

PART III – THE BUSINESS

INTRODUCTION

Despite an obvious cynicism and reluctant resignation to the state of the jazz business, I've tried to maintain an even attitude and objective perspective throughout this book. This may seem arguable to this point, but in this *Part I* will clearly delineate many of the reasons why my overall point of view has evolved.

I realize that this book is a bit like a roller coaster ride: Bad news in *Part I*, followed by a sense of spirit and partnership in *Part II*; and now...back to the bleak and dismal.

But a jungle's a jungle, a sea's a sea and a desert's a desert. Each terrain is filled with perils that need to be avoided or overcome in order to thrive, or simply survive in its environment. There's certainly no need to soften the truth around alligators, stormy seas or rattlesnake bites in preparing for those dangerous territories, nor any real reasons to extol their virtues – not in a book whose purpose is to familiarize its readers with the challenging conditions they'll be facing in pursuit of their goals.

But in this case, there are really no virtues to praise. At least in deserts and jungles the dangers that face you are a vital part of the environment, and contribute to their beauty and glorious edification as well. But business has attached itself to the jazz art like a tapeworm, sucking the nourishment out of its victim while doing nothing to enhance its host organism other than keeping it from getting too fat. For me, 35 years of watching the same old characters lay the same old rap about the same old phony issues in endless repetition has produced the recognition of a *syndrome*; and syndromes deserve generalization. It's a yin-yang thing.

Thirty-five years of direct experience, extended back another 15 through colleagues and even farther by research has also demonstrated consistent patterns of evolution (or more appropriately, mutation) among jazz business people, converting them from firebrand reformers to willing participants in the carnage. While this is not true of *all* jazz business people, there's a significant enough majority to maintain the status quo of imbalance and exploitation. By no means am I implying that these are malicious people who scheme and delight in abusing jazz musicians. Nor do I believe that they boast to each other with pride of the various musicians whom they've fleeced (despite the various musicians who have tried to persuade me that it's a regular occurrence).

But regardless of their conscious intent, the results are the same. Some may be paternalistic; others may persuade themselves that they provide some silver lining in an otherwise gloomy cloud. Some may simply blind themselves to the ugly reality; while others may feel that their obligations to their families supersede any damage they may be causing to others. No matter what they may sell themselves however, the bottom line of imbalance and exploitation is perpetuated by their participation.

Furthermore, the self-defeating actions of understandably frustrated musicians in regard to those who are actually on the artists' side only helps to push people out of the business or over to the side of the exploiters. This just feeds the never-ending cycle of abuse. All of these circumstances combined with

the mega-profits mentality set in motion in the 1980s has created an extremely hostile environment for the creative and committed jazz musician in the 21st century.

But as Miles Davis so succinctly stated, “*So What.*” This is what it is, and what the artist and the committed professional must accept, confront, and find a way to navigate. Or, as the magnificent John Coltrane so profoundly expressed in *A Love Supreme: Acknowledge, Resolve, Pursue...* and offer a *Psalm* to Creation for the ability to partake in this glorious art form.

When reading this *Part*, don’t let the hard edge of contempt interfere with the objective information contained, or even dilute the objectivity. It’s certainly valid to despise something from an objective point of view. In fact, it’s the only valid way. Objectivity does not mean *acceptance* of these negative aspects, just a clear understanding of them and the reasons why they exist. Then a judgment must be made. From the perspective of this highly experienced, honest, rational and successful professional, *this business is a cesspool*.

So pull on those high boots, plug up the nostrils, strap on the goggles and wade on in. I promise there will be plenty of anti-toxins in *Part IV*.

