Riverside)
- 1997 - Jazz Giants Play George Gershwin (Prestige)
- 1998 - Great Jazz Artists Play Jerome Kern
- 1998 - An Evening With Herb Ellis (Jazz Focus)
- 1998 - Ultimate Bill Evans (Polygram)
- 1998 - Complete Johnny Mercer Songbook (Polygram)
David Berkman

Another alumnus of Cleveland Heights High School, pianist David Berkman, the son of well known Cleveland attorney Bernard Berkman, went to New York in the mid-1980s and became a conspicuous member of the New York jazz scene by the 1990s. He performed with such artists as Tom Harrell, Sonny Stitt, Billy Hart, Matt Wilson and Billy Drewes, plus the Woody Herman and Village Vanguard Orchestras.

Berkman arranged material for vocalists Eden Atwood and Lisa Michel and recorded with Eliot Zigmund before becoming a member of the Cecil McBee ensemble.

Berkman’s 1998 compact disc Handmade included 12 of his compositions and featured the trumpet of Harrell.

Greg Bandy

Like many outstanding Cleveland jazz musicians, Greg Bandy went to New York City to advance his career. Unlike most, he stayed there 24 years, making his living as a jazz drummer.

Born in Cleveland in 1951, Bandy was also exposed to jazz early. His father, Charles Bandy, was a jazz promoter and brought many national jazz artists to Cleveland. When Greg was 11 (in 1962), his father took him to the Musicarnival in Warrensville Heights to see and hear the Duke Ellington Orchestra. After the performance, Greg went backstage with his father and met Ellington and his drummer, Sam Woodyard. Bandy later recalled with a smile, “He let me go on stage and play his drums.”

By the early 1970s, Bandy had become a leading jazz drummer in Cleveland. He went to New York in 1972 and quickly learned “you had to prove yourself.” He admitted it wasn’t easy at first. “Sometimes I slept in my car,” said Bandy in a 1996 Plain Dealer interview, but he eventually proved himself to other jazz players in New York and began supporting his family as a working jazz drummer.

He recalled that shortly after he arrived in New York, he was playing in a club when legendary bassist Charlie Mingus walked in, listened to Bandy’s group, and asked the Clevelanders if his group would play between sets at the Village Gate.

While making New York his base of operations, Bandy recorded with such artists as Pharoah Sanders, Richard “Groove” Holmes and Jimmy Witherspoon. In addition, he played drums with such jazz performers as Joe Henderson, Jackie McLean, Betty Carter, Leon Thomas, Jimmy Scott and Yusef Lateef. He toured the world with some of the biggest names in jazz.

He was also active in the theatre. He scored performances of the Ruth Williams Dance Company and acted in a 1985 Metropolitan Opera production of Porgy and Bess at Lincoln Center and appeared in the Negro Ensemble Company’s 1990 production of Sidewinder, a play based on the life of jazz artist Lee Morgan.

Bandy decided to return to Cleveland in 1996. He said he came home to take care of his mother, but admitted that New York had lost some of its luster. “It’s not the creative mecca it used to be,” he said.

Back in Cleveland, Bandy became very active playing with local groups while still touring from time to time. Ron Busch, the co-owner of the Cleveland Bop Stop, said Bandy “is a great drummer.”
In addition to performing, Bandy was teaching at Cuyahoga Community College, Oberlin College and in Cleveland schools.

At the 2000 Tri-C JazzFest, Bandy led an all-star group in a tribute to Art Blakey. Performing with Bandy in that concert were such former members of Blakey’s Jazz Messengers as Curtis Fuller, Wallace Roney, Curtis Lundy, Bill Pierce, John Hicks and Gary Bartz.

Eddie Baccus, Sr.  

Almost four decades after he played at the Club 100 at East 100th and Euclid with Roland Kirk and George Cook, Eddie Baccus was still winning great praise for his jazz in Cleveland. Born November 17, 1936 in Lawndale, North Carolina, Baccus began to lose his eyesight at the age of eight. He entered the Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh, where he studied piano. In the 1950s, his family moved to Dayton and Eddie enrolled in the Ohio State School for the Blind in Columbus. He graduated in 1960, after taking a year off to play with another student of the school, a Columbus native who at the time called himself Ronnie Kirk. Later as Rahsaan Roland Kirk, he became famous mainly for his unusual ability to play three different saxophones at the same time in three-part harmony.

After touring the Midwest with Kirk’s band, Baccus came to Cleveland in 1959 and after listening to organist Jimmy Smith, switched from piano to organ. He again played with Kirk in a series of engagements along the string of jazz clubs in the East 105th and Euclid area of Cleveland. Those gigs led to a record album called Feel Real in 1963.

Baccus moved permanently to Cleveland and married. He and his wife Jean began raising five sons. He was playing organ with Cleveland’s top jazz artists, including Tony “Big T” Lovano.

Tony Lovano’s son, Joe, remembered, as a teenager, sitting in with his father and Baccus. Baccus also played with the major names that came to town – Gene Ammons and Sonny Stitt among them – at such venues as Sir-Rah’s House on Lee Road and the East Town Motel in East Cleveland. Over the years, Baccus played with almost everybody in Cleveland, even big band leader Al Serafini in the early 1970s.

In 1986, Joe Lovano, celebrating the release of his first album as a leader, gathered a group consisting of his father, Tony Lovano, relatives and friends in the Beachwood Studio in Cleveland for an informal recording session. Included were drummer Lawrence “Jacktown” Jackson, and organist Eddie Baccus. It was only the second album for Baccus, the Cleveland organist who had impressed so many local and national jazz musicians over the years.

Ramon Morris, a Pittsburgh area saxophonist who played many times with Baccus, told Plain Dealer writer Carlo Wolff, “I believe if he had left Cleveland and gone to New York and played with a higher level of musicians on a regular basis, he would have had much, much more to say. I think his story would have been just as profound as (jazz organ legend) Jimmy Smith’s.”

Baccus never appeared disappointed with his career. He said, “I just love playing. I figured if I made it big, okay; and if I didn’t, okay. I always thought that if I could give somebody advice or help, an up-and-coming musician, I would.”

He gave a great deal of musical advice and help to many young musicians, including the youngest of his five sons.

Eddie Baccus, Jr.  

Baccus’ son, Eddie Baccus, Jr., became a highly-respected jazz saxophonist in the 1990s. Born October 22, 1970, he graduated from Cleveland’s John Hay High School and received a full scholarship to attend the Berklee College of Music’s 12-week summer program.

In 1993, Baccus went on the road, performing for a play called A Good Man is Hard to Find. He also toured with trumpeter Lester Bowie and performed with such well known artists as Dianne Reeves, Angela Bofill, George Duke, Najee, Bobby Watson, Marcus Belgrave, Benny Golson, Curtis Fuller and Grover Washington.

Later, he toured and recorded with the group Pieces of a Dream. His CDs with the group included Pieces and Ahead to the Past.
Whenever he came home to Cleveland, he almost always played with his father, the jazz organist who became a Cleveland music legend.

Mike Lee

A little boy named Mike Lee, the son of neighborhood friends Jack and Kathy Lee, was performing in a school program at Fairfax Elementary School in Cleveland Heights. It was one of those typical grade school shows, with proud parents applauding the efforts of their youngsters, assuming the kids would quickly tire of their music lessons in a few years.

But, for little Mike Lee it was the beginning of a music career that a few years later would attract wide attention and respect. He began studying the saxophone at the age of 14. When he went to Cleveland Heights High School, Lee was thinking about becoming a photographer, but he quickly discovered that photography is a very private pursuit. He said, “I needed something I could do both in public and in private, something I could do that was really hard.”

He played a few jazz gigs in Cleveland and went to the University of Cincinnati to study music. He said he wasn’t challenged in college and decided to leave and go to New York in 1984.

“New York is an amazing scene,” he said. At one spot he counted 14 players, including himself, waiting to sit in with a jazz group, “and they could all play.” He supported himself by working in word processing and playing some commercial jobs, including the wedding of the daughter of New York Governor Mario Cuomo. Tiring of hustling jazz jobs in New York, Lee returned to Cleveland in 1988 and “just pretty much let the phone ring.”

In 1989, while playing with Willie Smith’s Little Big Band, Lee was scheduled to play a Northeast Ohio Jazz Society concert saluting Tadd Dameron. Smith’s band was the opening act for trumpeter Johnny Coles. Coles’ tenor man got sick. At the last minute, Coles asked Lee to sit in with his group. Playing with both groups that night, Lee outplayed everybody and was clearly the star of the concert.

During the summer of 1990, Lee joined the Woody Herman Orchestra with piano-playing buddy Chip Stephens who had toured with Herman’s orchestra before Herman’s death.

Back in Cleveland after the Herman tour, Lee teamed up with Stephens, bassist Kevin Muhammad and drummer Ron Godale to make his first record as a leader. The compact disc, The Quiet Answer, included four of Lee’s original compositions. At the party celebrating the release of their son’s first album were Jack and Kathy Lee who recalled that day two decades earlier when their little boy first played in an elementary school program.

Returning to New York, Lee played frequently with the Village Vanguard Orchestra, the Maria Schneider Orchestra and with large ensembles backing such artists as Benny Carter, Harry “Sweets” Edison, Eddie Daniels, Claudio Roditi, Louie Bellson, Natalie Cole, Buddy DeFranco and Mel Tormé.

In 1997, two of Lee’s compositions were selected among the top five in the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz and BMI International Jazz Composers Competition. He was also a member of Joe Lovano’s Celebrating Sinatra touring ensemble.

Lovano said, “Mike Lee is a very gifted and exciting young saxophonist who has the future in his sound.”

Cleveland writer Mark Gridley said, “Tenor saxophonist Mike Lee represents the latest luminary in a long tradition of outstanding Cleveland saxophonists.”

His albums as a leader include Above the Battleground and My Backyard.

Holly Hofmann

When Holly Hofmann was in graduate school at the University of Northern Colorado, veteran trombonist Slide Hampton heard her play and was impressed. They exchanged letters and tapes, and when Holly went to New York in 1991, Hampton arranged for her to sit in with Frank Wess and George Coleman. “You’re going to get into a cutting session,” warned Hampton, so be prepared.”

When she showed up, Coleman looked coolly at the young woman from Cleveland and said, “So, you want to play with us big boys?”
He called several numbers, and, in a move of intimidation, counted them off at burning tempos, much faster than the big boys usually played. Hofmann held her own with the big boys, and they quickly became very friendly.

Being young and female and playing the flute was not the easiest way to succeed in the jazz world, but Hofmann was beating the odds and gaining wide acceptance.

Born and raised in Cleveland, she was the daughter of Nelson Hofmann who had played guitar with big bands led by Paul Whiteman and Jack Teagarden before becoming a chemist with the Diamond Shamrock Company. He played jazz records, mostly big band music, at home.

One day when Holly was five, her sister brought home a flute from school. “I picked it up and just started playing,” she remembered. “For some strange reason, it seemed really natural to me.” Her father arranged flute lessons for his young daughter. Before long, she was studying classical flute with members of the Cleveland Orchestra, including principal flutist Maurice Sharp.

She continued to study classical flute when she went to high school at the Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan, a year-round program for gifted kids, where she learned, in her words, “There are dozens of other people as talented as you are and you’re not the prodigy you thought you were.” She returned to Cleveland and got her bachelor’s degree at the Cleveland Institute of Music and performed as a substitute with the Cleveland Orchestra.

Hofmann had become very proficient technically as a classical musician, but was intrigued with the jazz playing of artists like Charlie Parker. She went to the University of Northern Colorado to get a masters degree and became deeply involved in jazz. She began playing jazz gigs including some in Denver and Los Angeles.

In 1984, Holly decided to go to San Diego, forget about the classics, and concentrate on jazz. Jeannie Cheatham, the Akron native who was living in San Diego, said, “It was hard for Holly at first. Some of the guys would pat her on the head and say, ‘Not bad for a girl,’” but her strong technique and jazz lines won the admiration of some important jazz artists including veterans James Moody and Mundell Lowe. Moody, long a leading saxophonist and flutist, said, “Holly is a wonderful musician, beautiful soul, beautiful person and beautiful flute.” Guitarist Lowe said, “Holly is a rare talent and a complete joy to work with.” Later, Lowe joined Holly on her third recording, Duo Personality.

The Cleveland Jazz Orchestra was also sharing stages with Hampton, Moody and Kenny Barron. Critic Leonard Feather called her “one of the most outstanding and fast-rising flutists in the world.” She led her own group consisting of former Ella Fitzgerald pianist Mike Wofford, bassist Bob Magnusson and guitarist Ron Satterfield. They played across the country and at festivals around the world.

She also got back to Cleveland from time to time. She played at the Tri-C JazzFest in 1991 with trombonist Jiggs Whigham and saxophonist Ernie Krivda. She also played a few times at Rhythms of Playhouse Square and took part in a Northeast Ohio Jazz Society Great Lakes Jazz Summit in 1993 at the Cleveland Museum of Art, just across the street from the Institute of Music, where the jazz flutist won her bachelor’s degree, and Severance Hall, where she played classical flute with the Cleveland Orchestra.

In the late 1990s, Hofmann was recording about one album a year. In 2000, she recorded Live at Birdland with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Victor Lewis. Overcoming all sorts of obstacles, she was playing with the big boys.

**Holly Hofmann Discography**

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<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Further Adventures</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>Take Note</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>Duo Personality</td>
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**Paul Ferguson**

Paul Ferguson became one of the busiest and most talented jazz artists in Northeast Ohio.

Most people knew him as the boyish-looking lead trombonist with the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra and as a member of a variety of jazz groups in Greater Cleveland, but many did not realize that Ferguson had toured with the Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey Orchestras, served as the director of Jazz Studies at Case Western Reserve University, was a very active composer and arranger whose works have been performed and recorded by some of the biggest names in jazz, and, in his spare time, was the principal trombonist with the Canton Symphony Orchestra. He also played at times with the Cleveland Orchestra.

When he was first introduced to music, it was classical music. “My mom had a great love of music,” said Ferguson. “She used to take us in the living room and turn on Brahms’ Fourth Symphony. ’We’d all fall asleep and she would carry us up to bed.”

Ferguson was born in Sandusky in 1961, lived in New Jersey when he was four and five, and grew up in Perry Heights between Massillon and Canton. When he was eight, his mother introduced him to live classical music.

“She took me to see George Szell conduct the...
Cleveland Orchestra at Blossom,” he recalled. “It was the only time (July, 1969) that Szell conducted at Blossom. He conducted Brahms' ‘Fourth,’” the piece Ferguson had fallen asleep to as a young child.

Unlike most excellent musicians, Ferguson did not learn to play at a very early age. In fact, he didn’t start playing until he was 15 years old. “I sang in the choir in junior high school and thought, ‘This is fun, but it isn’t that much of a challenge because you have a dozen other people singing along in the same part with you.’ So I thought, ‘Those guys in the band, how do they ever do it? Everyone has to play their own instrument? I thought they were really something. So, in ninth grade, I finally decided to take up an instrument.”

At first, he played the baritone horn, but quickly realized that wasn’t much of a jazz instrument and switched to trombone. He said, “My parents had a Duke Ellington record, Ellington at Newport, and a couple Sammy Davis records where he sings with Buddy Rich and Count Basie. I just loved those records. I’d pick up the trombone and try to play along with them and it was a lot of fun.”

He was soon playing with high school groups and taking private lessons. Ferguson was also listening to the recordings of trombonist J.J. Johnson. He said, “I transcribed a couple of albums of J.J.'s stuff, especially the album J.J. in Person.”

After graduating from Perry High School, Ferguson enrolled at the University of Akron and became a key member of Roland Paolucci’s University of Akron Jazz Ensemble. After getting his bachelor’s degree at Akron, Ferguson, then 22, decided to go out on the road.

“My first real gig,” said Ferguson, “was actually a legit gig with a group called the American Wind Symphony. I traveled with them for the summer of 1983.”

The following summer, Ferguson was selected to play with the touring Glenn Miller ghost band. “I filled in for the summer of ’84, the summer of ’85 and part of the summer of ’86,” remembered the trombonist. “It allowed me to get to know a lot of different musicians. It was just a great summer job for me. The timing was perfect. The money was not great, but better than I would have done had I been home. That was really a great experience because I was playing lead trombone every night.” Ferguson admitted, “The Miller band is a little bit trying because there are so many hits you have to play every night – ‘In the Mood,’ ‘String of Pearls’ and ‘Moonlight Serenade.’ In a two-hour concert, you wouldn’t have room for much else than the big hits, but the gigs I really enjoyed were the four-hour dances. We’d get a little bit deeper into the book and play a lot more charts by Bill Finegan and Billy May. Those were really a pleasure.”

After his first summer of touring with the Miller Orchestra, Ferguson enrolled at the Eastman School of Music to get his master's degree. One of the five other students taking a music writing course under former Cleveland area jazz pianist Bill Dobbins was Maria Schneider, who was later voted the Jazz Arranger of the Year. “She’s one day older than me,” said Ferguson. “We were very good friends there, helping each other out, staying up late, eating pizza and copying parts for each other and stuff like that. It was a manic situation in a way, working very, very hard.” Schneider later called Ferguson “a beautiful musician and a beautiful person.”

Ferguson wrote some arrangements for a concert at Eastman by native Cleveland trombonist Jiggs Whigham. “Just three days before Jiggs was coming in,” said Ferguson, “I hadn't written anything. Somehow, something just wasn’t just clicking. So, I’ll never forget, going to bed on a Thursday night, and just set to drift off to sleep, I heard this little figure. I scribbled it down. I wrote the chart the next day. It was called ‘Buckeye Blues’ and Jiggs has played it all over the world. He even recorded it with Mel Lewis.”

After getting his masters degree, Ferguson toured for two years with the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra. When he came to Cleveland in 1988, he became the director of Jazz Studies at Case Western Reserve University, joined the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra, and was selected to be the principle trombonist with the Canton Symphony. He composed and arranged many charts for the CJO and many others.

He also continued to write for Whigham. During the summer of 1996, Ferguson went to Berlin to record with Whigham’s RIAS Big Band, the Berlin radio orchestra. “I thought it would be Jiggs’ album, featuring him,” said Ferguson. “But, it turned out to be nine of my compositions, three or four of which featured Jiggs and several featuring Claudio Roditi.” The recording was released as Blue Highways.
In 1999, Ferguson recorded another compact disc of his arrangements and compositions. It was called *Friends* and featured many of his musical friends, many of whom played with him on the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra. “When I write a piece,” said Ferguson, “I hear the voices of my friends in the CJO. Duke Ellington, Johannes Brahms, all the great composers, wrote music with their friends in mind. That’s what helps bring the music to life.”

Recording as the Paul Ferguson Jazz Orchestra, the band performed four Ferguson arrangements of songs associated with Frank Sinatra, five Ferguson compositions and a Ferguson arrangement of a 1711 song by British composer Henry Purcell. “It seemed like an unlikely candidate for a jazz song,” said Ferguson, “but the song from Purcell’s opera *Dido et Aeneas*, is one of the most moving songs in the entire operatic literature.”

Besides being an excellent trombonist, Clevelander Paul Ferguson was emerging as a leading big band composer and arranger.

**Chip Stephens**

He soloed on Arturo Sandoval’s Grammy Award winning compact disc *Hot House*, named in honor of one of the best known compositions of Cleveland composer and arranger Tadd Dameron. Chip Stephens was one of Greater Cleveland’s leading jazz artists for more than a decade.

A native of Ashland, Ohio, Stephens was a protégé of Akron pianist Pat Pace and first attracted wide attention with his piano playing when he was 20 years old in 1984. He spent four months playing with the Glenn Miller ghost band.

After touring with the Miller band, Stephens worked on his bachelor’s degree at the University of Akron. He became a member of the University of Akron Jazz Ensemble. Other members of that Akron band in 1986 included trumpeter Doug Huey and drummer Joe Brigandi. The following year (1987), when he was just 23, Stephens captured second prize in the prestigious Jacksonville Jazz Piano Competition. That award led to a job with the Woody Herman Orchestra.

Chip frequently performed with jazz flutist and textbook author Mark Gridley who later remembered, “I was astonished and thought, ‘My god, there is nobody else in the world playing like this right now. He took chances that just blew me off the stand. I had to hang on by my fingernails to keep my bearings when Chip was playing.’

Stephens spent two years touring with the Herman band and was featured in a solo on the band’s *Live in London* compact disc. While touring and recording with the Herman Herd, Stephens returned from time to time to Cleveland and played frequently here and recorded. In 1990, he recorded *The Quiet Answer* with saxophonist Mike Lee.

Whenever he was home, Stephens also played with the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra, and in 1992 was featured on a small group recording, *Speechless*, by the CJO’s Jack Schantz.

He toured with the Maynard Ferguson Orchestra for two years, playing piano with the driving big band of the renowned trumpeter.

In 1995, Stephens recorded his first album as a leader, *Bootcamp*, for Cleveland’s Azica record label. It included a number of original compositions.

In November of 1998, Stephens was playing with the Cleveland Jazz Orchestra during a concert with former Count Basie arranger Sammy Nestico. Stephens soloed on many of Nestico’s arrangements and a recording of the concert was released on a CD, *Swingin’ Together*.

At about the same time, Stephens got the opportunity to tour with the big band of trumpet virtuoso Arturo Sandoval. He traveled the world with the Cuban trumpeter and soloed on his album *Hot House*, which also featured Michael Brecker and Tito Puente, and won a Grammy Award. When Sandoval came to Cleveland for a performance with the CJO in May of 1999, the Cuban trumpeter found two familiar faces in the CJO band. In addition to Stephens at the piano, saxophonist Kenny Anderson had also toured with Sandoval.

Later, Sandoval performed on Stephens’ compact disc *The Fields of My Youth*.

Along the line, while playing and touring, Stephens got a masters degree in classical music from Cleveland State University and taught at Youngstown State University.

At the age of 36, Stephens became a professor of jazz piano and improvisation at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

**Mike Petrone**

He combined a love of playing jazz, a love of the theatre, and a restless energy to create entertaining and creative music at a variety of restaurants and night clubs in Greater Cleveland and on record.

Mike Petrone, who viewed jazz more as entertainment than a religious experience, acquired much of his interest in music and his drive from his father, John Petrone, a professor of music at Oberlin College. “I’ve tried to learn from my dad,” said Petrone. His father for many years was a piano player in...
Cleveland, had his own trio, recorded, and worked as a high school band director as well as college teacher. “He definitely gave me a lot of pointers,” said the younger Petrone, “and put me into it when I was about 14 years old.”

Before long, young Mike was playing his own gigs. The first place he played was the Hanna Pub.

Playing jazz piano, however, was not Petrone’s only artistic passion. “I got involved in the theatre,” he said, “as the music director at the Cleveland Play House and I went to New York and spent some time there doing jazz and also working in the theatre.” He spent ten years in New York playing piano in theatres and such clubs as Sardi’s, the 21, and the Tavern on the Green.

According to Petrone, the New York jazz scene was exciting, but frustrating. “From a money perspective and from the amount of work that there is, I found it difficult. Things are a lot better here. There are fewer people who do what I do for a living here than there are in New York. Being in New York was a thrill, maybe because of all the great players that are there. You can walk into a gig and guys will sit in with you. On the very first gig I had in New York, John Hicks was in the audience and came up to sit in. That was a sobering experience.”

Petrone returned to his hometown in 1991. He took up almost permanent musical residence at Turner’s Mill in Hudson, and quickly became an active and energetic member of the Cleveland jazz scene.

He also wrote the score for the motion picture Flattered and recorded the soundtrack for the film. It included Cleveland singers John Morton, Meredith Rutledge, Tom Claire and Ki Aallen.

The motion picture soundtrack album was released on Goblin Bee Records, a new label which Petrone formed in 1994 with fellow Cleveland jazz pianists Leo Coach and Cliff Habian. “We’re jazz musicians,” said Petrone, “and we know we’re not going to make a mint, but we’d like to sell some CDs.”

If energy and enthusiasm are the main criteria, Petrone could easily find himself someday heading a national record company, while at the same time, writing and playing jazz, and perhaps even producing musicals for the stage.

Cliff Habian

The All Music Guide to the Best CDs, Albums and Tapes listed Cliff Habian’s 1987 album Tonal Paintings as among the best jazz albums and called it “a mix of progressive and contemporary.”

Born in Cleveland in 1956, Habian began taking piano lessons at the age of nine. He said, “I started on clarinet and became discouraged because I couldn’t get a decent tone out of the instrument. Because my mother played piano, she asked me if I would be willing to take piano lessons. I did and I absolutely fell in love with the instrument. I quit clarinet immediately.”

As he progressed with the piano, Habian planned to become a classical pianist. But he soon learned there were other forms of piano playing. “Because I took traditional classical piano lessons,” said Habian, “what really kept me going were the other styles of music I was exposed to. For example, I have always been a movie buff and, even as a kid, I would see those old Liberace movies and hear him playing boogie woogie and things like that. That really excited me and kept me going with the instrument. It was the jazz things and novelty tunes that were really fun.”

By the time Habian was 15, he was studying with Cleveland pianist Joe Howard. A recognized authority on Art Tatum, Howard introduced his young student to the piano of the man who had spent years playing in Cleveland. “Listening to my first Tatum album did it for me,” said Habian. “Some people are so discouraged when they first hear Tatum, they quit the instrument altogether, but I never looked at it that way. I saw it as something to aspire to. I knew I wanted to go into jazz. I absolutely knew it!”

In high school in the early 1970s, Habian said he began listening to another form of music. “One day,” he said, “somebody turned me on to Emerson, Lake and Palmer which was essentially a rock band. But they were really a classical-jazz-rock band. They took a lot of classical music and kind of synthesized it in arrangements...
which had a rock feel but with classical themes.”

Habian was bitten by the synthesizer bug. He began
listening to Joe Zawinul’s synth with the group Weather
Report. The Cleveland also began composing.

In the 1980s, Habian self-produced an album of his
compositions, Tonal Paintings, and began selling it in
Cleveland. “I was doing okay with it locally,” said
Habian. “Then I decided, ‘I think I’ll send it to a few
labels. I sent out six packages. Within two weeks, I had
a phone call from the vice president of Fantasy Records
and he said, ‘We’re very interested in signing you!’
They sent a contract to me. I hired an attorney who went
over it and I signed it.”

Fantasy Records released Habian’s Tonal Paintings
album on its Milestone label. He recalled, “They
completely redid the art work and packaging. Fantasy
Those were exciting times.”

The success of his first album led to a second,
Manhattan Bridge. “I not only recorded with great
people like Joe Lovano and Eliot Zigmund, but I also
met with the artist whose painting became the cover of
Manhattan Bridge.”

Keyboard magazine said in its April 1994 issue,
“Cliff Habian is a skillful player with easy fluidity on
the piano and solid chops on the synthesizer.” Critic
Leonard Feather wrote, “Cleveland has an engaging
eclectic.”

At the end of the 20th century, Habian was one of the
busiest musicians in Cleveland. He was playing seven
days a week at a variety of clubs and restaurants. He
said, “I don’t have enough of me to go around. I could
be playing 10 nights a week.”

The Cleveland pianist was being recognized both
world-wide and locally for his unusual musical
innovations.

George Foley

Cleveland pianist George Foley, born in Boston and
raised in Cleveland Heights, was improvising on the
piano almost before he could read. He recalls, “My
mother says that I was improvising at the piano a couple
years before I started taking lessons.” It took him a year
to persuade his mother that he should begin taking piano
lessons at the Cleveland Music School Settlement. “I
studied classical music from about the age of nine to my
first year of college,” said Foley, “and started taking
theory when I was about ten.”

A pivotal event occurred when Foley was 13. His
sister’s boyfriend was listening to him play and asked,
“Do you know how to play ragtime?” “What is that?”
asked Foley. “So he lent me the best-selling record from the
early ’70s, Piano Rags by Scott Joplin, and it really
got me excited.” The movie The Sting had triggered a
revival of interest in the ragtime music of Joplin. “So I
started working on ‘The Maple Leaf Rag’ which took me
about six months to learn because it’s a really hard rag.”

By the time he got to the College of Wooster, Foley
had become a serious student of American ragtime
music. “Ragtime happened before jazz,” he said. “It
was the first American popular music, starting in the
1890s, the same period that the popular music business
began in the United States.”

Playing and composing his own ragtime numbers,
Foley called ragtime the direct ancestor of jazz, which
like jazz, evolved over the years from the simple to the
more complex. “To say the whole ragtime spectrum is
one thing is like saying everything from Elvis Presley
and Chuck Berry up to what’s happening in rock now is
one kind of music.”

In 1977, at the age of 19, George Foley recorded his
first album, Cleveland Rag. It included six of his own
ragtime compositions, plus seven rags dating from 1888
to 1923. “One of the things I’ve enjoyed doing,” said
Foley, “is presenting ragtime, particular tunes, particular
composers that other people haven’t covered because
there is such a wealth of stuff.” He sold the album at
Cleveland area record stores, and wrote to Jazzology
Records, which was issuing a series of albums called The
Jazz Piano Heritage Series. “I sent them a copy of this
first record and I said, ‘I’d like to do another one. Would
you be interested?’ And they said, ‘We like this one.’
I didn’t really have a national agenda in mind when I made
it, but they did put it out.” A national review of the
album called Foley “a potentially monster ragtime talent.”

His reputation was enhanced when he went to a
Ragtime Society convention in Toronto and met and played
for the legendary Eubie Blake. With Blake on the piano
bench next to him, Foley played his version of “Spanish
Venus,” which had been composed for Blake by Lucky
Thompson and arranged by Willie “The Lion” Smith. “As
I was playing, he made a lot of comments. When I finished
playing the tune, he looked at me and said, ‘You’re a fine
pianist, but the Lion got the tune all wrong!’”

Foley’s national reputation grew as he uncovered and
recorded other all-but-forgotten ragtime tunes. “I
recorded an album called I Love It. I did a variety of
obscure rags on side one. Side two was devoted to a
composer from Buffalo named George L. Cobb.”

The Cleveland issued his third ragtime album in
1989. It was called Smiles And Kisses and included
some more advanced ragtime. A nationally-published
review of Foley’s album said, “Foley exhibits excellent
taste and a keen ear for neglected gems.”
Despite his long fascination and national reputation with ragtime music, George Foley spent most of his time playing a variety of jazz styles with various groups at many clubs and restaurants in Cleveland.

**Dennis Reynolds**

Trumpeter Dennis Reynolds, a graduate of Shaw High School in East Cleveland, caused a lot of excitement among Cleveland jazz fans in 1990 when he unveiled a swinging big band called the **Jazz Revival Orchestra**. It was not just another rehearsal band. Reynolds brought to it his experience playing with the Count Basie and Lionel Hampton Orchestras.

Reynolds played in the Youngstown State University Jazz Ensemble in the early 1980s and formed his own band which played for a while in the Warren area. He studied with Cat Anderson and played lead trumpet with Hank Mobley’s big band and with Louie Bellson before joining the Basie Orchestra in 1986.

"Man, that was like goin’ to heaven," said Reynolds. "I was scared to death on my first job. I had to get it together real quick in two weeks." After two years with the Basie band, Reynolds joined the Lionel Hampton Orchestra.

He returned to his home in Warren, revived his old band and decided to move his base of operations to Cleveland where he could find better players. Two of his former teachers, Snooky Young and Clark Terry, made guest appearances with Reynolds’ orchestra. Frequently singing with the Jazz Revival Orchestra was Dolores Parker Morgan of Akron, who in the late 1940s had sung and recorded with the Duke Ellington Orchestra.

Reynolds said, "I really feel that my generation, guys in their 30s and 40s, has to find a way to keep the tradition going. I promised Clark (Terry) I would do my very best to keep it going."

The Jazz Revival Orchestra lasted only a few years, but in 1998, after touring with Illinois Jacquet, Reynolds was named director of another new big band, the Jazz Heritage Orchestra, sponsored by the Black Studies Department at Cleveland State University.

**Ron McCroby**

Greater Cleveland also claimed the world’s greatest jazz whistler. Ron McCroby, calling himself a “puccoloist,” performed on the Johnny Carson television show and at jazz festivals around the world.

It was not just a novelty for the Chagrin Falls resident. He was always a serious musician. He began his unusual art when he was playing clarinet in a high school marching band. The regular piccolo player got sick and Ron filled in by whistling his part. Later, when he worked for an advertising agency in Cincinnati, he was producing jingles for television. He recalled, “Often when I was explaining parts to the flute players and piccolo players, I would say, ‘Guys, I want (whistles to demonstrate)’ and I would show them how the line would go.

“My wife said, ‘Hey, you oughta give this a shot!’ So I made a little demo tape of some nice tunes with a rhythm section. That tape got into the hands of Jimmy Lyons who produced the Monterey Jazz Festival. Jimmy liked it and called me. Blew me away! He asked me if I would be interested in performing at the Monterey Jazz Festival! I said, ‘I’ll fit it in!’ That sort of opened national doors for me.”

McCroby made several records, including such jazz standards as “I Remember Clifford” and “Four Brothers.”

Jazz writer Rhodes Spedale said, “The advent of Ron McCroby is an object lesson in the jazz whirl, demonstrating that an imaginative individual with a lot of energy and determination can get an opportunity to showcase a trail-blazing approach.”

McCroby died at the age of 68 August 5, 2002.

These and many other Cleveland jazz musicians – the artistic descendants of such Clevelanders as Noble Sissle, Pee Wee Jackson, Tadd Dameron, Freddie Webster, Fats Heard, Benny Bailey, Bill de Arango and Jim Hall – are all helping to set the standards for the future of jazz.