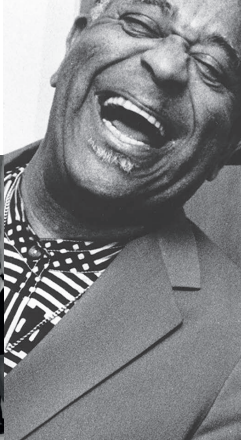


Dizzy Gillespie

All-Star Big Band

Geneva 2007



Swiss Radio Days | **51**
Jazz Series



Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band

Slide Hampton cond & tb
 Roberta Gambarini voc
 Frank Greene tp
 Greg Gisbert tp
 Roy Hargrove tp
 Claudio Roditi tp
 Jason Jackson tb
 Steve Davis tb
 Jonathan Voltzok tb
 Douglas Purviance btb

Antonio Hart as
 Mark Gross as
 James Moody ts
 Andres Boiarsky ts
 Frank Basile bs
 Roy Assaf p
 John Lee elb
 Dennis Mackrel dm

Songs & soloists

1 Hot House (Tadd Dameron) 6:08

Solos: Antonio Hart, as; Roy Hargrove, tp

2 Con Alma (Dizzy Gillespie) 8:32

Solos: James Moody, ts; Claudio Roditi, tp; Slide Hampton, tb; Roy Assaf, p

3 Manteca (Dizzy Gillespie) 9:50

Solos: Frank Greene, Greg Gisbert, Roy Hargrove, Claudio Roditi, tp; Douglas Purviance, btb; Andres Boiarsky, ts; John Lee, elb; Dennis Mackrel, dm

4 Round Midnight (Thelonious Monk) 12:44

Solos: Antonio Hart, as; Greg Gisbert, tp; Roy Assaf, p;

5 Dizzy's Business (Ernie Wilkins) 3:43

Solos: Greg Gisbert, tp; Mark Gross, as

6 Without You No Me (Jimmy Heath) 8:51

Solos: Claudio Roditi, tp; Andres Boiarsky, ts; Roy Assaf, p

7 Moody's Groove (Jimmy Heath) 7:06

Solos: James Moody, ts; Steve Davis, tb; Roberta Gambarini, voc

8 Blue'n Boogie (Dizzy Gillespie) 9:00

Solos: Roberta Gambarini, voc; James Moody, voc; Roy Hargrove, tp; Jason Jackson, tb

9 Things To Come (Dizzy Gillespie) 9:55

Solos: Frank Greene, Greg Gisbert, Roy Hargrove, Claudio Roditi, tp; Antonio Hart, as; Dennis Mackrel, dm

Dizzy's Undying Flame

Dizzy! Dizzy! Dizzzzzy!!! What a magnificent sound, one of the most tastefully apt nicknames for a dweller of the Jazz Pantheon. Because it's important to know, or to remember: with John Birks Dizzy Gillespie, we're dealing with truly royal Jazz blood.

Remembering the trumpeter, when we've had the luck to hear him – regularly – to see him – often – to meet and interact with him – all too rarely – every time elicits joy with a capitol “J”. Because, for the man who said of Louis Armstrong, “Without you, no me”, scores of elegant followers have probably felt or uttered the same laudatory and grateful phrase.

And then... dig into your memory or search the web and type in “Dizzy... Jazz”, and you'll find a gallery of photos all exhibiting the most visible of exceptional generousities. As if the happiness and pleasure Diz felt at being the musical genius he was, he felt naturally compelled to radiate in every shot, managing to bring out mischief, humor, sharing, and infectious good humor. And if in a number of these photographic testimonies, Dizzy does Dizzy and passes himself off as a sort of irresistible clown-entertainer, we must realize that his music was also irresistible and that in all circumstances, it remained undeniably of a supernatural quality.

In fact, orchestral ensembles that pay homage to a musician posthumously or that strive to extend their ideas and message, are few and far between! And among this exceptional cast, it's no surprise to find poetic heavyweights like Duke, Basie, Gil Evans, Mingus, and... Dizzy Gillespie!

For our hero trumpeter, there's no need to hesitate. The big band was the base for him, and before leading his own group of marvelously maniacal virtuosos from 1945 onward, he had already been sparkling his pistons in many of the best swing machines of the day for a decade. Starting with Frank Fairfax in 1935, then Edgar Hayes and Teddy Hill (with whom he recorded King Porter's Stomp, featuring his very first trumpet solo); it was the start of his young glory with Cab Calloway, Ella Fitzgerald and the musicians of Chick Webb, Earl Hines, Billy Eckstine, etc... He did this while starting to deliver in parallel arrangements for groups as famous as those of Woody Herman or Jimmy Dorsey. Simultaneously Dizzy then became, in the company of his alter ego Charlie Parker, the other bridgehead of the fever that was Be Bop, riding roughshod over everything in his path in the company of Bud Powell, Thelonious Monk, Max Roach, Miles Davis and all those who knew how to jump on the bandwagon of these two geniuses who revolutionized music in the mid-40s.

Dizzy's big band immediately became one of the most en vogue orchestras of the day, beyond that it would become, from 1947-1948, the crucible of Afro-Cuban Jazz that the trumpeter, transmitting passion and fire, had practically invented in the company of Mario Bauza, Chano Pozo or Sabu Martinez. In fact, from that moment on, our man would never stop seeking encounters to break down all the stylistic and political barriers possible. He would be the first to offer a chance to the very young Argentinean pianist-composer Lalo Schifrin at the very end of the '50s, then founded the United Nations Orchestra in which he would welcome some of his great Cuban friends, such as Arturo Sandoval or Paquito D'Rivera, extending a musical hand in order to allow them to start a new life after fleeing the regime of Fidel Castro.

The Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band is thus here for us – to refresh our memories and remind us that this music hasn't aged a bit, paying homage to Dizzy's incomparable aura. This 2007 ensemble, energized by bassist and musical director John Lee (a former partner and lynchpin behind the band), stopped at Geneva's Victoria-Hall for a concert that you can now experience – or relive for the first time – on record. The lineup includes former partners of the trumpeter, such as trombonist and conductor Slide Hampton, Brazilian trumpeter Claudio Roditi, and of course the legendary saxophonist James Moody, who joined Dizzy's big band on alto in... 1946! However the majority of the sections are overflowing with young talents who were already at the top of the Jazz scene at the time of this recording. A list particularly impressive with rhythm and three horn sections experienced with all the flamboyancy demanded by a repertoire built as much on memorable compositions, that are identified with the inspiration of this project – such as Con Alma, Manteca, Blue'n Boogie and Things to Come. These are titles, inevitably associated with Be Bop as well as Hot House (grafted by Tadd Dameron on the chords of What Is This Thing Called Love) or Round Midnight. Finally, the three remaining arrangements (which are all fraternal tributes to Dizzy) are Dizzy's Business by Ernie Wilkins and two gems by the "little giant" Jimmy Heath (who joined Diz's orchestra in... 1949 and often returned to the All-Star Big Band in the 2000s!): Without You No Me, a title that should remind you of something and that Jimmy had affectionately diverted in the direction of his mentor and buddy; and finally Moody's Groove, which Jimmy had written on the occasion of his friend James' eightieth birthday in 2005.

A single last word of advice: let yourself be carried away by the flame of each solo from this glorious team of committed Gillespians, as they embark on a uplifting program of exhilarating Swing! You'll experience a truly special moment, served up with passion, seriousness AND humor – three words that pretty much sum up the man we also called... The Champ!

N.B.: During the 1964 US presidential campaign, Dizzy Gillespie submitted his candidacy as an independent, promising that if elected, he would rename the White House as the Blues House! He also announced the composition of his future government: Duke Ellington (Secretary of State), Miles Davis (Director of the CIA), Max Roach (Secretary of Defense), Charles Mingus (Secretary of Peace), Ray Charles (Librarian of Congress), Louis Armstrong (Secretary of Agriculture), Mary Lou Williams (Ambassador to the Vatican), Thelonious Monk (Travelling Ambassador) and Malcolm X (Attorney General). No doubt it would have looked a lot different than the government of these mid-2020s, don't you think? Especially since he, in his campaign slogan, clearly announced his motto: «Vote Dizzy!»

Yvan Ischer
RTS Producer – Radio Télévision Suisse
Swiss Radio Days Jazz Series Consultant

Translation by Tony Lewis



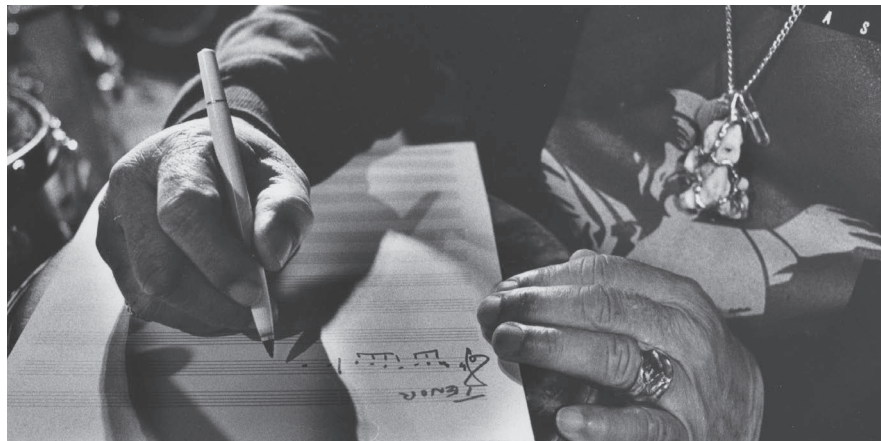
^ Dizzy Gillespie & John Lee (© D. Gignoux)

▼ Greg Gisbert & James Moody (© J-J. Becciolini)



^ Claudio Roditi & Jimmy Heath (© J-J. Becciolini)

▼ Dizzy at work! (© D. Gignoux)



A salute to Slide Hampton and the Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band

At the turn of the 1970s, as a college student in Geneva, I worked during my summer vacation at the *Maison de la Radio* as a jack of all trades. One day, a coworker told me that “the world’s greatest trombonist” was coming to conduct the studio’s regular big band for a recording (back then we had money!) and that afterwards, we had to get the magnetic tapes to him. I was given this task. I was also asked to show him around Geneva that same evening, my high school English being deemed sufficient. The gentleman in question was Slide Hampton. Thus began a friendship that lasted more than fifty years.

Trombonist, composer, arranger, and conductor Locksley Wellington (Slide) Hampton was born in Pennsylvania in 1932. From childhood, he performed in the family band as a singer and dancer. A gifted musician, he would become a member of the orchestras of Lionel Hampton, Dizzy Gillespie, Maynard Ferguson, and Thad Jones-Mel Lewis in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1962, he founded his own orchestra with the support of Artie Shaw.

Slide then went on tour in Europe with Woody Herman’s big band in 1968, and decided to stay there. He settled in Paris but worked with studio orchestras mainly in Germany, Denmark and Switzerland for nearly 10 years. He befriended Eddie Barclay and then Sacha Distel, with whom he even recorded an album.

He then returned to the United States, where he devoted most of his time to teaching at prestigious universities, including Harvard, and took over as director of the Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band around 2005. Legendary musicians such as Frank Wess, Jimmy Heath and James Moody joined the orchestra. The rest of the orchestra was made up of young jazz musicians whose names were at the top of the rankings in



Slide Hampton
© Jean-Jacques Becciolini

American Jazz magazines. One of them was the extraordinary star trumpeter Roy Hargrove. I'll let you discover the rest of the line-up in this highly anticipated album!

Slide Hampton won two Grammy Awards: in 1998 with Dee Dee Bridgewater, and as leader of the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra in 2006.

Due to my frequent travels to the United States, our relationship lasted for decades, leading me to get to know both his family and the small community of exceptional musicians he led, which was perfectly managed by John Lee, bassist and former sidekick of Dizzy Gillespie.

In 2006, I had the idea of inviting the Dizzy Gillespie All-Star Big Band to Switzerland for a private party organized by a Zurich business club that I chaired. This also led to two public concerts in Switzerland, one at the Victoria-Hall in Geneva on May 7, 2007, and the other at Moods Club in Zurich two days later.

So that's a little bit of the story behind this album. Slide, who suffered from diabetes, gradually withdrew from the music scene and finally passed away in Orange, New Jersey, on November 18, 2021, at the age of 86.

But as legendary British veteran George Chisholm once said: "Old trombone players never die... they just... slide away..."

Jean-Jacques Becciolini
Geneva, August 2025

Translation by Tony Lewis



Roy Hargrove
© Jean-Jacques Becciolini

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