Clevelanders have also been in the forefront of efforts to preserve and chronicle the legacy of jazz. In fact, it might be argued that Cleveland’s greatest contribution has been its unusual and almost continuous effort to spotlight and preserve jazz.

The Ellington Archives
Cleveland Representative Louis Stokes spearheaded the effort in Congress in the 1980s to appropriate funds for the Smithsonian Institution to purchase the personal archives of Duke Ellington. Included were manuscripts, arrangements, recordings and photographs from Ellington’s personal collection.

Stokes said at the time, “Duke Ellington is a unique figure in American culture. As one of our greatest composers, he deserves to be well represented in America’s national museum, the Smithsonian.”

Stokes’ efforts came following a chance meeting between Ellington’s son, Mercer, and the director of the Smithsonian museum, John Kinard. Kinard told Mercer he had heard about an unsuccessful attempt by Yale University to acquire a large collection of Ellington’s papers. After learning from Mercer that his late father’s collection was available, Kinard contacted Roger Kennedy, the director of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History. They worked with an attorney to negotiate with the Ellington estate for the personal archives. The negotiations took two and a half years. Eventually, through the prodding of Stokes, Congress in 1988 appropriated the funds for the acquisition of the priceless collection of manuscripts, photographs, recordings, clippings and personal items documenting Ellington’s legacy as a performer and composer.

Three years later, Ellington’s sister, Ruth Ellington Boatwright, sold 2,000 additional manuscripts, photographs and memorabilia to the Smithsonian. They had been kept in filing cabinets in her one-room Park Avenue apartment in New York City.

A portion of the Ellington archives was displayed at the Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art for a month beginning October 7, 1995.

Transcribing jazz masterpieces
Dr. Frederick Starr, president of Oberlin College in the 1980s, was a major force in another effort to preserve the legacy of jazz.

Starr told me, “Gunther Schuller and I decided (in 1988) that what we needed to do was take the real masterpiece recorded performances and carefully transcribe them, get the notes on paper so accurately that you could take a high school band in Elyria and they could sit down with a good conductor and actually play ‘Daybreak Express’ by the Ellington band or some Goodman piece, or whatever.

“If the music isn’t played and played well,” said Starr, “it dies. There is no way that a music that is not performed can be called ‘living.”

Starr and Schuller began by joining forces with the Smithsonian Institution to transcribe classic jazz performances recorded by Ellington, Fletcher Henderson, Count Basie, Earl Hines, Artie Shaw, Benny Goodman, Jimmie Lunceford, Dizzy Gillespie and others. Starr and the Smithsonian secured financing to transcribe and publish 40 to 50 volumes of what they called The Jazz Masterworks Editions over a period of about 20 years.

Starr said the transcriptions “will enable professional repertory orchestras and college ensembles to recreate the great classics of recorded repertory and encourage the growth of jazz repertory ensembles.” He said, “audiences will be stunned by the difference between the slapdash published parts available since the 1930s, generally simplified versions done quickly, and the music the great bands were actually playing.”

The first Jazz Masterworks Edition was The Duke Ellington Orchestra: The Extended Works from 1929 to 1937. edited by Schuller and including “Symphony in Black,” “Reminiscing in Tempo” and “Creole Rhapsody.”

Within several years, the Smithsonian project produced a number of excellent live concerts of Ellington music including concerts by various repertory big bands such as the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra and the Smithsonian Jazz Orchestra.

Starr was also a founder and leader of a group called The Louisiana Repertory Jazz Ensemble which gained an international reputation by playing authentic recreations of the music being played in New Orleans between the years of 1890 and 1930. Starr said he wanted to “peel away the layers of paint [various interpretations of early New Orleans music] and restore the original features” of what he called “this old house of jazz.” The members of the group found old manuscripts of many songs that were played before records were made.
Telarc International

In March of 1990, two Clevelanders — record producer Robert Woods and recording engineer Jack Renner — took their sophisticated digital recording equipment to the famed Blue Note nightclub in New York City to record a live performance by a jazz trio. It was a revolutionary move for the Clevelanders who had won world-wide praise for their natural, simple and realistic recordings of symphony orchestras. Woods and Renner, the co-founders of Telarc International of Cleveland, were not sure they could transfer their classical music recording magic to jazz.

After listening to the recording, the jazz artists — pianist Oscar Peterson, bassist Ray Brown and guitarist Herb Ellis — said, “Beautiful!” Renner knew at that moment they had passed the test. “We achieved,” he said, “what we thought was the best possible sense of the excitement of being in the club.”

When the recording was released a few months later on a compact disc entitled The Legendary Oscar Peterson Trio Live at the Blue Note, it won two Grammy Awards. The Cleveland company was off and running as a major player in the jazz recording industry.

Telarc was founded in 1977 by Renner and Woods, two classically trained musicians and teachers, who pioneered a “minimal miking” technique in their recordings and made the first commercial classical recordings in the U.S. in the digital format. “We’re not out to make hyped-up recordings,” said Woods.

After the success of that first jazz recording with Oscar Peterson, Telarc moved quickly into the recording of jazz and amassed an impressive stable of jazz artists.

By 2000, Telarc had more than 600 recordings in its catalog, ranging from classical to jazz and blues, and was releasing more than 50 recordings each year. From its headquarters in Beachwood’s Commerce Park off Chagrin Boulevard, the firm’s approximately 50 employees were setting new standards in both the quality and the quantity of jazz recordings from Cleveland.

Discovering a jazz masterpiece

An educator from Cleveland won international acclaim for his work.

Andrew Homzy, who had played tuba with Ralph Grugel’s dixieland band in the Cleveland Flats in the 1960s, discovered almost by accident what Whitney Balliet of The New Yorker magazine called “The most important composition to emerge in jazz since Duke Ellington’s ‘Black, Brown and Beige’ in 1943.” Homzy found, hidden away in the apartment of Charles Mingus’ widow, the score for a monumental two-hour orchestral work called Epitaph which Mingus had composed before his death in 1979.

Homzy, who grew up in Cleveland and went to Brooklyn High School in suburban Cleveland, became a music teacher at Concordia University in Montreal. He wanted to catalog Mingus’ compositions. He called Sue Mingus and discovered the unknown work in an old chest in her apartment. Homzy took a year off from the university to go through all the scores he found. “Eventually,” he said, “I began to see a pattern. There were 18 different sections with numbered measures.” Homzy slowly pieced them together. The score for a 30-piece orchestra ran 500 pages and included 4,000 measures.

Mingus’ Epitaph was first performed June 3, 1989 at Lincoln Center in New York City with Gunther Schuller directing an all-star orchestra. Jon Pareles of the New York Times wrote, “It ranked with the most memorable jazz events of the decade.” Two days later, there was a second performance at Wolf Trap near Washington. The third performance, April 22, 1990 — the 68th anniversary of Mingus’ birth — was at Severance Hall in Cleveland with a proud Homzy and his family in attendance. The Severance Hall audience applauded loudly when from the stage I introduced Homzy and explained how the Cleveland had made jazz history.
Homzy is also a recognized authority on Duke Ellington and contributed to the first biography of Cleveland native Tadd Dameron. He wrote two chapters of Ian MacDonald’s *Tadd, the Life and Legacy of Tadley Ewing Dameron*—one on the importance of Tadd and the other analyzing Dameron’s music. I contributed to MacDonald much of the information on Dameron’s early life in Cleveland.

**Textbook author Mark Gridley**

_Jazz Styles—History and Analysis_ by Cleveland educator and musician Mark Gridley became the most popular jazz textbook in the country. Gridley’s book was a required textbook in introduction-to-jazz courses at more than 400 colleges and universities throughout the United States. The book was also published in several foreign languages.

In 2002, Gridley estimated that about a quarter of a million copies of his book had been sold.

Gridley told me it began almost by accident when he was a graduate student at Case Western Reserve University. He asked the chairman of the music department why there was no jazz course at the school. “It turned out he had been looking for someone to teach a jazz course. I threw together a syllabus and designed the course,” said Gridley. “I recorded my lectures and gave them to a girl to transcribe. Over two or three semesters I had a bunch of classroom handouts.” He copyrighted his material and contacted an editor. “He was also looking for someone to write a jazz textbook,” said Gridley.


He also wrote a *Concise Guide to Jazz* for high school and college students to use in a ten-week program. The smaller book also included tape or CD recordings.

A resident of Shaker Heights, Gridley played flute with his own group and taught psychology at Heidelberg College.

**Drum book author Chuck Braman**

“When I was learning to play drums,” said native Clevelander Chuck Braman, “I was very frustrated with the standard material that I was being taught from. I thought it was not complete and not logical. Although the books were regarded as classic and had been used for years, I couldn’t understand why they did it this way as opposed to that. Why didn’t they think of this? Basically, what bugged me was, I thought, ‘Why isn’t this more systematic and logical?’”

So Braman sat down and wrote his own book about drumming. *Drumming Patterns* is a systematic presentation of the components of rhythm and drum technique. Louie Bellson said, “This creative, valuable book is for every drummer’s library.” *DownBeat* magazine called it “An outstanding book.”

“I spent three years alone at a computer,” recalled Braman, “working out all the different possibilities and trying to put something together. I finally did. I wrote the book.”

Braman didn’t begin playing drums seriously until after he graduated from Berea High School in 1977. “I was lucky,” he recalled. “My dad got me started in music around the time I was 11 or 12 years old. A local disc jockey named Ronnie Barrett, got a Freddie Hubbard album called *First Light* and gave it to my dad and my dad gave it to me.” The Hubbard album sparked Braman’s interest in jazz and his father nurtured that interest. “My dad took me to the Theatrical where the house band was Bob McKee, Bill Dobbins and Lamar Gaines. I was really knocked out by them.”

Soon the teenager was taking drum lessons from McKee and going to jazz concerts. At a Duke Ellington concert, he met a young teacher named Mark Gridley who was about to begin teaching a course in jazz history.

“I took Mark’s course the next summer. That was when I was 13. I sat in on the course he was teaching at Case Western Reserve while he was in the process of researching his book. He was an incredible source, teaching me who was who and what the good music was.” According to Braman, Gridley, was the best teacher he ever had.

“Since I got a late start playing drums,” recalled Braman, “the first thing I wanted to do when I got out of high school was put in some heavy practicing. Instead
of going to college, I practiced a lot, maybe six, eight, ten hours a day for a year or two.”

By the late 1970s, he was playing at a variety of clubs in Cleveland. “I started doing what I’ve done ever since, basically hustle gigs in places that had never had jazz before, talk them into trying it. At some places it would work out and I’d have a place to play and I would call my favorite players and go out and play.”

After playing and writing in Cleveland, Braman moved to New York in 1989 and soaked up the playing of his drumming heroes, Paul Motian and Roy Haynes. “I really loved their playing,” said Braman. “I also loved the playing of Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, Philly Joe Jones, Max Roach, Billy Hart and Al Foster.”

For Braman, jazz reached an artistic peak with Miles Davis, Tony Williams, Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock. “To me, that’s the ultimate in jazz. That was the era when it really reached the zenith of its evolution. To me, the ‘60s, just before fusion, was my favorite era in jazz.”

A jazz record guide

Another important written contribution to jazz, Music Hound Jazz: The Essential Album Guide, was co-edited by magazine writer Steve Holtje and Cleveland Heights free lance jazz writer and photographer Nancy Ann Lee.

She said the book, published in 1998, is “really for people who are new to jazz, recommending what albums to purchase. It’s a buying guide of jazz compact discs currently in print.”

The guide is a huge paperback book, about 1,400 pages, two inches thick, and weighs almost five pounds. Included are entries for 1,260 jazz artists, living and dead, with brief biographies of each and suggestions regarding their most important compact discs. Lee admitted compiling all the information was a massive undertaking.

“It took a year from the time I signed on,” she said. Lee and Holtje assigned articles on individual artists to a virtual army of jazz writers across the country. “We had 90 writers on the project,” she said, “and edited entries from our writers. I edited about half of the book, about 600 entries, and of those 600, I wrote or co-wrote about 200.”

Among the 90 writers who contributed to the Music Hound Jazz Album Guide, in addition to Lee, were seven others from Cleveland – John Bitter, George Foley, Chris Hovan, Dan Polletta, Jim Prohaska, John Richmond and Bill Wahl. “I was very lucky to have so many good writers,” says Lee. “They are all knowledgeable people who knew their history and the artists they were writing about.”

The Music Hound Jazz Album Guide includes biographies and compact disc listings for 13 jazz artists from Cleveland: Albert Ayler, Benny Bailey, Tadd Dameron, John Fedchock, Jim Hall, Chuck Israels, Ernie Krivda, Joe Lovano, Ken Peplowski, Vanessa Rubin, Jimmy Scott, Pete Selvaggio and Don Wall. Lee said, “I tried to include as many as I could and I apologize to those jazz artists from Cleveland that I didn’t get into the book.”

The Music Hound Guide included a compact disc of performances by ten of the artists and photographs of many more, plus listings of jazz publications, jazz internet sites, record labels, radio stations, festivals and producers.

Lee said she received notes from some of the artists that she wrote about in the book. “And they were very pleased about their entries and the overall presentation of the book.”

For co-editor Lee, whose other written work appeared in DownBeat, JazzTimes, Cleveland’s Plain Dealer and Free Times, there was a huge sense of accomplishment in being a major contributor to the literature of jazz. “It’s a tremendous letdown after a very, very intense period of time,” she said. “I feel like you would with a new baby, kind of, ‘Look, what I made!’”

Jazz author at Kent State

William Howland Kenney, an historian at Kent State University and a traditional jazz clarinetist who played frequently in the Greater Cleveland area, wrote two books that have been recognized as important contributions to jazz literature.

Kenney’s Chicago Jazz: A Cultural History 1904-1930 was published in 1993. The focus of his scholarly work was on jazz in Chicago in the 1920s. Unlike most other books on the subject, it placed the music in the social and economic setting of the period.

According to Kenney, the craze for popular dance music began in Chicago before World War I and exploded in the teens when more than 65,000 blacks
Preserving the Legacy

from the South migrated to Chicago. This migration, wrote Kenney, “triggered Chicago’s jazz age.” Just after World War I, workers with money to spend on entertainment flocked to night clubs on Chicago’s South Side, particularly an area called “The Stroll,” a bright-light district on South State Street. Kenney quoted Cleveland writer Langston Hughes saying that “Midnight was like day” on The Stroll even without street lights.

According to Kenney’s book, the word “jass” first appeared in Chicago’s black press in 1916. Others have claimed the word was used earlier.

In addition to the musicians who shaped jazz in Chicago, Kenney examined the politicians, businessmen and even gangsters who contributed to jazz in Chicago as well as the social and economic forces (Prohibition, the Depression, race relations, and technological advances in recording and film) that contributed to it.

In a review published in the Arts Midwest JazzLetter, Tom Jacobsen wrote, “Kenney has clearly shown that a proper understanding of Chicago jazz in the ‘20s goes well beyond an account of the musicians and their music.”

In his book, Kenney acknowledged the assistance of Clevelanders Joel O’Sickey, Jim Stincic, John Richmond, Larry Booty and Brad Bolton.

Kenney’s second book, Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890-1945, was published in 1999. The 288-page book examined the interplay between recorded music and social, political and economic forces during the phonograph’s rise as a popular form of entertainment. Victor Greene of the University of Wisconsin said, “At last someone has attempted to place the phonograph industry in the context of America’s cultural life.”

**A pictorial salute to Cleveland artists**

Until I began doing weekly Cleveland Jazz History radio features for Radio Station WCPN in 1988 and the first edition of the Cleveland Jazz History book was published in 1993, there had been absolutely no effort to chronicle Cleveland’s many links to the history of jazz. Then, in 1996, there was another book about Cleveland jazz and Cleveland’s jazz musicians.

Jazzkeepers was produced by Gregory Reese, the director of the East Cleveland Public Library, who had been presenting free jazz concerts at his library on Euclid Avenue since 1988. Reese told me, “I thought that some of the stuff should be documented. We have some great local musicians and performers in the city and we really don’t pay tribute to them as we should.”

Reese got photographer Roger Brown to go with him to various clubs in Cleveland and begin taking action shots of Cleveland jazz performers.

Consisting mostly of photos, the 176-page book includes virtually full-page original pictures of 101 Cleveland jazz artists and 14 Cleveland jazz clubs and venues. Reese also interviewed some of the artists. Included is Weldon “Schoolboy” Haggins who told Reese that he once performed with boxing great Ezzard Charles playing bass.

Reese said he learned that many of the Cleveland jazz musicians “aren’t concerned about making it big. They enjoy what they are doing here locally. They have full-time jobs but they love the music.”

**Collecting Django Reinhardt records**

The guitar that Django Reinhardt bought in the United States and played in Cleveland when he made his American debut here was later presented to a Clevelander who had amassed the world’s largest collection of Reinhardt records.

Fred Sharp began his life-long fascination with the French jazz guitarist in the 1930s when Sharp was still a teenager living in the Glenville area of Cleveland. His guitar teacher, Jerry Stone, asked Sharp, “Have you heard about the French hillbilly guitar player? His name is Reinhardt and there’s a record out called ‘Clouds.’ I went out immediately,” said Sharp, “and bought the record. It was a Decca Personality Series. It was 75 cents, the most expensive record out. I played it in the store and it just floored me. It put a mark on me for the rest of my life.”

Sharp sent away for a catalog. “It listed all these Djangos. I had never heard any of them. So I sent them
money and ordered all the records that were listed.”

While pursuing his own guitar career, touring with the Adrian Rollini Trio and Red Norvo’s big band, Sharp continued building his Reinhardt record collection. “I had about 50 sides and got in touch with a guy in Chicago who was a Django collector. He said, ‘If you want some of them, come to Chicago and we’ll tape them.’ So I went to his house. He had stuff I had never heard of. He had like 600 sides. We taped for hours.

“The collection began to build from there. I started to buy records and trade with people in Holland, Belgium, all over the world.”

Reinhardt died in 1953 at the age of 43 and was buried at Samois, France. Sharp visited Django’s grave eight times and planted flowers there.

Django’s son, Babik, learned of Sharp’s great interest in his father’s music and gave Django’s old guitar to Fred, the guitar Reinhardt had used when he played with Duke Ellington in Cleveland in 1946.

Eventually, Sharp’s collection of Django Reinhardt records grew to about 1,100 sides. “Most people don’t know he made that many,” Sharp said. “Of course there’s a lot of second takes and third takes of things.”

Charles Delaunay, Django’s biographer, asked Sharp to compile the Reinhardt discography.

### Remembering Albert Ammons

Cleveland resident Christopher Page set out in the 1980s to research the life of boogie woogie pianist Albert Ammons. Page said, “I wanted to discover and reconstruct the man behind the famous name. The irrepressible joy that radiates through the notes on Albert Ammons records seems to have been a reflection of his soul and I had to find out if this was true.”

In 1989, Page began interviewing Ammons’ family members, friends and associates and researching the history of boogie woogie. In 1997, the Northeast Ohio Jazz Society published Page’s book, *Boogie Woogie Stomp, Albert Ammons & His Music.* The book is not a biography in the usual sense; it is more a celebration of Ammons and boogie woogie music.

Page celebrated the publication of the book with a party at his home. Among the guests were a number of boogie woogie piano players and Ammons’ son, granddaughter, niece and nephew.

### The Campus Owls preserve swing

If you spent any time at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio between 1924 and 1961, you probably remember the Campus Owls. It was a student big band that played at Miami for four decades.

The band was formed just a few weeks after Bix Beiderbecke and the Wolverines played at Miami’s Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity in 1924.

In the summer of 1935, the Campus Owls were booked by the Cunard Lines to play aboard a trans-Atlantic ship. They played as an intermission band for the Duke Ellington Orchestra. They went to Germany, France and Switzerland in 1938.

The leader of the Miami Campus Owls in the early 1940s was the saxophonist who later was considered the dean of Cleveland jazz musicians, Hank Geer.

“It was a first class band,” recalled Geer. “Most of the guys came off the road with bands they played with in the summer months.”

In fact, before he went to Miami University, Geer had played with bands led by Charlie Spivak and Henry Busse. During the summer before starting college, Geer was touring with the Ray Anthony Orchestra.

Another member of the Anthony band, Harry DeMarco, also joined the Campus Owls with Geer. DeMarco later toured for years with a group called the Tune Toppers and played with a variety of big bands in Cleveland, including the Vince Pattie and Hal Lynn bands.

Trumpeter Dick Mains, who played with the Campus Owls in 1940 and ’41, later played with the Teddy Powell Orchestra and in 1945, joined the Benny Goodman band. Mains later spent 31 years playing with the U.S. Army Band.

Each fall, they arrived in Oxford a week early to prepare for the new school year. “We did nothing that week but break in new recruits and rehearse,” said Geer. “We rehearsed eight or nine hours a day, getting ready to play at the end of the week for the Freshman Mixer.”

The Campus Owls was not an official Miami University band. It was a bunch of student musicians who were working their way through college. In
exchange for free meals, they played Monday through Friday nights at a local restaurant called the Huddle. “It used to be packed,” remembered Geer. “We also did two-hour sessions on Sunday afternoons. People drove up from Cincy, drove down from Dayton, came from Columbus. They came from all over. They used to have to put two traffic cops to direct the traffic in Oxford, there were so many people that wanted to come in and hear the band. And the Huddle wasn’t a big restaurant.”

When Geer was leading the Owls in the ’40s, the band also played throughout the Midwest during school breaks.

The Campus Owls was a dance band, playing the music of the swing era, strongly influenced by Benny Goodman. Geer said, “We were carrying five brass, five trombones, four saxes, and four rhythm, same as the old Goodman band.”

In addition to leading the band, Geer was one of the arrangers. The band members wrote their own arrangements of the popular music of the day, as well as some tongue-in-cheek original charts. Jack Amaran did an original thing called “A Madrigal to a Melancholy Mugwump.”

In addition to the nightly sessions at the Huddle and touring during vacations, the Campus Owls frequently shared the bandstand at college dances with name bands.

Geer remembered the night the Gene Krupa Orchestra came to Miami. “We’d always play opposite the name band. Some of the guys came in and said, ‘These college kids are gonna play some things.’ The members of the Krupa band went outside to have a smoke or whatever. And when they heard the band, they all turned around and came back, to stand down front and listen.” Krupa later said he never heard a college band play so well.

Les Brown said the Miami Campus Owls were better than the college band he led at Duke University, the Duke Blue Devils. Drummer Ray McKinley, who sat in with the Miami band one night, said the Owls was the best college jump band he ever heard.

“We’d make enough for tuition on road tours at Christmastime,” recalled Geer. Like all touring bands, the Campus Owls had their share of adventures on the road. Geer remembered, “Up in the Catskills in the wintertime we pulled into Binghamton, all frozen, and we slept ten guys in a room.”

The band faded away in 1961, but in June of 1992, during the annual alumni reunion, there was a reunion of the Campus Owls alumni in Oxford. “It was beautiful to see all the guys,” said Geer. “When we sat down to practice, I knew I had my work cut out for me to try to put this together and try to make it at least presentable.”

Geer, one of the few members of the Campus Owls to make music his career, led the alumni band for the reunion concert. Most of the players were doctors, lawyers and businessmen — many in their 60s and 70s — and said Geer, “Some guys hadn’t touched their horns in 50 years!”

While some of the playing at the reunion concert was a little rough around the edges, it still sounded pretty good and reminded the players and the thousands of others who listened to the Campus Owls over the years of an outstanding, long-running college big band.

After that first reunion, the Campus Owls alumni began playing regularly at the freshman orientation and reunion weekends. The band’s alumni also created an endowment to preserve the memory of the Campus Owls and to promote jazz. Among other projects, they sponsored a high school jazz festival at the university.

To help raise money for the endowment, the alumni group produced a half-hour videotape of the band’s history. I was delighted when they asked me to host and narrate the video presentation. Entitled Big Swinging History, it was completed late in 1997 and sold by the university.

When Geer died in 2000, it was suggested that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Campus Owls Memorial Fund at Miami University.

Jazz recorder Fred Eisenberg

“Come on upstairs,” said Fred Eisenberg, “I want to show you something.” The retired rabbi led me to the third floor of his Cleveland Heights home. There, he had a huge collection of jazz recordings.

I had seen many large jazz record collections, but this one was different. There were shelves filled with reel-to-reel tapes that Eisenberg had recorded himself on location. He had spent years, from the 1950s to the early ’70s, combining his interests in jazz and recording by creating his own library of live performance recordings.

His collection included live performance recordings of such artists as Les Brown, Harry James, Louis Armstrong, Stan Kenton, Bobby Hackett and Lionel Hampton. “Hampton was thrilled,” he said, “because I recorded him in four channels. He had heard of me and knew what I was doing and knew that if he wanted them, he could have those tapes.”

Eisenberg began recording in Boston when he was 13 years old. His father gave him a Wilcox-Gay disc recorder, in the days before wire and tape recording, and he began recording jazz from radio broadcasts on plastic-coated paper discs.

When he went to Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Eisenberg was hired by a Cincinnati radio station and Columbia Records. “My best gig,” he said was to record Dave Brubeck for the Jazz Goes To College series. “All of the material from the University of Cincinnati, I recorded on a Magnacorder tape machine. I set up the microphones, listened as they were warming up, set the mics [volume] and went and sat down and
watched the concert. It was incredible!

After becoming a rabbi, Eisenberg served as an air force chaplain. He began recording all of the jazz artists who entertained at Lackland and Keesler Air Force bases, where he was stationed.

"I taped everybody I could," he said, "everybody from the Buddy Morrow band to Louis Armstrong and Jack Teagarden. You name 'em. If they were there in the South in the 1950s, I got them."

In November of 1958, the Stan Kenton Orchestra played a four-hour dance at the Keesler Air Force Base. "I set up four microphones and just let it rip," he recalled. Eisenberg’s private recording of the Kenton performance was later released on a compact disc.

Over the years, Eisenberg recorded countless jazz artists. He was not sure how many. "I must have a hundred tapes of live performances that I taped," he said. "I did a lot of stuff for Hampton and some for Harry James. I recorded them for the bandleaders mostly."

He said he believed his live recordings of live performances were far superior to carefully-engineered studio recordings. "The studio recordings, even the best ones," he said, "are absolutely dead. They don’t have the proper ambiance. And the feeling of the live music from the live musicians, even when they made mistakes," he said, "was much, much better than the beautifully-engineered recordings of the time."

Eisenberg was also critical of recordings made with dozens of microphones and later mixed by engineers. "With those," he said, "I feel that what I’m getting is a fake. The engineer is making the music, not the band. That hurts because it shouldn’t be the engineer’s choice as to what goes on the recording."

When he became the rabbi of a congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eisenberg continued his long interest in playing clarinet. He played for four or five years with a group that included a banker and teachers. His last gig as a clarinetist, he said proudly was with trumpeter Bobby Hackett and trombonist Vic Dickenson.

Eisenberg came to Cleveland in 1971. "I was with (Rabbi) Arthur Lelyveld at Fairmount Temple," he said, "and there was no time for collecting. I spent 70 hours a week visiting people, working with them, teaching and preaching." Later, Eisenberg became the founding rabbi of Temple Israel Ner Tamid on Lander Road.

"Now that I have retired," said Eisenberg, "I’m going back to sort through my collection."

With an enormous collection of jazz that he recorded, Rabbi Eisenberg plays some of his tapes for friends but he flatly refuses to sell them. "We listen to them and we share them and we don’t sell them – for any amount of money!!" He explained his philosophy: “I recorded this for posterity, not to make money. I was never interested in making money from it. I wanted to be sure, in the Mosaic tradition, that I wrote down ‘the words of God’ – the music and excitement of these good musicians.”

Rabbi Eisenberg also said, “Jazz is like a religion. It’s beautiful, it’s lovely, it’s expressive. And a good musician is praying. He’s praying that he hits the notes and that people listen and like what he is doing.”

**Jazz painter Raymond Farris**

When Miles Davis died in September of 1991, there was a portrait of him hanging in his home in California a portrait of him painted by Cleveland drummer and artist Raymond Farris.

"After meeting and keeping in contact with Miles," said Farris, "I gave him a portrait of himself, which was hanging in his Malibu home. It was a painting of Miles on a coin and it had the inscription, ‘In Miles We Trust.’"

That unusual portrait of Davis by Farris was not the only copy. Farris said, "Freddie Hubbard had another of my Miles Davis acrylic oils hanging in his home in Hollywood Hills."

For painter and jazz drummer Farris, there was always a definite connection between his visual art and his music. "Without a doubt," he said, "They are both very creative media, involving individual self-expression and improvisation."

Davis had been Farris’ hero since he was a child and his brother began bringing home jazz records, “and there was something about that music that I could never get out of my mind,” said Farris.

He went to East Tech High School and studied drums with former Stan Kenton arranger Phil Rizzo at his Modern Jazz School in Cleveland Heights and with the percussionist of the Cleveland Orchestra at the Cleveland Music School Settlement. By 1960, Farris found himself playing jazz drums with such Cleveland stand-outs as Carl Fields and Bobby Few. In 1961, Farris became part of a popular local jazz group, the East Jazz Trio that included pianist Few and bassist Cevera Jeffries, the late older brother of Dewey Jeffries.