

# Jazz Educators Journal

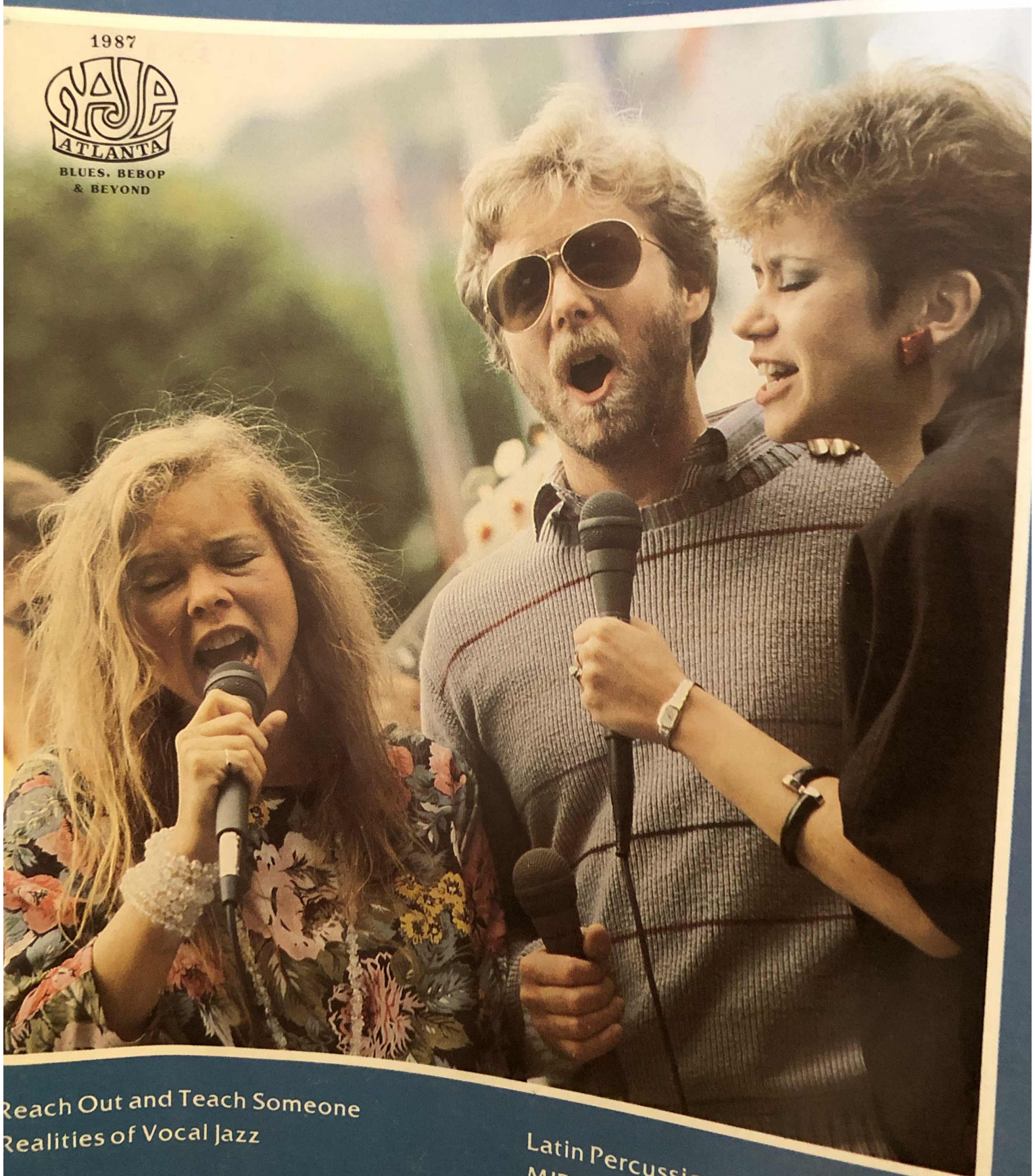
Official Magazine of the National Association of Jazz Educators

Oct./Nov., 1986 XIX, No. 1

1987

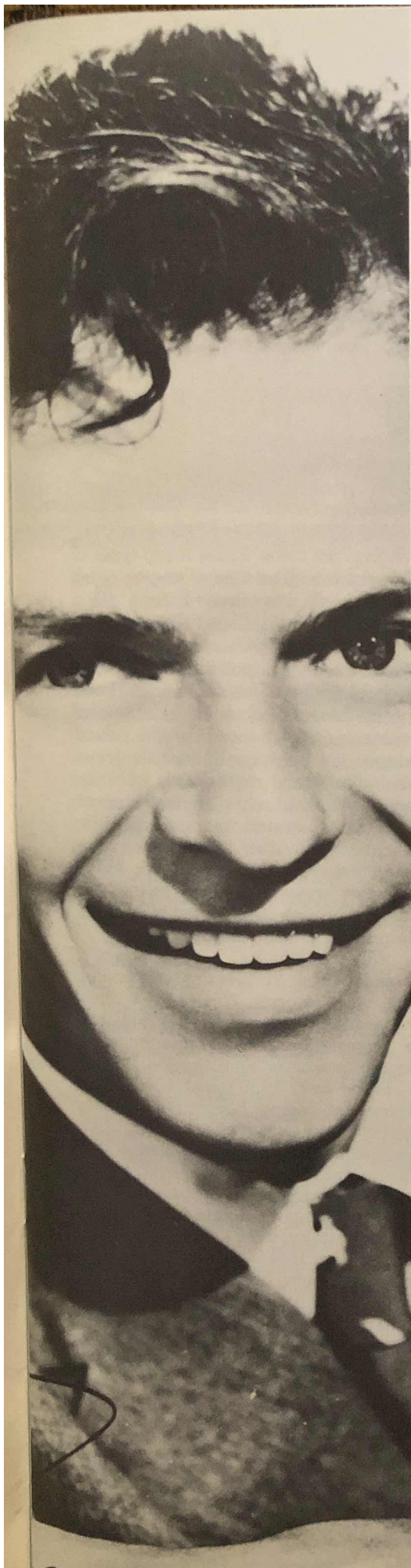


BLUES. BEBOP  
& BEYOND



Reach Out and Teach Someone  
Realities of Vocal Jazz

Latin Percussion Styles  
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# The Realities of Vocal Jazz Style

Jan Shapiro

While the Jazz Studies curriculum has become more prevalent in music departments, the addition of voice to some jazz study departments is more recent. It seems there is still some controversy as to just what jazz voice in college and university settings should be. In high schools and colleges, "jazz voice" could be any group ensemble singing popular and "standard" materials.

Also, at this time, there don't seem to be any clear cut guidelines for establishing a jazz-popular voice curriculum. Certain institutions, however, have been innovative in offering jazz vocal classes, applied jazz voice lessons, and vocal jazz ensembles. Notably, these institutions include Berklee College of Music, Boston; the University of Northern Colorado, Greeley; and the University of Miami, Coral Gables. But, is jazz voice in colleges and universities really jazz singing?

## WHAT IS A JAZZ SINGER?

In classical music, defining opera in a few sentences or giving one concrete definition would be difficult due to its diversity of styles. Likewise, we cannot clearly define jazz voice since it is also diverse in style. Who is a jazz singer or, who is more of a jazz singer than another? Are *the* jazz singers: Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn and Frank Sinatra? Some people may call Mel Torme a jazz singer while others say his improvisation of vocal solos is too contrived: thus, he is not perceived as a true jazz singer. In some music circles, Joe Williams may be considered a blues singer rather than a jazz singer. There are many other singers such as Mark Murphy, Cleo Laine and Chris Connors who could be placed in several musical categories or styles. Therefore, it would be impossible to mention in this one article all the different kinds of singers within the jazz realm.

Furthermore, a singer like Barry Manilow could be considered a jazz

singer. His recent album, "2:00 a.m. Paradise Cafe," is written and sung in typical jazz ballad style. On the album, there are two duets sung by Manilow and Sarah Vaughn, and Manilow and Mel Torme. Tania Maria is a newly discovered artist who can be considered a jazz singer. Chaka Kahn has shown her flexibility and uniqueness by recording strictly a jazz album, "Echos of an Era." If you listen to this album, you may agree that she is indeed a jazz singer. However, if you listen to the album, "I Feel For You," you will probably say Chaka Kahn is a rock singer.

Michael Franks, another recording artist, is also hard to define. His style of singing does not really resemble today's Top 40 music and his records are generally played only on local jazz stations. Yet, true "jazzers" may not accept Franks as a jazz artist.

On the 1973 album, "Bridging a Gap," recorded by Mark Murphy, Dan Morganstern, then editor of **down beat**, raised the question: "Is Mark Murphy a pop singer or a jazz singer?" When you listen to several of Murphy's albums it is difficult to answer. There are other singers such as Nancy Wilson and Al Jarreau who have crossed over from jazz to pop to rock. Jarreau's album, "High Crime," exemplifies more pop and rock style in addition to his scat singing. This latest album is certainly a break from his earlier recordings, particularly the early album, "The Masquerade Is Over."

It is interesting to note that current popular artists such as Sade are considered "jazz." Top 40 stations and jazz

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Jan Shapiro has been a full-time entertainer as a songwriter, studio vocalist, and night club performer (vocalist, flautist and percussionist) for over a decade in Chicago, Atlanta, Washington, D.C., etc. She has a four octave voice range. She is a full-time faculty member at Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA teaching voice. Jan has taught part-time at Fontbonne College in Clayton, MO and Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, IL. Her degrees are from Maryville College, Howard University and Southern Illinois University.

stations alike play Sade's recordings. If you confronted a teenager or college student, many would consider Sade "jazz."

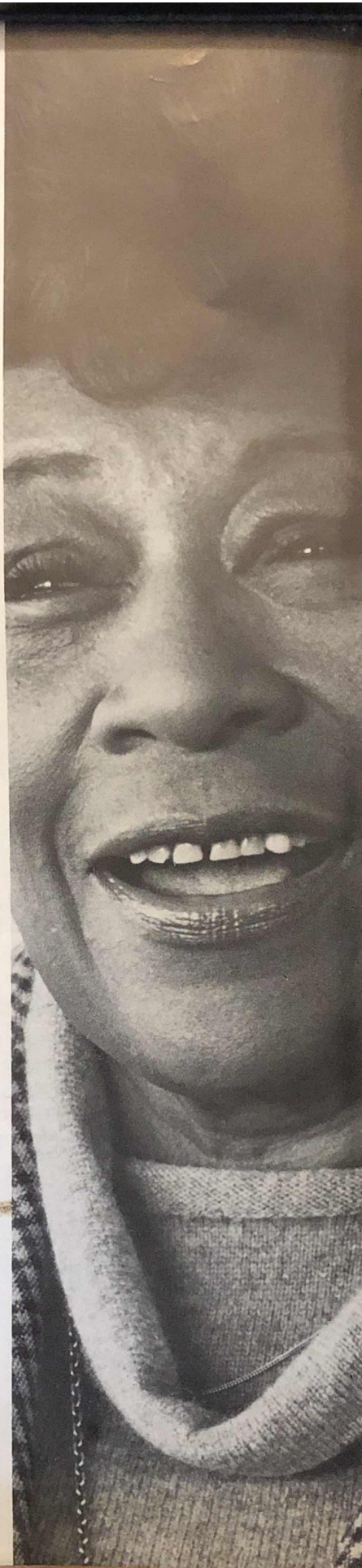
There are many artists who tend to cross over from jazz to pop — or they are simply not in one definite category. Examples of the jazz singing category would include Eddy Jefferson and Anita O'Day. Carmen McRae is a jazz singer but she also has been known to record pop and soft rock material as she did in her 1976 album, "Can't Hide Love." In the late 1950's, Sarah Vaughn recorded "Broken Hearted Melody," which was considered to be a Top 40 tune and made **Billboard's** Top 40's charts. Some traditionalists in the jazz field felt that Sarah Vaughn was being too commercial. Regardless, she has been and is still one of the great jazz stylists of all times. Randy Crawford is yet another example of a singer who "crosses over." She performed in the Montreux Switzerland Jazz Festival, although many consider her to be a pop singer.

Teaching in both a small private college and a large university, I have found that each school's view of what jazz voice comprises is somewhat different. Jazz voice could be anything from voice students singing swing tunes to singing musical comedy selections, to singing a few "pop" songs in conjunction with traditional classical vocal training. In our attempt to define jazz voice in the academic world, we must remember the subjectivity of voice in the pop-jazz idiom. Each school therefore has its prerogative to assemble its own criteria and standards for a jazz voice curriculum.

In the college or university program, it appears that the emphasis is on scat singing for the solo singer as well as for jazz ensembles or choirs. And, though it is certainly true that jazz embraces improvisation in dealing with the voice, scat singing in particular is not the only consideration of a good jazz singer. At any rate, jazz voice at the college level should be a combination of phrasing, interpretation and improvisation, all of which make up a singer's style.

### CREATING A STYLE

A singer can improvise with his or her own way of singing the words or lyrics of a song. The singer can hold out certain vowels or consonants. He or she can "lay back on the time" for stylistic reasons. And, the singer may choose to use nonsense syllables instead of words (imitative of horn players). The



vocalist's use of these nonsense syllables within a song is referred to as scat singing.

Jazz singing does not dictate that only 1930's, 1940's and 1950's jazz standards be sung, nor does a singer's race (black or white) indicate whether or not a singer is a "true" jazz singer. A competent vocalist can incorporate **STYLE** in just about any song of any era, including today's songs. Aspects of style include changing sounds or tones with the voice and/or a combination of using various rhythmic patterns, plus the most important element, the singer's own emotion.

Taking a broad overview of vocal jazz history, we come across many types of song stylists. The style of singing called the 'blues' was derived from slave songs, field hollars, and American folk song. In the 1920's, Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith popularized the 'blues' style of singing. The singer would bend notes (blue notes) emitting a type of sadness and emotion. In true 'blues' singing, the vocal line is freed melodically and rhythmically from the substructure. In other words, the singer improvises around the melody. The vocalists' individual interpretation of a song in the 'blues' style has made a very effective impact on the public that has lasted through the years in various forms of popular music.

When you think of it, most of today's popular music contains at least one of the above aspects. Newer songs may not always be suited for scat singing, but a singer still has the opportunity to incorporate his or her own style.

In the early 1930's Bing Crosby did some scat singing, but utilized his own phrasing to achieve an effect that people called "crooning." During the 'swing' era, vocalists still used the 'blues' style of singing, but the backup band gave the songs a different rhythmic feel and tone color, thus, a different sound. During the 1940's, singers used blue notes and laying behind the beat or time to enhance or embellish their style. Several black vocalists became particularly creative in using their voices as instruments or imitating the sound and phrasing of instruments.

### FRANK & ELLA — DIFFERENT STYLES

Two noted solo singers held in high esteem among musicians, as well as by the general public, are Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra. Ella Fitzgerald's scat

(Continued on page 55)

NYC 1950 with Miles Davis, in the Chet Baker quartet. Bird

Red Record VPA 191. The Rouse, Kenny Barron, Buster after a recording hiatus has an cut in November 1985. Com- putings, this one seems more e the cohesiveness is unmiti- u Needn't" from the book of T. om Buster Williams and Kenny rd - "Beautiful Friendship." unded and swings with bright- tion is one of the best in jazz. ion recording, Sphere may best ode of retrieval. An outstanding stinction of an outstanding state

ge," BlackHawk BKH 51101. I ically on this album since I was ot hesitate whatsoever in inform- istence. The rhythm section with George Mraz and Victor Lewis. 86 it is the first Getz Quartet Lp me rationale, the first U.S. Lp of with trumpeter Tom Harrell is on titled "Heaven." Speaking of ay of Light" is also a new release,

**INS/BENNY CARTER.** Swing awkins in 1937 is an historically of his titan status. Here he is French orchestra which includes Stephane Grappelly, recorded in in Paris and New York in 1938 occupy similar significance, espe- h the Chocolate Dandies (Ben n, Al Grey, John Simmons, Sonny

White and Sid Catlett.)

**ALBUMS FROM THE CAMPUSES . . .**  
**NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY JAZZ SINGERS.** "Reaching Out," Paris Rutherford, Director. Mark MJS-57616.

**DE ANZA COLLEGE JAZZ SINGERS & THE VINTAGE SINGERS.** Roger Letson, Director. Mark MC-20655. De Anza College Cupertino, California.

**HOWARD UNIVERSITY JAZZ ENSEMBLE '85.** Fred Irby, III Director. Mark MCJS-20603. (Features Frank Foster as guest soloist).

**EASTMAN JAZZ ENSEMBLE.** "Hot House," Ray Wright, Director. Mark MJS-57615.

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## Vocal Jazz

(Continued from page 21)

singing is quite predominant in her singing style while Frank Sinatra has capitalized more on phrasing. Ella approaches melodic lines as an instrumentalist. Her solo scat singing within a song displays a unique virtuosity. Frank Sinatra's relaxed phrasing within a song is yet another example of unique jazz styling.

Mark Murphy, in the album, "Stolen Moments," and in the recorded song, "Stolen Moments," uses his voice as an

instrumentalist. Mel Torme utilizes this type of singing in his recordings but he can also sing in a very relaxed way on ballads.

Singers who use tone colors, phrasing and interpretation more pre- dominately than scat singing include Peggy Lee, Billie Holiday, Jo Stafford, Keely Smith, Billy Ecksteine, Nat King Cole, each singularly effective in his or her style and interpretation. Singers of today who are noted for their unique style, while not using much or any scat singing include Barbra Streisand, Roberta Flack, Crystal Gayle, Linda Ronstadt, Dionne Warwick, Chaka Khan, Billy Joel, Daryl Hall, Luther Vandross and Peabo Bryson.

During the 'swing' era, groups such as the "Modernaires," "Ink Spots," "Mills Brothers," and "Andrews Sisters" were very popular. None of these groups used scat singing as their pre- dominant style. On the other hand, after the swing era, the group, "Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross," utilized scat singing as an integral part of their unique sound. All of these groups could be categorized as "jazz singing" groups.

Several other singing groups tend to

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fluxuate between jazz and popular or contemporary stylings. The most recent group to do this is Manhattan Transfer. Their latest album, "Vocalise," represents a return to jazz from their earlier album, "American Pop." The groups Rare Silk and Singers Unlimited also utilize scat singing as well as singing in a more pop style. The Hi-Lo's are yet another groups to cross over from jazz stylings to a pop sound.

An all-women's group called "Alive" instrumentally and vocally utilizes jazz stylings as well as pop and rock stylings and phrasings.

### THE QUESTION:

The question is, what are we teaching in regard to jazz voice in the college setting? Are we putting too much emphasis on scat singing? Is every student meant to scat sing and be really good at it? Probably not. Every student may learn how to improvise in the college setting, but not everyone may be great at this skill. Some vocalists naturally find scat singing easy while others, in particular those who have never been exposed to classical jazz and swing, wind up sounding contrived or simply "jibbering."

As educators we have yet to explore non-traditional ways in approaching voice to aid the student in expanding and developing various vocal styles. In the past and in traditional classical vocal training, the singer learned to depend on the melody. Often the singer may be completely dependent on the piano. It is true that there are no "F" or "C" notes to push or blow with the human voice. However, approaching singing as an instrumentalist may be the way to improve not only musicianship, but also to help the vocalist become independent of what the pianist is playing. The time involved in training the "ears" of the jazz vocalist may be considerable, depending on the particular student (based on the student's musical experience, background and exposure to the jazz idiom).

### THE SINGER

Every ballad singer can be just as affective and "moving" as the best "scat" singer. In my own professional experience, the great ballad singer is often not particularly a strong utilizer of "scat" singing. Every student will have strong points — ballad singing, up tempos, scat singing, rock singing, musical comedy selections, etc. It is

important to encourage the singer's unique abilities, whether it be ballad singing or "swing" tunes.

Barbra Streisand has been noted for her beautiful ballad singing in earlier and more recent albums (see discography\*). It is important to note that she also recorded an album of art songs, showcasing once again her expressiveness and vocal abilities within the classical realm. There are so many excellent ballad singers that not all could be mentioned here. The array of strong ballad singers are many — from Judy Garland, Vic Damone, Steve Lawrence, Jack Jones, Edie Gorme, Roberta Flack to today's current artists (see discography\*).

### SOLUTION:

It would seem that every effort should be made in jazz education institutions to give the jazz vocal major an opportunity to expand his or her vocal skills. In order to accomplish this, I recommend that scat singing should be included, but certainly not take precedence over interpretation or stylistic phrasing. All are important to the singer and for some vocalists, one or the other may be better suited.

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Exposure to the jazz idiom and the opportunity to perform are of utmost importance. It is equally important to prepare students for a realistic world. John Naisbitt, author of **Megatrends**, states: "The problem is that our thinking, or attitudes, and consequently our decision making, have not caught up with the reality of things." The reality in regards to the music student is he or she needs not only knowledge, but marketable skills. The majority of successful singers today, soloists, vocal groups, including studio and jingle vocalists, do not use scat singing.

Even with a limited job market, there is a definite need to continue our excellent training in traditional classical literature. In order to give students alternatives to the musical job market, there is a need to offer excellent jazz training as well. Jazz studies programs must never forget that, inevitably, the student is training to hopefully make a living as a performer and/or teacher.

Students who intend to be teachers need as broad a background in jazz as they have in the classical realm, if they are to be effective instructors in the classroom. We need good musicians who are flexible in classical music, in jazz, and commercial music, even though as musicians, our forte will most likely be in one of these idioms. A realistic and constant assessment of the state of our art and our student's needs is essential.

#### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

##### Ella Fitzgerald

- A Perfect Match Ella and Basie  
 Pablo Today  
 Take Love Easy Pab  
 A Classy Pair  
 Pablo Today 2312-132  
 Ella Loves Cole Atlantic Records SD 1631  
 Ella Fitzgerald Newport Jazz Columbia  
 Festival Live at Carnegie  
 July 5, 1973

##### Nat King Cole

- Unforgettable Capitol Records

##### Keely Smith

- I Wish You Love Capitol Records T 914  
 Politely Capitol Records T1073

##### June Christy

- Something Cool Capitol Records SM-516

##### Dinah Washington

- Dinah Washington  
 Golden Hits Vol. II Mercury Records 60789

##### Nancy Wilson

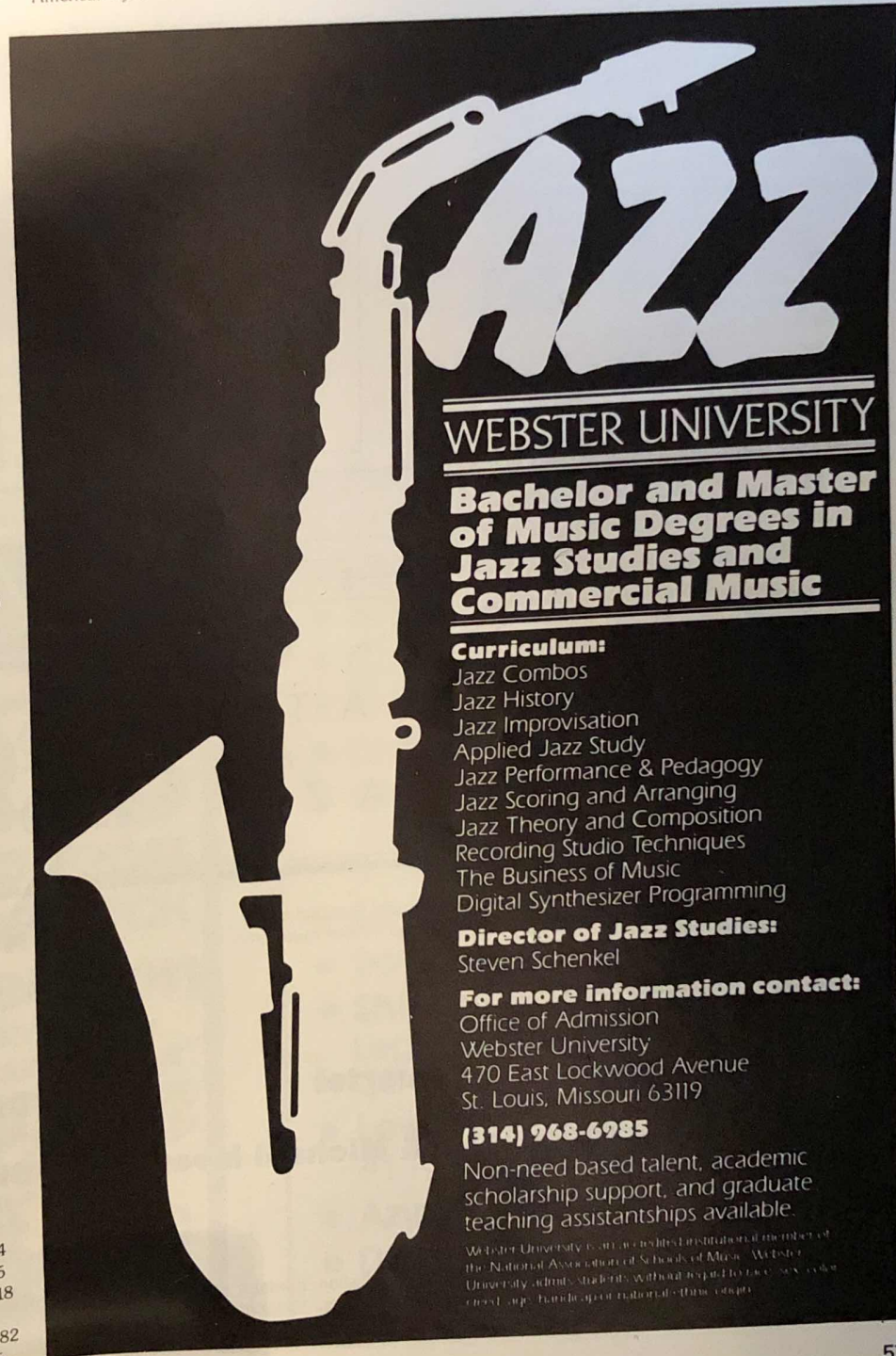
- Yesterday's Love Songs Capitol Records T2012  
 Today's Blues Capitol Records SF 729  
 Who Can I Turn To? Capitol Records SM 1524  
 The Swingin's Mutual! Capitol Records SY 4575  
 Broadway My Way Capitol Records ST 11518  
 This Mother's Daughter Capitol Records

##### Barbra Streisand

- Simply Streisand Columbia S-C59482  
 My Name Is Barbra Columbia CS9136

Yentl Classical Barbra <b>Carmen McRae</b> For Once in My Love Can't Hide Love <b>Eddie Jefferson</b> The Jazz Singer <b>Judy Garland</b> A Star Is Born <b>Anite O'Day</b> The Big Band Sessions <b>Randy Crawford</b> Secret Combination Casino Lights-Recorded Live at Montreux Switzerland <b>Rare Silk</b> American Eyes	Columbia Columbia Atlantic Blue Note Inner City Harmony Verve Warner Bros. Warner Bros. P/O	JS39152 M33452 SD8143 BNLA635-C IC-1016 HS 11366 UE-2-2534 BS1C3541 1-23718 S-8086	<b>Hi-Lo's</b> Back Again Hi-Lo's Collection <b>Alive</b> City Life <b>Sarah Vaughn</b> Recorded Live The Best of Sarah Vaughn After Hours Count Basie and Sarah Vaughn <b>Billie Holiday</b> Billie Holiday/ God Bless the Child A Rare Live Recording of Billie Holiday	Pau MCA Al. Mercury Pablo Records CSP Rou. Columbia Rec. Industries Corp.	\$-7040 \$-2-4171 543 ENS 2 412 1983 JCL 660 S 42018
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(Continued on page 58)



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**Chaka Khan**

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I Feel for You War. Bros. 1-25162

**Michael Franks**

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Passion Fruit War. Bros. 1-23962

**Al Jarreau**

High Crime War. Bros. 1-25106

The Masquerade is Over War. Bros. SDRM 990136

**Sade**

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Jan Shapiro

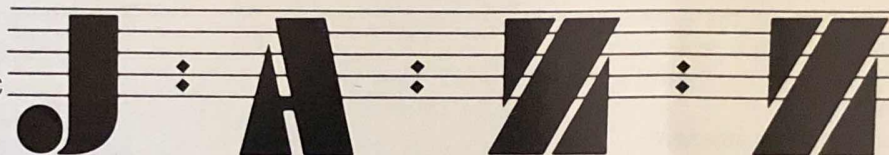


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Readers — plan to attend NAJE's 14th Nat'l Convention in Atlanta on Jan. 8-11, 1987. It's a must event for both educators and students alike who want to see and hear what's happening in jazz today. Here's four good reasons why: 1) the music (great junior high, high school, college & professional jazz bands and vocal groups); 2) informative "how to" clinics; 3) a mammoth music industry exhibition and 4) make professional contacts and 5) organized student jam sessions (bring your 'axe'). Special NAJE room rates are also available. See pages 8-10, 86 and 87 for further information about the convention, a tentative schedule and photos of who's participating. This year's convention promises to be even better.

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