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SHIRLEY HORN
NEA Jazz Master (2005)

Interviewee: Shirley Horn (May 1, 1934 – October 20, 2005)
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Stitt: Tape one of the Shirley Horn interview for the Smithsonian Institution Jazz Oral History Program, and the Sung and Unsung Jazz Women Symposium. Today is Thursday, June 13th, 1996. We're at the home of Shirley Horn, located at 2018 Lawrence Street, N.E.

So if you would please state your full name, date and place of birth.

Horn: Shirley Horn Dearing, Washington, D.C. I was born May 1, 1934.

Stitt: Were you born at home, or in the hospital, and if so, which hospital?

Horn: I was born in Gallagher Hospital. My mother could tell me better. Gallagher Hospital in Northwest [D.C.].

Stitt: What were your parents' names, and what are or were their occupations?

Horn: My mother is Grace Louise Horn; I'm sorry, Grace Louise Saunders. My dad is Ernest Joviet [phonetic] Horn.

Stitt: Were your parents native Washingtonians? If not, where were they from?

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Horn: My mother's a native Washingtonian. My father is from East St. Louis. My mother's from Ivy City, Northeast, which is not too far from where we are now, Ivy City.

Stitt: Do you have any siblings, any brothers or sisters?

Horn: Have two brothers, and that's it.

Stitt: Can you state their names?

Horn: Ernest Horn and Dale Horn.

Stitt: And in what order are you all?

Horn: I'm the oldest one. Ernie is the big one. I'm the oldest, Ernie is next, and Dale is the next Horn. Yes, he's the baby.

Stitt: And where are they?

Horn: They're in Washington, D.C.

Stitt: Are either one of them musicians?

Horn: No. No, they're not. I wanted them to do something, but however, my oldest brother is just . . . maybe he's about . . . good lord, he's about twenty minutes away from here, and he's an adjudicator with the government, and the baby brother is just a baby brother. [laughs]

Stitt: Okay. And did all of you all grow up in Brooklyn? Did your family reside in Brooklyn?

Horn: No, darling. We all resided right here in Washington, right here in this area is called . . .

Stitt: Oh, Woodridge.

Horn: Woodridge, right.

Stitt: Okay, so we were [unclear].

Horn: No, no, no, this is Woodridge here.

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Stitt: Can you describe the neighborhood at the time, both the racial composition as well as the socioeconomic composition, the school systems, etc., as you remember them as a child?

Horn: Well, you know, there was a difference here. There's ten years' difference between my brother, my oldest brother and me, you know. Ask that question again.

Stitt: The neighborhood, just your recollections of the neighborhood when you were growing up, both the racial composition as well as the socioeconomic makeup of your neighborhood.

Horn: Oh, it was really always . . . it was kind of mellow, you know, always here, because my brothers always, you know, they were hoodlums. They're both hoodlums. However, the neighborhood was always nice.

Stitt: Was it basically working-class people?

Horn: Yes, yes, right, right. I mean, my mom and dad and my brothers, they were here. I moved here like maybe twenty-four years ago, and before that I had my daughter, and we were in Dupont Park. My daughter was born, and of course I had to move over here close to my mom and my dad, and my aunt was there, and my uncles over there.

Stitt: There's a natural support system.

Horn: Yes. Yes.

Stitt: Now, just to be clear again, the neighborhood was segregated, or was it an interracial, I mean an integrated neighborhood?

Horn: You know, I don't really . . . I really don't know. You mean here?

Stitt: When you were growing up; obviously not now. It's changed incredibly. But as a child, do you remember?

Horn: No, I don't, I really don't know, because my dad's from St. Louis, and I had my Aunt Cleo, you know, who taught Miles [Davis] and stuff, because Miles didn't . . . he didn't talk about black and white and all that other stuff. It was people. I remember him telling me my aunt was mean. She was a mean teacher. But I remember going into St. Louis and going to the school, and Aunt Cleo was rough. Ooh, she was mean. But I don't remember, because my dad was . . . I don't know. I don't know about black and white. It was like . . .

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Stitt: So it didn't really impact you.

Horn: No, not at all. I mean, we were just us.

Stitt: What sort of childhood did you all have?

Horn: My childhood, I really, I can't tell you what my childhood was like, because it was all about . . . well, yes. It was all about music, going to school. I was in school all the time. I wanted to do that. I mean, good lord, my mother would say, "Why don't you go and play with the kids outside?"

Stitt: Yes, I remember that. She'd always bribe you.

Horn: Yeah, right. And I just wanted to do the music.

Stitt: So with the exception of, of course, the music, which I guess never leaves you alone, you were predominantly alone.

Horn: Yes, right, right.

Stitt: Now, as a young girl you also got paid for being a pianist for your church congregation.

Horn: That's right.

Stitt: Is this correct? How old were you at that time, roughly, approximately?

Horn: I'm thinking about twelve years old. Yes, about twelve. It was a Baptist church in Northeast Washington, 11th and G Street, Northeast, right? I was there all the time. I just played. I wanted to do that. I wanted to play. I didn't have much, what do you call it . . . it wasn't . . . the gospel choir. I couldn't really just swing it like I wanted to swing, you know. I tried. It was fun.

Stitt: Your grandmother now, and you have to clarify on which side, but she was the organist for the church?

Horn: My grandmother, she's my darling. I called her Grand Doll, you know. She's a little short lady, and she never studied, and in Ivy City . . . Grand Doll used to play at the church in Ivy City, and she was so short, you know, they would have . . . I remember they had to hold her because she could not play the pedals on the organ. But I remember years ago when I would have . . . when I grew up and I would say, "Mama, we're going to have a little party," and stuff, my grandmother would be there. She'd play the piano and it

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wasn't really a party unless my grandmother played the piano. She played and she sang. She was just . . . she was special.

Mama taught me so much. She told me about like picking persimmons on baseball diamonds, and all kind of different kind of fruit. She taught me about how to pick poke salad, and just so many things that will carry me on . . .

[Tape recorder turned off.]

Stitt: You spoke of Aunt Cleo earlier. She was Miles Davis' music instructor, or a general studies teacher?

Horn: Yeah. Aunt Cleo was . . . Miles said, "She's the roughest bitch in the world." [laughs] And Aunt Cleo was really rough. She was a very positive teacher. I think I was like twelve years old or something, I went to St. Louis and went to her class, and she was mean.

And everybody's, "She's mean, she's mean, she's mean." She was not mean. She was factual, you know.

She'd tell them, "Hey, this is what you're supposed to do. You're supposed to do this and that, so, so, so," blah, blah. I respected her for that, you know, and Aunt Cleo was kind of rough. She was kind of rough with me, you know, when she'd come to Washington. I was cool, but my brothers were scared of her, because she was always very positive and everything, and I liked that. That was Aunt Cleo.

Stitt: And she was a Horn, also, her last name?

Horn: Horn, yes.

Stitt: Did you spend a lot of time in East St. Louis, growing up?

Horn: No, I didn't. You know, just a bit of time, not that much time. When I was older I would go and do a job here and there, or something like that, you know, then I would hang out with Aunt Cleo and Uncle Clifford. But they would come here to Washington to visit my dad, whose house is right around the corner. They would come and she would cook and make chicken and dumplings. She wasn't affected by the weather here, because, like in St. Louis it was 110 [degrees], but she'd come here and she'd make chicken and dumplings. He's so happy he couldn't move. [laughs]

Stitt: She'd visit in the summer? [unclear]

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Horn: Yes, she would. Right.

Stitt: Your father's family, the rest of them were also in East St. Louis, your father's parents?

Horn: Yes.

Stitt: Did you know them well?

Horn: Yeah. My granddad, my father's father was West Indian. He was from St. Louis, and all the rest of them, you know, they were in St. Louis.

Stitt: You began playing at four years old? You began lessons at four . . .

Horn: Right.

Stitt: . . . years old, and this was at the prompting of your mother.

Horn: My grandmother.

Stitt: Your grandmother.

Horn: Yes.

Stitt: But I read that the primary goal was to make you a classical concert pianist.

Horn: Right.

Stitt: Was this always your desire? Well, at four . . .

Horn: I don't know. I didn't know what I wanted, you see. I just know I wanted the music. It wasn't like, well, what direction? I just wanted to play the piano. But I had classical training in the beginning, and that's what I knew, you know. And I wanted to. I wanted to, to be a classical artist, but I don't know, something happened with it. Earl Garner [phonetic] came along and he kind of said, "Ooh, ooh, ooh," you know.

Stitt: With *Penthouse Serenade*? Was that one of the many?

Horn: That's right. That was the first, that's right.

Stitt: Would you say that was really the pivotal point for you, in terms of wanting to be a jazz musician?

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Horn: I think so. I heard that; something happened, you know?

Stitt: You also cited Debussy and Rachmaninoff as two of your early influences.

Horn: That's right. Debussy is my lyricism man, and Rachmaninoff is my Oscar Peterson man. I was in San Francisco and I just got it. I was really thrilled, you know. He wants that I be a part of his tribute.

Stitt: The tribute to Oscar?

Horn: Right. Yes. It just kind of knocked me out, you know, when I got there. Yes, I'm really thrilled, because he's been my Rachmaninoff all my life, and he's a bad motorcycle. [laughs]

Stitt: What are your earliest recollections of hearing music in your household? And what styles . . .

Horn: I heard Billie Holiday. I heard Dinah Washington. I heard Count Basie. I heard, oh, good lord, I heard all the best; everything that was good, I heard. Duke Ellington; I mean, I was surrounded by the best. I mean, I heard all the good stuff, all the goodies.

Stitt: Did both of your parents have an interest in music?

Horn: Yes. Yes.

Stitt: So they talked . . .

Horn: Right, right, right.

Stitt: Would you say that you grew up in the church? I mean, you were the pianist. Was it a solid . . . you know that church upbringing that you can't get . . .

Horn: Child, I was there when I was . . . at Israel Baptist Church. I think you know about Israel Baptist Church, okay? So I played for Sunday school and church. I played . . . let's see, they didn't have the B-3 organ. I played the pipe organ, right? I did all that, because I was there all day and all, and I did the whole nine yards. Child, believe me, I was there until I was eighteen.

Stitt: What impact do you think this had on your music?

Horn: Oh, hey, it made a difference, you know?

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Stitt: How so?

Horn: Oh, hey, because it affected me right on down the line, up and down the line, right? I just, I heard it. I heard it all, you know. Well, sometimes you listen out, I'll be throwing a little something in there, you know.

Stitt: That gospel influence?

Horn: Oh yes, yes, oh yes.

Stitt: Now, at the age of twelve you began studying composition at Howard University?

Horn: I want to correct that.

Stitt: Okay. Please, feel free.

Horn: Okay. There was a teacher, and I'm going to remember her name in a minute, who was very strict and very mean, and I'm going to call her name. I want to call her name, damn it. Okay. I was in this Junior School of Music, and there's a teacher. Her name is Dr. Francis Hughes, who right now is the number one lady in my life. I mean, we're in touch now, and she has so much faith in me. She and my uncle set up something with Howard. [whispering] What was her name, Mrs. Nickerson; I don't know if she's dead or alive. [normal volume] Was a shy child. Her name was Mrs. Nickerson, okay? All this is going to be documented, right?

Stitt: Yes.

Horn: Okay. Well, I was a little shy child, and I was there, and I was in Junior School of Music there, and Dr. Hughes and my uncle, Dr. Horn, set up something special so I could be there, because they thought I was special, right. But this woman, she was . . . I'm not going to say she was mean. She was just maybe too positive or something, and we had to do a special composition. Now, at that point who was in the same class as me was Frank West [phonetic], Frank West, right. And he was a sweetheart, you know. Okay. I did what I thought was really great, and she said, "This is too avant-garde." She just ruined me. And I remember walking down . . . what the name of that street was . . . down to Georgia Avenue. Frank walked with me, and I cried all the way, because I was a scared child, you know what I mean? This woman had just ruined me. I mean, she just stepped all over me and stuff. So I couldn't call her names then. Now I can call her names, but however . . . and she just kind of killed me.

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Then there was something about not doing . . . ask me another question, because I think you know what I'm trying to say.

Stitt: If we can just return to the church for a minute, was there anyone else in the church who was instrumental in teaching you, or in showing you things, perhaps the choirmaster there?

Horn: Mr. Tibbs.

Stitt: And who was he?

Horn: He was the organist, and there was a family of Bobby Tibbs, Bobby and Peggy, and I was just right there in San Francisco, and the uncle came up and said something to me.

Stitt: You mean later on when you played San Francisco?

Horn: This is last week.

Stitt: Yes, okay. When you say right there . . .

Horn: Yeah. Right.

Stitt: Did he actually teach you, like formally sit you down and show you things, or was it more just getting what he was doing?

Horn: The organist at Israel Baptist Church? No, I studied him. I just watched him, you know, and then he let me sit in. He was beautiful.

Stitt: Did you participate in other musical activities outside of church, or outside of your studies, perhaps parties or school dances?

Horn: Child, you know one thing. When I was in school, right, see, I was in Shaw Junior High School, there was no one who could play for the specials and stuff like that, but me. I mean, I didn't get an education. They had to ship my ass off. I mean, this is, you know, all over the place, all over Washington. I was the one who accompanied all the singers, and the musicades, and the stuff like . . . I hope you can . . . I'm sorry, I didn't mean to say [whispers] ass. But, I mean, they just used me. [laughs] I didn't get a decent education. They just shoved me around. "Play for this." "Play for that."

Stitt: How old were you when you won a citywide competition?

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Horn: I was thirteen. I was thirteen.

Stitt: So at that point the secret was out, and they knew who you were.

Horn: Yeah. They just shoved me on.

Stitt: You attended Dunbar High School?

Horn: Dunbar, yes.

Stitt: And did you . . . well, I guess you did the same thing there. You played a great deal. Did you play in the band, or any formal musical activities?

Horn: Yeah, I did. I was with the band and Mr. Grant. Mr. Grant was a wonderful man, and I wanted . . . well, anyway, I wanted to play cello, and my mother came one day and I'm on the stage with the band. See, at that time you don't have pants. You know, you had a skirt, right.

Stitt: Ladies had to wear skirts.

Horn: Yes. So mother said, "Oh, Mr. Grant, she can't play." So, well, it was kind of a drag, you know.

Stitt: You couldn't play the cello?

Horn: No, couldn't play the cello because, you know . . .

Stitt: You couldn't sit right the way . . .

Horn: I tried, you know.

Stitt: You straddled the cello in a dress, right. [laughs]

Horn: Right. But I played viola. It was good. I still have it here.

Stitt: How long did you play viola?

Horn: Just about two years. You know, you had to . . . got to play the piano, and viola kind of fools with you.

Stitt: And at the end of high school you were offered a scholarship to Juilliard.

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Horn: Yes.

Stitt: Can you talk about that experience, of having to decline?

Horn: Wasn't happy, you know. It was . . . my uncle, Dr. I.B. Horn, you know, was a very successful doctor, and Uncle I.B.—I always called him that—you know, he took care. See, when I was at Howard at the Junior School of Music, he paid for my . . . see, Uncle I.B. took care of all my studies at the Junior School of Music at Howard University, when I was eleven, twelve, right until I was eighteen, and those studies cost more than my parents, where they lived, you know. They cost more.

Okay. I was eighteen; Uncle I.B. died. And that was the end, end.

[Tape recorder turned off.]

Stitt: So, risking being redundant here, I just want to talk a little more about the whole process of becoming a child prodigy. I mean, it is unusual that at four years old you're taking formal lessons, and by the age of twelve you even understand enough to cite someone like Debussy, or a composer like Rachmaninoff, as an influence for . . . that's pretty amazing. What exactly was the training for four years old? What were you doing? Did you have one teacher consistently until the age of twelve, or were there several teachers?

Horn: I had Mr. Murphy, who was a wonderful gentleman who just, you know, he saw something in me, and he was there until I was eleven years old. And he told Dr. Francis Hughes that, "I've taught her all I can." And then she took over. Oh, I wish you'd talk with her. She just opened things. She opened doors for the Junior School of Music at Howard University.

Now, just I guess maybe a year ago, she was there when I was doing the thing for the children at the Friendship House. You know, it's for helping children, and what have you, and it's called the Sphinx Club. We did a benefit last year, and then we just did one this year, right, at the Sphinx Club, and Dr. Hughes was there. I would like for you to talk with her, because she can really open some . . . she can open your eyes and ears to everything that's happening when, you know, you're trying to help these children. I think it would be really great if you would talk with her. And then she can tell some things about me that I can't tell about me. She's beautiful. She's something else.

Stitt: Before Dr. Hughes you studied with Mr. Murphy, or Dr.—

Horn: Mr. Murphy, yes.

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Stitt: Was this primarily classical in nature?

Horn: Yes. Mr. Murphy taught me, yes, he taught me . . . I don't remember what he taught me, but, you know, he taught me little ditties and stuff, and he told my mom that, well, he wouldn't teach me, because I couldn't read or write, you know. But he would help me to come along.

Stitt: Read or write music, when you say read or write.

Horn: I couldn't read or write. I couldn't read paper, read or write, you know. And he said, "Well, okay. I'll do this to help her," because I couldn't write my name.

Stitt: Oh, literally at the time.

Horn: Right.

Stitt: When you were a young child. As you got older, closer to ten, eleven, before you made the transition to Dr. Hughes . . .

Horn: When I was three and four, I couldn't read or write.

Stitt: But he allowed you to study with him anyway.

Horn: Yeah, oh yes.

Stitt: And it was primarily classical.

Horn: Oh yes, yes, yes, right.

Stitt: Now, how did that overlap with your experience at the church, and in your study of gospel music, of Mr. Tibbs, is that correct, the choir director?

Horn: Oh, I didn't study with him, but I was really influenced. I heard him, Dr. Tibbs. He played the organ. He played the pipe organ and stuff, and he showed me things, you know.

Stitt: How were you influenced, specifically, by him? Was it harmonically? I mean, when you think about it, how did he influence you?

Horn: He influenced me because he was bad. [laughs] I mean, he was bad. He played . . . you know, I listened to him. He just, he just knocked me down. You know, yeah, right.

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Stitt: Did Dr. Hughes, when you began to study with her, did she introduce you to jazz more? Like how did you find out about Earl Garner's *Penthouse Serenade*?

Horn: Well, I found out about Earl Garner's *Penthouse Serenade* on my own, because I mean, I guess I was maybe twelve, thirteen years old, and I was playing for Sunday school in church. Now, I could buy the records on Sunday, but I could not play them until Monday. And I discovered Earl Garner, right. And Dr. Hughes, oh man, she taught me power. She made me . . . I don't know if sometime you might hear me and I'm kind of powerful.

Stitt: I have heard that, yes.

Horn: You know, it comes from her.

Stitt: It comes out of nowhere, you know, like a volcano.

Horn: Yeah, right. And she made me [unclear]. [laughs] It wasn't like, you know, she never hit my hands or anything like that, but I have this from her, and she's a great lady. I love her to death, because she made me . . . good lord, she made me play the piano, you know. Wasn't no pussyfooting or anything like that. She just, you know, she gave me this.

Stitt: You can really dig in.

Horn: Oh, that's right, dig in, yeah.

Stitt: What was it about Earl Garner's playing that really changed you? I mean, you cite him as the reason that you became a jazz musician, so what was it in his playing that you heard?

Horn: I hear . . . in the beginning I heard lyricism. I heard pretty stuff, and I heard, I heard, oh, good lord, what did I hear? I mean, I heard . . . man oh man oh man. Give me a minute now. I heard him willowing through trees, and I heard, oh god, I can't think.

Stitt: When you say that you heard pretty stuff, you also have said that about Debussy.

Horn: Debussy, that's right.

Stitt: How did Debussy's pretty things differ from Earl Garner's pretty things? You know, they're both beautiful. I'm a big fan of both of theirs. But to your ears, how did

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he differ? What was the difference that made one classical and one jazz, and made you want to go the way of jazz?

Horn: Well, with Debussy, you know, I studied him. I studied him. Dr. Hughes made me have that lyricism there, right, Debussy, right. Okay. Now, when you listen to Earl Garner, he's got all that lyricism there. I mean, he's just making all these kind of beautiful things, trees, and everything is just . . . I don't have it. I don't have it right. He just helped me. All the beauty and lyricism is right there. Oh, god, I can't . . . help me.

Stitt: Is the lyricism that you hear in Earl Garner different from what . . . you've already said it's different from what you hear in Debussy, but is it also different from what you hear in the church, because there's also very beautiful spiritual . . .

Horn: Oh no, no, no, no. The lyricism I hear with Debussy and Earl Garner is so fluid, it flows together. Now, in the church it's different. I hear a difference. I hear a different feel, you know.

Stitt: How so?

Horn: A soulful feel, you know. You know, you kind of . . . I'm from the Baptists, right? And you have a tendency to pat your foot. Are you Baptist?

Stitt: I am, yes.

Horn: Okay.

Stitt: But I have to say that I was brought up in a Baptist church where they sang a lot of Mandel, and a lot . . . you know what I mean? [laughs]

Horn: Yeah.

Stitt: So I wouldn't kind of presume so much. But I have an uncle who is a spiritual minister, a spiritualist . . .

Horn: Yeah, right.

Stitt: So there they do, so I understand the concept.

Horn: Yeah, right, right, right.

Stitt: So then again, I know you're just like, she won't leave this issue alone, but it's really crucial if you can just figure out what that thing is that Earl Garner has, or had—he

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still has it, of course; he'll always have it, because the music is there—but what was it that he had for you?

Horn: Well, let's see. You're messing with me now. It's like Earl Garner, okay, we're talking about the lyricism, right. It seems that with me, I think when I really discovered him, I had a porch off of my bedroom, and I would see the flowers, and I'd hear him. He was caressing the flowers. I don't know. He was just . . . sorry. It was just, baby, it was stroke the pussy willow. That was like Earl Garner.

Stitt: [unclear]

Horn: Yes, right. You know, like stroking a pussy willow. And he had so many songs there, and there are so many songs that one day I must record.

[End of Track 1. Begin second track, also called Track 1.]

Stitt: So I was asking you about Howard, when you started as an undergrad, at seventeen?

Horn: At twelve.

Stitt: That was the Junior School of Music.

Horn: That's right.

Stitt: And so we can try to get the chronology right; I'm having trouble. So at twelve you were at the Junior School of Music at Howard University.

Horn: That's right.

Stitt: Concurrently you were at Shaw Junior High School for your academics.

Horn: That's right.

Stitt: And the whole time you were also, as you were growing up, you were also then moving on to Dunbar, and you're still at the junior school.

Horn: That's right.

Stitt: So you spent six years there . . .

Horn: Yes.

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Stitt: . . . and then went into your undergraduate study. Or was that a part of . . . was that an advanced curriculum?

Horn: It was advanced curriculum.

Stitt: So when you started at Howard after Dunbar, you were an undergraduate.

Horn: At twelve I was at the Junior School of Music at Howard. Dr. Hughes . . . you don't know anything about this, right?

Stitt: I'm just trying to understand the chronology.

Horn: Okay, okay. Dr. Hughes and my uncle, Dr. I.B. Horn, started this thing here, in order to make it open for me to do . . . at twelve years old I was in the Junior School of Music, okay. Also, there were people like Frank West, right, and whatever they were doing, I don't know, right. But I was there, because they started this special school there so that I can come in there, right. Okay. And at eighteen I was done with the Howard University school, the music school, okay. And meanwhile I had Mrs. . . . I just got her name . . . she was rough, really . . .

Stitt: Mrs. Nickerson?

Horn: Nickerson, right. Okay, there was a problem there, and she said . . . I wrote something and she said I was too avant-garde, what I wrote, and whatever, so and so. I want to, hey, let this be known, Nickerson. I can't remember all her names and stuff. Dr. Hughes is still living. Nickerson, that what I wrote was too avant-garde, and it hurt me, because I was a shy child, you see. And I'm in school with Frank West, oh, good lord, there are three, four guys in there. You know, Frank West, right? And it broke my heart, and it broke my spirit. So, you know, you really should talk with Dr. Hughes. She remembers all this.

But I was a shy child. You know, I didn't get bodacious until recently. You know, right now, don't mm-mm-mm-mm, you know, because, well, I had to come out here, and I'm dealing with . . . good lord, I'm pursuing the business here. I mean, I'm paying men's salaries, which means I'm the boss, right. And that's the way it is.

Stitt: So at the age of eighteen, then, what did you do? Why don't I just say that.

Horn: What did I do?

Stitt: Were you studying, or did you continue studies at that point?

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Horn: Well, at eighteen I was trying to get into be-bop jazz. I mean, it's hard going from the classics into jazz, you know.

Stitt: How were you doing that?

Horn: It won't easy. [laughs] Now, the guys weren't nice to me at all. There's one man, Buck Hill . . .

Stitt: They were not nice to you at all?

Horn: Oh no, no, no.

Stitt: How were they mean to you?

Horn: Well, you know Buck Hill?

Stitt: Oh, very well, yes. And I know that he was one that was . . . he was nice.

Horn: He was the only one who was nice to me, you know, because I was trying, I was trying to get in there and be involved in jazz and the be-bop and stuff.

Stitt: And at the time, Washington had a thriving jazz scene.

Horn: That's right.

Stitt: I mean, there were after hours and . . .

Horn: Yes. But you know one thing? I just said, "Let me go in, too. I'm going to do it my way." You going to wait for me? Oh, keep going? Anyway, there's a place called 7-T [Seventy?] Cocktail Lounge, and let's see, before that I used to try to in and sit in with the guys. I just wanted to learn, you know. And, well, they wouldn't help me.

Stitt: Why not? Was their resistance due to the fact that you were a woman, or that you a young woman? Or what was the reason for them resisting you, or not wanting to help.

Horn: I just think they were just a bunch of A.H.'s. [laughs] You know, I wanted to learn, and, well, they wouldn't give me a minute. Only Buck, you know, and the 7-T Cocktail Lounge. At that point that was like . . . the Howard Theater was the big thing then. Everybody came through; all the big acts came through there, and I said, oh, boy oh boy oh boy, to myself. Mm-mm-mm. I want to have this gig over there at the Howard Theater, at the 7-T Cocktail Lounge, because . . .

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Stitt: It was adjacent to the Howard . . .

Horn: Yeah, the Howard Theater's right there, and right on the corner is the 7-T. Anyway, the guys had been mean to me, and I said, well, I'm going to take the gig. And I did. Well, you know, I didn't know anything about playing jazz music, but I was young, I was cute, had long hair, and the man hired me, and I just took the band. [laughs] And it was fun.

Stitt: Did a little marketing.

Horn: Yes. Right. Anyway, I met a lot of people.

Stitt: What kind of . . . so you were leading the band then?

Horn: Yeah.

Stitt: What kind of ensemble was it, what size?

Horn: It was . . . well, I was trying to play jazz. That's piano. Okey doke. There was a guy named Bill something, okay, bass player. I don't know who the drummer was, but Don Domit [phonetic], white boy, and then there was a vibe player, and I don't remember his name. He played vibes. Anyway, I didn't know anything about playing jazz music, but I . . . well, okay, I'll keep trying, and I was up there doing the thing.

Stitt: So you were leading a quartet, or a quintet.

Horn: Quintet.

Stitt: What sort of repertoire were you all playing?

Horn: I don't know, child. I remember playing a lot of *How High the Moon*. [laughs]

Stitt: Now, was this experience before, or this was after your experience at Olivia's Patio Lounge? You had a job.

Horn: Yeah, this is before Olivia.

Stitt: Oh, this was before Olivia.

Horn: Yeah. Yeah, this is early, early.

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Stitt: So did this gig eventually lead to that gig, and were there gigs in between?

Horn: Well, no, that was the beginning, and then there's a place called . . . on 9th Street . . . Abart's [phonetic]. We had done 7-T, so let me go in and check that. I just went there and same thing, and the mom and dad liked me, and they were building this place. And I said, "I'd like to have the job." So then there was a trio, right.

Stitt: That you brought to that?

Horn: Yeah. I took a trio in there.

Stitt: The same group of musicians, some of the same musicians?

Horn: No, no, no. It was Harold Minor and Louis Powers.

Stitt: Was this the beginning of your . . . this was your first trio, the first serious trio?

Horn: I think so, yeah, yeah. So then we did that, and I think stayed about a year.

Stitt: What age were you then?

Horn: I don't remember.

Stitt: Or what year? If you remember the year . . .

Horn: Don't start that. [laughs]

Stitt: I know. But just [unclear].

Horn: I'm trying to think now, what year. I tell you what. I'll get it together. Okay.

Stitt: Just so you know, and it's not necessarily correct, but I have here that . . . I had a year here.

Horn: Oh, just leave them alone.

Stitt: 1954, roughly, for the year of your first group.

Horn: No, indeed.

Stitt: Okay, so then that's wrong.

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Horn: No, that's wrong, child. Fifty-four? [makes razzing sound.]

Stitt: Is that too late? That's what we need to know . . .

Horn: No, that's too early. No, that's too . . . no, that's '54? Good lord, I was . . . I'm going to tell my mother.

Stitt: Well, you're twenty.

Horn: We'll talk about that later.

Stitt: Okay.

Horn: Okay, go on, go on now.

Stitt: You were telling me about this Abart's.

Horn: Yes, Abart's. Anyway, that was Louis Powers and Harold Minor.

Stitt: Harold Minor on base, and Louis Powers on . . .

Horn: Louis Powers on bass, and Harold on drums. Now, I'm going to tell you when that was. That was . . . good lord. Remember the Three Sounds?

Stitt: Yes, I do remember.

Horn: Okay. They were next door at the Hollywood, upstairs. In fact, we were just talking about that the other day. Oh, man.

Stitt: Do you remember where you met Louis and . . .

Horn: Harold. I don't remember. Let's see, Louis was working with the State Department. Harold was working in the government. I don't remember. I can't tell you. But this is a long . . . do we have to go that far? Let's go on to something else, okay, because I can't . . .

Stitt: Let's go on to Olivia's Patio Lounge.

Horn: Oh, child, that was great. Olivia's Patio Lounge was the biggest thing to come to Washington, and I'm trying to think of the year. But a long time before that she had a place called . . . a place, and I had changed my age to play there. It was called . . . what's

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the name of that place? Oh, lord. Anyway, there was a wonderful dining room. That's where I met the old man with the big teddy bear.

Stitt: This was your first singing, the first time you . . .

Horn: Right. Anyway, that's when I met Olivia. Then it was I don't know how many years, she opened Olivia's Patio Lounge, and it was really great because she asked me to do it, and I opened for all the big stars who came to Washington. It was great. I mean, it was really something, you know. It was too much.

Stitt: Did you open with your trio, or was it solo?

Horn: No, with my trio, and I opened for all the . . . everybody. I opened for Oscar Peterson, opened for the Modern Jazz Quartet, and good lord, everybody big came to there, and we did it. Just knocked me out. It was wonderful.

Stitt: That trio that you had there, was this the same trio that you had at Abart's?

Horn: That was the same trio, right. That was Harold and Louis Powers. And then Harold, I don't know what happened to Harold. Louis is still around. He worked with the State Department, and he's still fine, you know.

Stitt: Now, tell us about your first singing engagement there, how it came about. And at that point, had you made the decision to become a singer before the gentleman asked you to sing the tune, or was it really something that took you completely by surprise?

Horn: When he brought that beautiful teddy bear there, and I looked at him, and I said . . .

Stitt: I'm sorry, Miss Horn, to interrupt you. Can you just back up and tell the story so that whoever's listening knows why he brought [unclear]?

Horn: Okay. This was a dining room that I was, you know, sneaked my age. At that time you had to be eighteen to play in where they served alcohol. Okay. Well, I changed my age, and this old man would come in. He was so fine. He was good looking, debonair, you know. He came every evening and had dinner, and he'd just tip his hat and leave. And he was a good-looking dude, you know? Okay. It's getting closer to Christmas, and this time he came in and I just knew that was my bear. The bear was as tall as I, beautiful turquoise bear. And I said, "I know that's my bear."

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And he sent me a little note up to the piano. “If you sing *Melancholy Baby*, that’s your bear.” And I sang *Melancholy Baby*, honey. [laughs] I had that bear, oh god, for years and years.

Stitt: After that, did you incorporate singing into your . . .

Horn: Yeah. Well, your daddy would know about Clara Bow, who was a great singer; Clara Bow, great singer and pianist. And see, she was there, and she kind of was looking out for me and stuff, and she went to Olivia and said, “She can sing. So, she’s gotta get more money.” Well, that was cool, because since I could sing, I got \$175 for five days, five days a week and two hours. So that was a whole lot of money then.

Stitt: Was it? That was a decent pay for a musician?

Horn: That was a lot of money, child, \$175. So, it didn’t last long. Then my mother found out what was happening. My dad and mom came in and that was the end of that. Then they just acted ugly.

Stitt: You were talking about the clubs, particularly at Olivia’s Patio Lounge, and I remember even my mother telling me about how exquisite it was inside.

Horn: Oh, yes.

Stitt: I mean, it was really elegant. Were all of the clubs along that U Street corridor like that, or was there a hierarchy? Well, there was the Crystal Caverns, and then it was the Bohemian Caverns, and then Abart’s, and you talked about the 7-T Lounge. Was there a hierarchy in terms of where musicians wanted to position themselves for, like, the best gig, the best-paying gig, the most elegant club?

Horn: Everyone wanted to do Olivia’s. That was top, right. Okay. Abart’s was pretty cool, as far as the money, right. Okay. Then the Caverns came, and see, I don’t remember much about the Crystal Caverns, because they had shows and stuff. But when it went to the Bohemian Caverns I went in there for a year and a half, and it was jazz-oriented all the way, right, because you don’t get much money, but it was like this prestigious stuff that happened. The Hollywood was fun, you know. It was like foot [unclear]. The Three Sounds were there, you know. Oh yeah, good lord, a lot of musicians came through there. They didn’t pay as much money, you know, but it was fun.

It wasn’t about money. It was about swinging, swinjin. [laughs]

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Stitt: Were there other female musicians on the scene as well? I'm assuming that there were. In fact, I know there were a few "girl singers," quote, unquote. But were there other female musicians, and do you think that is why you had such an adverse . . . or why the musicians, the male musicians had such an adverse reaction to you, because you were threatening, in some ways, to them?

Horn: Well, there was Betty Gray [phonetic]. She swang and sang. She was great. You know, Betty didn't . . . she wasn't a pusher. You know, after I had been . . . it seemed like the guys just kind of stuck foot to me. I said, "Okay, I'm taking over." You know, it's like that. I'm a Taurus, right, and I just thought, well, why do they treat me so mean? You know, because I was always nice to the guys. You know, come to my house. I'll feed you. We'd, you know, have sessions and stuff like that. You know? But when they got on the bandstand, it was mean, it was ugly. And I made up my mind, I said, "Whoa." I said, "One day I'm taking over the whole Washington, D.C." I did. Okay?

Stitt: Do you think it would have been easier for you had you been a girl singer?

Horn: A girl singer?

Stitt: Strictly a girl singer. You were a singer, but, you know, that whole persona of . . . and you were already lovely, obviously. But that whole persona of, you know, the girl singer that doesn't know her key, you know, can't count off the tune, can sing, but can only sing under direction kind of thing. Would that have been an easier road for you?

Horn: No. I mean, my road was this. Okay, I know my key. [laughs] You know, and I'm always, you know, it's my thing. Hey, I'm one of the guys.

Stitt: So you're a consummate musician.

Horn: Right, because I . . .

Stitt: Had you not been, do you think it would have been easier? That way you're weren't threatening?

Horn: Had I not been able to play the piano and boss my own lead, I'd have been ruined, you know. Spell that r-i-u-n-t, and I got that from . . . I can't call his name now. Well, you know, I've always been . . . I didn't want to have to be one of the guys and do all that, but, hey, what I do here, you know, see, I build my own rooms, right. And I'm a boy, you know, like I'm a Taurus, and I just . . . you know, I would like if they had just said, "Hey, give me a little hand." But not one but Buck Hill is the only one.

Stitt: Did you actually play with Buck? Would you sit in?

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Horn: Yeah. He's the only one let me sit in, years ago; he's the only one. I mean, all the guys, you know, eventually we got to be good buddies and all that stuff, you know, but Buck was the only one who was nice to me. And I said to him one day, "I'm going to take all your gigs," and I did.

Stitt: What kind of response did you get from the audiences, and what were the composition of the audiences, since the jazz was . . . you know, at that time Washington, as you're well aware, was segregated, and for jazz or any music like that, you had to come uptown, and at the time I think blacks weren't allowed to go downtown, but whites could come uptown to hear the music. So were the audiences integrated all of the time?

Horn: I don't really know anything about that, because number one, I had the first integrated band in Washington, and that was in Maryland over there with the rednecks and stuff, right.

Stitt: In Maryland?

Horn: Well, I had the first integrated band in Washington, and I took it to Maryland, right? So I don't know. I never had a problem with that. I didn't, did not. There was no problem, you know? I mean, who gave a . . .

Stitt: Yes, clearly. I was just trying to have a reference point.

Horn: I don't know.

Stitt: Just to move on a bit now, how did your first recording date come about, on the Staircraft [phonetic] label with *Embers and Ashes*?

Horn: How'd you know about that? [laughs]

Stitt: I'm supposed to. That's why I'm interviewing you. [laughs]

Horn: Oh, child, please. Oh, lord.

Stitt: And was it a group of musicians, or was it two musicians that you had met here?

Horn: See, at that time I had—I want to say this for the guys—I had the baddest trio then. Number one, I was right out of school. I was, I mean, my chops were . . . I was so strong, and I was trying to . . . I'm trying to get into jazz, and I'm still with the classics. I was just bad. I mean, I was strong, you know.

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Stitt: No, but I know what you mean, yeah. You do develop.

Horn: Yeah, and when you're playing that, and I was playing it, then I would get these things . . . okay, that was Stump Saunders [phonetic] and Louis Powers, and your dad loved them. And we were playing at the Bohemian Caverns every night. Tony Taylor, you remember Tony? We weren't making no money, but I'm saying I just had to play the music. I just to play. We played . . . I used to call them slavery time. We played Tuesday from nine-thirty until two, Wednesday nine-thirty to two, Thursday, Friday, nine-thirty to two. Saturday we played a matinee. Then there was a break, then we played until whenever that was. Then there was a matinee on Sunday. That was eight to something, and something to twelve. That's what I called slavery-time stuff, and we did this every week, every week.

But you know one thing? It made us strong. The music was strong. I would like to have my own food, my own choice and stuff, and I'd bring my food in and bring my pressure cooker, take it upstairs, and Angelo, Endo's [phonetic] father, Alvino, you know, this Italian old man, he didn't speak in English, and he didn't understand the pressure cooker. Child, I had my pig feet up there, just [makes sound], or my chitlins or whatever, what I wanted to eat, and he didn't understand it. But those were good times, you know? We fought and argued and everything, but it was all about love, and the music was there.

Stitt: What repertoire were you doing then, do you remember?

Horn: You know what? I cannot tell you that it's any different from right now. I really can't tell you. Everything, you know. Well, Stump is not living anymore. I miss him. I loved him with a passion. But you know, they would be doing the same thing, trying to change around and have different ideas. I don't know, I don't know, I don't know. You'd better stop for a minute.

Stitt: What you just imparted about that whole corridor, the U Street corridor and the jazz scene is real valuable information.

Horn: Yeah.

Stitt: People don't know that.

Horn: Yeah, that was fun. Child, that was so good, mm, mm, mm.

Stitt: Oh, we were talking about *Embers and Ashes*, and then you were talking about that trio that you had put together.

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Horn: Yes. *Embers and Ashes* came . . . I was at the Bohemian Caverns, and there was Tony Taylor. Okay. John Levy, you know, *the* John Levy had come down to check me out, because he didn't know I was playing the piano for myself. He thought I was accompanying myself, like, as Jimmy Jones, the great Jimmy Jones. And, okay, I don't know what happened, you know, because child, I was working and like I told you, I was doing those slavery-time hours, and my daughter was little. I was, yeah, Rainy [phonetic], and I was taking care of her and stuff. And I felt complete. I just felt complete. I had a beautiful baby and I had a full life, and I just didn't feel anything else was necessary, you know.

Then Tony came up one day, said, "Hey, man, you got to do this record called *Embers and Ashes*."

I said, "Okay." I'm still doing what I'm doing, right.

So he said, "We've got to go to New York." So we went to New York. It was like a bunch of the guys, you know. We just went on to New York and I don't know what it meant to me. Everyone just put something on record, and that was it.

Stitt: But this is, in fact, your first trio recording. Well, you had been on a recording before that, and this [unclear] Stuff Smith. [phonetic]

Horn: No. This was first.

Stitt: Oh, so there wasn't a recording.

Horn: No. This was *Embers and Ashes*.

Stitt: Was it. And this was also the one that got the attention of Miles Davis.

Horn: Yes, that one, yes, *Embers and Ashes*.

Stitt: But as something pivotal for you, it wasn't a big deal, necessarily.

Horn: No, because I never really . . . I wasn't about being anything more than just . . . I've always been one of the guys. I'm a musician, you see. I'm not . . . I kind of resent the fact you're a . . . when they call you . . . what is the thing they call you, what is it?

Stitt: Women in the music?

Horn: Yeah. They call it . . .

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Stitt: Diva?

Horn: I do not like that at all. I'm not a diva. I'm a musician, you know, and as I say, I like to hang in with the guys and play. But a diva? I'm no diva. Shit, I'm not a diva. I'm a musician.

Stitt: But even as a musician, this is your first recording that could lead to other gigs. How did you . . . well, you were already gigging every day, so I guess you . . .

Horn: Yeah, I came home and I was doing, you know, every night playing the gigs.

Stitt: So you didn't feel like you were missing anything by not touring?

Horn: No, no, no, uh-uh. No, no, no. I didn't.

Stitt: Or not having a recording on the [unclear]?

Horn: No, no. I didn't miss anything. I was one of the guys. It was my pleasure to sit down and hang out with the guys. They would play all night long, you know, because that was my thing.

Stitt: With that in mind then, what was your reasoning for accepting Miles Davis' invitation, when he called you and invited you to perform with him at the Village Vanguard?

Horn: If Miles Davis had called *you* and asked you, okay, okay? The way it came about, because I'd been loving him all my life, you know.

Stitt: Had you ever encountered him before when you were in East St. Louis?

Horn: No, I encountered his wife. I'm not talking about that. It was crazy, and I was in . . . just like you heard about it. Maybe you've read it or something, you know. I'm down in the country with my mother-in-law, and I went to the phone. [imitates voice] "I want you to come in the August, somebody, a lot of people I think you ought to meet." And I laughed, you know. That was it.

But somebody said to me, "No, this was not a joke. This was Miles." And to this day I don't know how he found out where I was. So I went to New York and then, you know, that was the beginning. And he's my love. I loved him with a passion. Anyway, he let me know that everything was cool. It wasn't no b.s., you know. He had little young boys, then. They all sang one of the songs off that first album I did.

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And I said, “I don’t believe it.” I stood there and I cried, you know, and I met a lot of people with him. That one time, I didn’t know who they were, and who Gil Evans was, and Bill Evans and a whole bunch of those other people.

But anyway, and then when he said he told Max Gordon, “I’m not going to play unless she opens.” Yeah. That was something. It knocked me down. My sweet love.

Stitt: [unclear] So you did the Vanguard that first time, opening for Miles. What was the audience’s reaction?

Horn: Child, I was so . . . I mean, I was standing around like . . . see, what happened, the same night that I did that opening for Miles, it was the opening of *A Raisin in the Sun*, and everybody was there. I was staring like this. Aww . . .

Stitt: Sidney Poitier was there, Lena Horne.

Horn: Yes. They were all there, and I was . . . my mouth was just wide open. And Miles had told me, “You can’t sit at the bar.” These were his orders. “You can’t sit at the bar. You can’t do this. You can’t do that.” So, you know, he’s like he’s looking at . . . but I had been standing at the bar there.

And Sidney Poitier came and I got weak in the knees, and he said, “Miss Horn, I really enjoyed your music.” And I almost just passed out. And right behind him, here comes Lena Horne with this beautiful red . . . she was like a little red bird. Oh, and everybody who was . . . the whole *Raisin in the Sun* people were there, and I’m [deep breathing]. [laughs] I mean, I was in . . . anyway. So that went on for like two weeks I was there, me and my man.

Stitt: In terms of musically, or musical comparisons between yourself and Miles Davis, I do notice that your use of space and silence was very similar to his use of space and silence. Do you see that? Or when people say that to you, do you see that? Do you recognize that?

Horn: Yes.

Stitt: Is it intentional? Is that something that you got from him, or he from you?

Horn: Well, we got that from each other. We . . . so much . . . we talked about this. So much . . . I can’t even remember now, but we talked about it. Yeah, we both felt the same about that use of silence.

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Stitt: Now, from this engagement you ended up with a five-year recording contract for Mercury Records. Is that correct?

Horn: Well, I don't know how it happened. See, Quincy was doing things at Mercury. He was playing the trumpet and all that stuff.

Stitt: He was [unclear] there at the Vanguard, was he [unclear]?

Horn: Yeah, yeah, right. And I don't know what went on. I was a child. I mean, I'm wild-eyed with enthusiasm. I'm just wondering, what's going on? Oh, it's beautiful. It's like it was beautiful. It was exciting and stuff, you know. But there was a man there named John Levy, who just took care of things, you know, for me. John called one day, he said, "You want to record with Quincy Jones and a big band?"

I said, "You're kidding!"

He said, "Yeah, you want to record with Quincy and the big band?"

I said, "Yes!" So I came to New York.

Stitt: Now, is this the *Loads of Love*?

Horn: This is . . . maybe so.

Stitt: It's not Shirley . . . *Shirley Horn With Horns*, wasn't that Jimmy Jones?

Horn: Babe, I don't remember, you know. Isn't that something? Anyway, John said, "Well, tell me who you want." And see, I loved all these musicians, and see, I remembered . . . see, there were albums then, and I liked this album with that face and so and so.

So, "Him, and him," and I had picked out like forty-some musicians. So I went to New York and I looked and said, "I don't want to do this job."

He said, "You want it. You go on in there. I'm pushing you in." He pushed me right on in the studio. All these guys were there, and the first person that I saw was Toots Tillman [phonetic]. He was so sweet, you know. He held my hand and he put me back in a little corner there, and I was scared to death. I thought, good lord, all these musicians. Everybody was . . . I mean, the biggest names were there. And I just remember being scared to death. I don't know what the name of that album was.

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Stitt: I'll double check. I think it's *Loads of Love*, but I'll check and try to find out for you. But now with the Mercury albums, you also weren't allowed to play your own piano.

Horn: That's right.

Stitt: Which didn't sit so well.

Horn: No, I didn't like that. You know, I had my choice of the finest pianists, but I mean like today, nobody knows how to play for me what I can play for me. Jimmy Jones is number-one pianist for me. He's *the* accompanist. I mean, I'm so comfortable with him. But I ain't happy with nobody else.

Stitt: Was it difficult for you to even be able to sing, I mean, when you were recording those albums, not being able, like, to hear things, where you're hearing things that they weren't playing?

Horn: That's right. I was hearing what they weren't playing. I mean, it wasn't comfortable, and John Levy didn't make it any easier, because he got on the microphone. [demonstrates] "Hank Jones, Shirley Horn says you're not playing the right changes." And I wanted to faint. I said, lord, please. But, you know, we understand each other now. We've been friends for many years. You know, because I've been playing for myself, and that's the only way I know. It's my own little shot, and that's that.
Got questions?

Stitt: Yes.

Horn: Okay.

Stitt: In terms of just the business and your recording deal with Mercury, in the five-year contract you did two recordings. Were they happy with this at the end of five years?

Horn: With Mercury, yes. I was very happy with them. There was no problems. I had complete artistic control, and there was Quincy there, who saw about me, you know, so there were no problems.

Stitt: But it's certainly different than recordings you've done more recently, where you are, or a member of your trio is arranging everything, so you're getting royalties that I guess at that time you weren't entitled to, since the arrangements were done.

Horn: Well, with Mercury when Quincy was there, I got royalties.

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Stitt: You did get royalties?

Horn: Yes. Now I don't get royalties, and I don't think I should go into that, because Verve Polygram, the biggest . . . don't be looking at that thing. I'm not going to say another word. No, I can't. I can't do that. No, I can't. Okay, you want to move right along?

Stitt: Sure.

[End of second Track "1". Begin third track, also titled Track 1.]

Stitt: . . . friendship.

Horn: Yes.

Stitt: So you figured someone had your back. It wasn't . . .

Horn: [unclear] business, that's right.

Stitt: You didn't have to be so business minded, because you knew that . . .

Horn: That's right. So there was a union contract. Bam, that was it.

Stitt: There are some other questions on that track that I have for you, but since you brought it up, how have you seen the industry change over the years, in terms of the treatment of musicians, specifically towards each other? There's a lot of dissention with [unclear] promoters versus record company executives, but how the musicians are treating each other.

Horn: Darling, musicians are, oh boy. You see, they're not trusting each other as much, because there's so much fighting between the musicians and the record companies. I mean, wait, I don't know. I just feel sorry; I feel sorry, you know, because there's so much fight, fight, bite, scratch. And the record companies are . . . I don't know how far I can go with that.

Stitt: Do you think with the musicians it's due to the fact that while the companies are larger, there are really less opportunities for jazz musicians? It sounds like with all that you've described, there might have been less money at a time, but there was more opportunity, more opportunity to play, to experiment, to grow, and there's not really that kind of network or support system anymore in place.

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Horn: Baby, I would like to say a lot of things, but I can't, because what I was saying with Carmen, so we were in the studio.

Stitt: Yes, with Quincy that we cleared that up. We didn't clear it up, we just figured out Quincy's relationship as a producer.

Horn: Yeah.

Stitt: After that, though, he was instrumental, he and Sidney Poitier, in you doing two soundtracks, I believe, *For the Love of Ivy* . . .

Horn: Yeah, I did two, three.

Stitt: . . . and *A Dandy in Aspic*. You did a third one?

Horn: [sings notes] That was one, two, three, three, three, yes.

Stitt: Do you recall the third one?

Horn: [sings] These are [unclear] necklaces, [sings notes]. Yeah, all three of them I remember. Yes.

Stitt: The actual title of the third one? Because I don't know that one.

Horn: If you want love, if you want love and . . . wait a minute. Don't promise anything except to try love. I'm going to tell you . . . can we get back to that?

Stitt: Sure, sure. Well, there are two that I know of. I was just wanting to ask you . . .

Horn: Which two do you know? Maybe . . .

Stitt: *For the Love of Ivy*, that was the movie with Abbey Lincoln.

Horn: Yeah, *The Love of Ivy*.

Stitt: And *A Dandy in Aspic*.

Horn: Yes.

Stitt: Those are the two that I know of.

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Horn: And the other one is [sings notes] *A Dandy in Aspic* is. The third one, *If You Want Love* in *A Dandy in Aspic*, and . . .

Stitt: Oh, that's the title, *If You Want Love*?

Horn: Yeah. [sings] If you want love, yeah. Okay. [laughs] Thought a dirty something. See, the guys, we're in the studio and they're talking dirty and stuff. [laughs] And I remember.

Stitt: Oh, what they were talking about.

Horn: Oh yes, oh yes.

Stitt: Was that experience different than the experience of recording just a straight jazz album? Was soundtracks different for you, and if so, how?

Horn: You mean then?

Stitt: Then, because yes, you've done . . .

Horn: Oh, wow, yes. You know, it's like a family thing, and all the musicians in the studio, all the ones . . . you know, I have the pictures on the records, right, and if I didn't know them, I know their faces. It was like a family thing, you know. There was a place called St. Charles, so-and-so Charlie's, downstairs, under this particular studio. All the musicians went there when you're done with the recording. On a break or whatever you went on down there, and then you saw everybody who was young. But it was important and new, everybody new and stuff. And it was something like, it was quite an experience. You think you're nineteen years old, you're look at all these guys, everybody, all the big guys, just wow.

Stitt: Do you like doing soundtracks?

Horn: Well, I loved doing it with Quincy, you know, because it was an experience that I'd never had before. Oh, of course I loved it. [laughs] Good lord, I did nothing, but it was fabulous, and I was out there hanging with all the guys and stuff. Oh yeah, I loved it.

Stitt: Now, after your tenure at the Vanguard and the recordings, you made a decision to actually stay off the road more, because you had your daughter. You were still active, but you chose to really stay close to the home.

Horn: Oh yeah.

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Stitt: Can you discuss your relationship with her, and her impact on you, both then and now?

Horn: Oh, boy. Well, I came from home stock, right. My mother lives right . . . I can see her garage from here, you know, and my aunt's right there. My uncle's not living now, but his house was over there. And I'm from home, you know. When I got married it wasn't easy. It was like, well, I didn't want to stay with him, you know, when I first got married.

Stitt: And this is, you're talking now about separate . . .

Horn: Yeah, right. I didn't want to stay with him. It was hard.

Stitt: At the time you got married, was your career already in place?

Horn: I didn't have any career. I was just . . . I was trying to get out of classics into jazz. You know, I didn't know anything. Good lord, I was right out of my daddy's arms into this old man's arms. [laughs] I don't want him to hear that. But no, that was not new all life, that I had to have music. I had to have . . . it's got to be. There's got to be music. I don't know how to explain it, but I've got to have music, or I just kind of get ape and stuff like that, you know. Shit.

Stitt: Did Mr. Derry [phonetic] understand that about you always?

Horn: Well, see, no, he didn't. He didn't understand. He thought that, well, number one, he's a good deal older than I, and he thought I was going to just be happy just to have some children and forget about music. But it wasn't that way with me. Number one, I didn't want a lot of children, because I remember my grandmother talking about if you have too many children it's not good. Okay. Well, after four years of marriage I had one child, and that was it. He thought I was going to have a whole lot, and be barefoot and pregnant, but I said to myself uh-uh. No, I didn't have that in mind, you know, so I spent my time, I raised my child. I've got a beautiful daughter, extremely intelligent. I mean, I have no regrets, but I did what my mother did. My mother stayed home and raised her children, and I did the same thing. So there's my time. You know, I'm getting a little tired, but however, he thought I was going to do something different. But I didn't.

Stitt: That was probably quite revolutionary, especially at that time. I mean, jazz musicians have been going off into the wilds forever . . .

Horn: Yes.

Stitt: . . . but the reverse doesn't happen quite . . .

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Horn: That's right. You know, I'd seen in the years, I've seen women, I mean, leaving their children, and I've seen what happened with the children. I don't have to tell you word, you see. And I'm sorry about that. And the kids suffer. The mom's gone, you know. Kid's all screwed up. And I was here to see about mine, and I'm so happy I did, you know, because, hey, I have no regrets.

Stitt: Well, and also during that period you were still always working.

Horn: Yeah, I was always doing something. Child, I worked everywhere. Even one time I was doing an interview with somebody, and there were a lot of conversations about, well, I had gone into retirement, or I had not, no, I'm out of retirement, and all that kind of stuff. I never went into . . . I didn't retire. I worked every place in this town. I opened and closed all the joints. Really, I worked all the government buildings. I even played at a funeral home for two lovely people, used to come to see me all the time, and I played at the funeral home. So I was busy.

Stitt: The whole time. So when people were saying, "Oh, Shirley Horn has stopped playing," . . .

Horn: Bull. Bull. [laughs]

Stitt: Do you ever think about, and if you do, what is the impact of making the conscious decision to stay home for ten years; what did that do to your career?

Horn: Well, you know, during that time I'll tell you what was going on. There were a lot of people, a lot of artists that I respected and held in the highest esteem, who decided they were going to—I want to add a word that's probably—stoop to conquer. Well, I remember when the Beatles came through. I mean, they did a lot. There's a lot of good music there, a whole different feel. I mean, everything was different. And I said to myself, I said, "Myself, it's not my style." Now, however, I listened to some great music that they did. I do it now, but it wasn't my style. I saw my people stoop to conquer. I said, "No, this is not the way to go." Right? Let this phase, let this go. Let this go. And it didn't hurt me at all. I was staying home and honing whatever, whatever.

Stitt: And you were happy that whole period?

Horn: Child, it was [unclear] slop. Oh, lord. But see during those times, you know, I always had something going on at the house, a little gig or something. I always had food, and the guys would come over and we'd . . . and meanwhile, I'm still trying to get into be-bop. I was into Horace Silver. You know Horace Silver? I was trying to get into him. Art Blakey, now I loved Art Blakey. But I'd try to get into Horace Silver. After

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maybe about three or four years I got into Horace Silver, you know, and that was good. [whispers; unclear] Don't do that, okay, that little thing there. I didn't mean that; I didn't mean to.

Stitt: During that period you were also recording for Steeplechase. Can you talk about that experience?

Horn: No, that wasn't Steeplechase then. That was . . . it was something called . . . see, I was home. I was doing Perception.

Stitt: Oh yeah, *Where Are You Going?*

Horn: Yeah. I dedicated to my daughter. My daughter was like twelve, almost thirteen years old, right. And there was another one on another label. I didn't make any money, but you know, I was just . . .

Stitt: Were those labels based here?

Horn: No, in Chicago, Chicago. I met one guy that, Perception, we talk all the time. He's a sweet man. He wrote a lot of songs, a lot of great songs. He wrote [sings] "Have you tried to forget? When your lover has left you, it's so hard to forget someone you loved." He did two albums there. Johnny Pate, yeah.

Stitt: That was his label?

Horn: Perception. But he came in here from Chicago. He knew John Levy and he came in, and I did . . . you remember [sings] "Don't be on the outside looking on the inside"?"

Stitt: I do remember.

Horn: Remember that?

Stitt: Yes.

Horn: Somebody asked me for that last week. We were in San Francisco. Okay.

Stitt: What was it like to go from a large label, for that time anyway, like Mercury, to an independent label like Perception Records? Clearly, the budget, the personnel were not, you know, the kind of personnel you were able to choose with Mercury and have them paid for is probably not the case. There were budgetary restraints that probably didn't make that possible with Perception.

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Horn: Well, darling, you know what? I didn't realize anything, because I had a man named John Levy. You know who he is?

Stitt: I know the name very well, but I don't know exactly why. I know he's an agent.

Horn: That's right. At that time, John Levy had, oh, good lord, he had all the top acts. He had Wes Montgomery. Well, he's had Nancy Wilson and Joe Williams for fifty years.

Stitt: Right. That's what I knew.

Horn: Okay. Then he had Cannonball. He had the top acts, and at the end of that top-act business was me, and he cared about me. Okay? He knew in the beginning that I was not ready to go . . . I didn't want to be in show business. I just wanted to be one of the guys. I want to play the music. I want . . . and, he's my friend right today, and he cares about me. If Mercury wanted me to stand up and be a stand-up singer, I don't want no stand-up singer. I'm going to play the piano. That's my forte, right. Hence I didn't stand up to sing, and I mean, John never tried to push me, you know, because he knew what I wanted to do. So there was not any problem, you know.

I wasn't going to be a . . . do you remember Mercury? Dinah Washington was the hottest thing in the world, right. Okay. Nancy wanted to step in there, but Nancy wasn't strong enough to step in there with Dinah.

Stitt: [unclear]

Horn: Okay, so that went along, right? Meanwhile, they were trying to ease me in to have another feel for Mercury, and I wasn't into that, and I said no. I said, "John, I don't want to do it. I'm going to sit down and play for myself. I'm not going to stand up."

Stitt: So Mercury really was trying to cultivate another girl singer.

Horn: Yes.

Stitt: Strictly a girl singer, not a musician.

Horn: Trying to cultivate me, and Quincy was in there trying to push it, and I said no. But no, that wasn't my thing. I wasn't interested, and I thank God, you know. I have been lucky that people . . . John Levy loves me today, like I love him, and he respects me, and Quincy, too, you know. They know that I'm not into that other stuff. I'm not there. They respect me for what I feel, and I'm a musician, and that's that. I can't be anything else but, you know, and that's it.

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Stitt: But since you touched upon the issue, especially bringing up Dinah and Nancy, who were both very glamorous women at that time . . .

Horn: Yes.

Stitt: . . . very glamorous, I mean, and yourself as well. Does that go along with the territory of being a female musician in this male-dominated arena? I mean, is that part and parcel of it, and do you feel in some way, had you played that game more . . . because, you know, categorically, if you look down the line at early pictures of Sarah [Vaughan], of Ella, of Betty Carter, I mean, and not that they're not . . . they were always gorgeous women. But you know what I mean. They tried to package them and market them so that they were very cute and very tiny and very, just everything. Had you gone along with that whole thing more, do you think you would have been farther ahead?

Horn: But darling, I . . .

Stitt: At that time.

Horn: I don't think . . . how can I explain that to you? Ever since day one when I came on the scene, number one, they don't know how to package me, number one, right, because here's to say I play the piano like a man. See? Now, that stops them right there. Right? John was . . . because I was out there; talking about, "What are we going to do with her?"

"Do the same with me. Give me a big band."

So they would laugh and then kind of say, "No, but you've got to stand up and sing."

I said, "No, I'm going to sit down and play."

Say, "You've got to stand up and . . ." You know, they don't know how to package me. It's like Quincy said, and you know, there's a thing you stick in a machine. What do you call it? Crap. Have you seen it? In fact, that might help you a lot, too.

Stitt: A videotape?

Horn: Yeah. Have you seen that video of me?

Stitt: No.

Horn: Maybe tomorrow; you're coming tomorrow, too, right?

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Stitt: We're coming tomorrow. I know you just hate the thought of me being here.

Horn: No, no, no. I don't mean that. No, I'm sorry. But you know what? This would be good if you looked at that videotape tomorrow. See, it's Quincy and John Levy and Carmen and all those folks talking about me and stuff, and it will let you kind of know more about me.

Stitt: When was this done?

Horn: I don't know, about two years, I guess.

Stitt: So this is recent, yes. No, I haven't seen it. Yes, I'd like to see it. The reason I keep asking about . . . I do understand, I think. I can't go so far as to say that, but in terms of the marketing, because they really did, as you know, they really did try to market women, and in not the same way that they tried to market the men. I mean, you could count on one hand, they tried to market . . . well, it was a natural marketing thing with the Mr. D. [phonetic] collars, you know, and they marketed . . .

Horn: Oh yeah, right.

Stitt: [unclear], and maybe Dizzy and the whole be-bop thing. But by and large, the men they left alone, you know. They could look however they wanted to look.

Horn: Oh yes.

Stitt: Whatever size they wanted to be was okay. I mean, look at Mingus, you know, notorious . . .

Horn: Yes, yes, yes.

Stitt: . . . just like letting go of themselves, and it was okay, because they were a genius, they were a musician, and they didn't give the women the same leeway.

Horn: That's right.

Stitt: And because you were a musician, I wondered how all of that played out in your experience, so that's why I keep pressing the issue.

Horn: Well, I just kind of, you know, shit, I just kept trying to play harder and better, you know. I mean, it got to the point that when my sweetheart . . . said, "Man, you're marching to a bigger drummer," or something like that. I'm talking Milton Kelly, right?

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Because I used to sit down and watch him, and just I mean I loved him. I just loved them every night they played.

I was trying to get out. I was trying to ease into classics without . . . at one point there, somebody said something about—it was a white boy—[sings notes] five-five-four thing. [sings notes] [Dave] Brubeck. And I resented that, I mean, hard, I resented it. It's hard to get out of classics into jazz. And Wynton [Marsalis] used to say to me, "You're going to be one [unclear]." Anyway, I was just, I wanted to play the music that I loved. I want to play the Debussy and I want to play the Rachmaninoff, and nobody helped me. But, you know, Buck did, much as he could, and Wynton did.

I don't know what I'm saying to you, but does it make any sense?

Stitt: Yes, it does. I mean, you're answering the question perfectly. You're saying that what was most important was the musicianship. This other stuff didn't really matter to you.

Horn: Right, that's right. No. But diva? Somebody calls me a diva and I want to punch him right in the snoot. I hate that. What is a diva? Leontyne Price is a diva. This little young girl is a diva. When they started calling me a diva, and Betty Carter's a diva, and what's the child's name? Did a thing called *The Divas*. You know what I said? I cancelled. I mean, I'm be-bop. I'm a musician.

Stitt: As a singer . . . you've talked a lot about the influences on piano, but as a singer, who were your influences?

Horn: Peggy Lee, got to say that, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, the first lady, all my buddies, Sarah, Carmen. I love Joe Williams, Louis Armstrong, Lena Horne. See, that's what I heard when I was fooling around, you know, fooling around with the little piano I had. That's what I was hearing. I heard the best music. Really, Mickey Mouse, my dad didn't like it, my mom didn't like it, and I just heard this stuff, child.

Stitt: Can you cite specific things that you took from, particularly Billie Holiday, because people compare you quite a bit. I mean, there are critics all the time comparing you to Billie Holiday.

Horn: Really?

Stitt: You know, of course they cite your individuality, don't get me wrong. But the first thought to them is always Billie Holiday, at least from the things that I've read. It's almost always Billie Holiday. What is it about her singing or her rendering of a song that captured you?

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Horn: Her use of space, time. Her time was magnificent. I mean, it wasn't one, two, three, four, one, two. It was one, one, one. I mean, yeah, interpretation. Maybe I shouldn't talk about this now.

Stitt: We shouldn't talk about this?

Horn: Well, okay, yes.

Stitt: I mean, you don't have to. I just didn't hear what you said.

Horn: When I was twelve years old I played for Sunday school in church, and I could buy records, and, of course, I couldn't play them on Sunday, because I got paid on Sunday, right. You had to wait until Monday. Well, of course I had my little record player up in the bedroom, and I would just squeak it, play it, right. And I discovered Oscar Peterson. You know, Sunday school, church, I played, okay, and then I played piano, and I played a pipe organ, but I did not play for the gospel choir. And I'd do my thing. Then I got fifteen dollars every week. Child, and I'd get Oscar Peterson records, because I loved [long pause], I loved Rachmaninoff and Debussy.

I got an invitation to play at Oscar Peterson's. They're doing a tribute on the first of March, something like that. It's kind of knocking me out, you know. I really don't know how to . . . I don't want to think about it, because I'm just . . . I'm thrilled, and I'm kind of afraid, and . . . wait a minute. You ask me something. I'm getting to that point.

Stitt: Let's see, we talked about Billie Holiday.

Horn: Yes.

Stitt: Was there another question that came out of that?

Horn: Okay, that was it. Okay. I'm getting around to . . . so years ago Oscar Peterson played for Billie Holiday, and there was one song. It's called *I Can't Face the Music Without Singing the Blues*, right. Okay. I'm going to ask him to play for me, to do an album, and I want to do all those songs one that one album that he did with Billie Holiday. It must have been, lord, maybe it's thirty years ago. Anyway, I don't mean to turn it around like that, because you asked me something direct. [unclear]

Stitt: No, it was fine, it was fine. Another question came to mind when you were answering now. My brain's slowing down a bit. Oh, I started to ask you . . . I asked you about the singers. I wanted to go back and now ask you specifically about your relationship with Carmen McCrae, yes.

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Horn: Carmen, um. Oh, boy. You know, Carmen and I knew each other many, many, many years ago through music, right. And she's come down here to Washington. She did, I think, every year she would do the Blues Alley place, and then I'd go to see her. And then we'd do the North Sea Festival, and you know, she would come early and I would come early, and then I got to know the girl who traveled with her, Shirley Thomas, who was a dear person, and she would always say, she'd call me and say, "We're going to be there like four days ahead at the Bel Aire." Okay, right, you know. So we kept in touch like that.

Now, Carmen McCrae knew about my music many years before I realized she did, right. Okay. So we're in the North Sea at the Hague, went into Amsterdam, and there was a guy, Albert Van Dam [phonetic], my friend, who picked us up and took us all over there to his house, and he had a great big piano and stuff. And Carmen sat down and played. She said, "I don't know why I should play in front of you."

I said, "Why you don't want to play in front of me? Play in front of me." So we was laughing and talking and everything, you know.

Then she started talking, and she said, "You know one thing? I remember you in 1959. I came to Washington." That's where I was working. That's home, right.

I said, "You were there?"

She says, "I don't want to bother you, but I think you're just wonderful." And that's where we got to know each other, you know, because I got one of her albums back there from 1952, right behind me, right. And we just realized we just loved music, and we loved each other, and we had great fun toward the end. She loved my . . . I cooked mustard greens and stuff. She came to me one time. Now, she didn't come out, you know. So I had mustard greens and candied sweet potatoes, and beef and beer, that's my famous recipe. Carmen came, and she was working at Blues Alley, and I was working, too, and I cooked for three days. She came in here, she sat at a table, dining room. She burped [whispers] and farted. She said, "Okay, now I've got to go. Come on, Larry Shore [phonetic], let's go. I'll see you tomorrow, Shirley Horn," and split, you know. Well, she's a sweetheart. I would go up to her house and fix mustard greens. She loved mustard greens, fried potatoes, and catfish, and I'd go up there and cook for her. She's a sweetheart.

You know one thing. Everybody thought she was a . . . she was nothing but a pussycat.

Stitt: She had that reputation of being difficult.

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Horn: Yeah. But you know one thing. People are always in your face and everything, you know what I mean? And people are not always nice, you know.

Stitt: The other thing is, wouldn't . . . I don't know how you feel about it. It's a good lead-in point again to how the women . . . because many of the women, I mean, almost everyone, the list that we ran down of your influences, had that label of being difficult. And again, I think in a male-dominated industry like the jazz industry, often the women are not [unclear], they're not given the same kind of leeway as the men are. Certainly there are male musicians who are equally, if that is the standard for difficulty.

Horn: But you see, there's something here that, oh, how can I . . . because I'm a leader, a man, right, you know, doesn't affect me at all, you know. See, I get the respect that lady divas don't get, because I'm one of the guys. See, I boss my own lead, because when I sit down and play, I've got the control. It's mine, you know? Do you understand what I'm saying?

Stitt: Oh yes, yes. Do you think it's more difficult, though, being a woman and a leader?

Horn: I don't know, see, because I've been doing it all my life. You know, all of a sudden I sit down and there it is, "Y'all do this. Boys, boys, jump and dance." [whispers] Wait a minute, wait a minute, I shouldn't be doing . . . you're listening to everything I say, aren't you? Well, well, that's the way it is. [laughs]

Stitt: So it really hasn't been a problem for you, whereas . . .

Horn: No, darling, not at all. See, and then, too, I boss . . . [whispers; unclear] I control the money. [snaps fingers] Right?

Stitt: No, it's a very different experience, because most women don't.

Horn: That's right. I do. I control [whispers; unclear]. I mean, I don't use it, you know.

Stitt: But you don't have to, because sidemen know who's paying them.

Horn: And I'm one of the sidemen. You see, I keep it like that.

[End of third "Track 1". Begin fourth "Track 1".]

Stitt: Day two of the Shirley Horn interview. The date is June 14th, 1996, and the interview is being done at the residence of Shirley Horn, 2018 Lawrence Street,

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Northeast, for the Smithsonian Jazz Oral History Project, and the Unsung and Sung Jazz Project. Close enough for something.

Yesterday we talked about your vocal influences, and among them you mentioned Peggy Lee. I wanted to just revisit that, and if you could talk specifically about what about Peggy Lee's style that you like, and also I was listening to *The Main Ingredient*, and you do *Fever* on there, and I was wondering if that was some sort of . . .

Horn: Oh, I don't know. I just like that song. I get a lot of requests for it. We used to do it every year; sixteen years we did Summer in the Parks at Fort DuPont, and people asked me for *Fever*, and every year we got the same people to come out there. One old lady used to come and bring us fried chicken, and other ladies bring us cakes and stuff.

Stitt: You were well fed out there.

Horn: Really, you know. I made a party of it, and my family would come, and I'd carry a lot of food and stuff. I would get requests for *Fever* and *The Look of Love*, and I said, let me go in and record those things. And as it is now, *Fever* and *The Look of Love* are getting a lot of play, I guess maybe because, well, I heard a lot of Billie Holiday at home. I don't know all the stories about Peggy Lee, but I know Billie Holiday was her definite, definite influence, and I just loved her singing.

I think I was about fourteen, thirteen, fourteen, and she came out with a record called *Lover*, and I saw it in . . . it was a movie, a convention of disc jockeys, and she was the performer there. She performed and she was beautiful. She had on a gown that was fit; oh, she was just fabulous. And that was a hit record for her. And I like her style. I like her choice of music. I met her once and I was really overwhelmed, recent years, you know. She was at Antoine's. I went to see her, and she wasn't . . . she invited me to come to the hotel, so I did. I went to the hotel to see her. I was with a guy, and you know, he said, "You wanted to meet her. When you got there you never said a word." And I didn't. I couldn't think of anything to say. I was just overwhelmed, you know. She was lovely and very gracious.

She's one of those people that I used . . . I played for Sunday school in church, and they paid me, and I could buy the records on Sunday, but I couldn't play them until Monday morning. You know, Sunday you didn't play jazz music, and you didn't play cards. Sunday you taught Sunday school and you played for Sunday school in church, and then you were quiet. But she's definitely an influence.

Stitt: I've also read . . . you've cited Sheila Jordan before, as well. Is she an influence, or someone that you'd say whose singing you just prefer?

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Horn: Oh, I just like Sheila a lot. She's a good friend and what she does is interesting. I don't really, not understand it; I don't . . . well, what she does is very interesting. I mean, are you familiar with her work?

Stitt: Yes, I am.

Horn: Yes. And she's a good friend. She's a funny lady. Yeah.

Stitt: I asked you about this before, but just to clarify, with Perception Records—we did talk a little bit about this; maybe I shouldn't go back to it—I was just going to ask you again about the difference between recording for a larger label like Mercury Records, or in later years even Steeplechase was a very prestigious jazz label, a largely jazz label, and certainly Verve.

Horn: They were crooks, Steeplechase, right today. They owe me money. It's kind of a joke now. It's been . . . I don't know how many years it was I recorded with them, but it was my first time to the North Sea, I think it was, and they recorded three albums during that time. They've messed over so many musicians. I hate to think about it. But I got a chance to put something on record, you know. Yes, they're crooks, Steeplechase.

Stitt: Perception, was that . . . you talked about it yesterday, saying it was a good label.

Horn: Oh yeah, oh yeah. You know, I had my way. I had all the musicians I wanted, because I used my own group. There were no problems. I did the things I wanted to do, and it's always nice when you have a warm relationship with a company, because I've had pretty good luck so far. However, I want to be free now. I've been with Verve eight years. Doesn't seem like eight years. Oh, man.

Stitt: '88?

Horn: Was it? I don't remember.

Stitt: That was a question for later, but since you've touched on Verve, when you said you wanted to be free I was just going to ask you about exclusive contracts and how you feel about them, particularly for a jazz artist, where you really need to be able to record with whom you want to record, when you want to record, so that you have enough on the marquee.

Horn: Yeah, but I've been able to do that. But there's one pest in Verve that I have made . . . well. Yeah, I've been very lucky, you know. I haven't had any problem. The only thing Mercury was kind of pushing me to stand up. I mean, I tried it, but I wasn't happy, you know, because I wasn't playing for myself.

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Stitt: To move back to Steeplechase, and actually before that I want to talk to you a bit about Billy Hart. Now, I understand he apprenticed in your ensemble at seventeen.

Horn: Yeah. You know, I met Billy, Billy was about fourteen years old and he used to come around the clubs. He loved the drummer that was actually my famous drummer in all the world. He name was Stump Saunders, and he passed a couple of years ago. But he loved Stump, and he loved what we were doing. He'd come and we were working someplace way up 14th Street, and the man who ran the place was a drummer, and he got to know and like Billy. He let him come in and he'd sit back behind the stage and listen to Stump. Yeah, he was about fourteen years old, a sweet little guy, bashful and shy.

And he was seventeen, and the first time we went on the road his mother said—she was standing on the front porch—“Take care of my baby.” Wait a minute. I'm not going to take care . . . I'm a few years older than Billy, but not that. [laughs] We had a lot of fun together, yeah, Billy.

Stitt: How long was he in your ensemble?

Horn: You know, I don't remember, darling. Okay . . .

Stitt: Actually, you clarified the first one who . . .

Horn: Yes. We went . . . Walter Booker, Billy Hart were in the band. We went to California. I wanted to drive, so there were two cars. Boogie had his friend with him, has me and Billy in the car. We drove, and I wanted to stop and look at everything, the snake farms. I mean, I was having a ball. They wanted to hurry up and get there. Anyway, we were there two, three weeks. We were in San Francisco, and we were right across the street from the Jazz Workshop. Les McCann was there. Oh, it was hot. Peggy Lee was around the corner at a place called Basin Street, and there's musicians all up and down the street, like next door there was everybody. I didn't see much of the guys, just in time to let them play.

And then Billy . . . well, we had nowhere to go after that; was, you know, drive back home. John Levy was my manager at the time. He thought it was crazy to drive all the way to California. Well, I wanted to see it. So we were at the hotel. This is going into a month, nothing's happened. Said, “When are we going home?” I wasn't ready to go home. I was having a good time. Meanwhile, Billy got a call from Wes Montgomery, and Booker got a call from Cannonball Adderly, and I was so unhappy. I mean, I was just hurt. I cried.

And I called Shep, I said, “Come out here and get me. They left me.”

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Stitt: Oh, they left right then [unclear]?

Horn: Yeah, they went with the other groups, and I was out there with all the . . . I shopped. I had a brand-new station wagon, and it was loaded with clothes and shoes and everything, you know. But anyway, Billy, it seemed like he was always there. Even now, I went to the North Sea and I had a drummer here who, well, he wouldn't get on a plane. I don't know why. I don't know to this day. So I wasn't worried. I know at the North Sea every drummer in the world is going to be there, you know. So I talked with Paul Aket [phonetic]. I said, "I need a drummer."

He said, "Who do you want?"

I said, "I want Billy Hart." Okay, so we were all in my room, all the Washington people in my room. It's like Grand Central. The doors were open. We were all over the floor.

We were drinking and talking and funning, and Billy came. "Hey, man, what you want?"

I said, "I want you to play the drums."

He said, "Okay." I didn't know at that time, but he was playing with two other bands, so I was the third band. But he made it, you know. He's on those Steeplechase things. Yeah, he was there for them. Oh yeah.

Stitt: Just at the risk of being redundant, but he was instrumental in you hooking up with Steeplechase the first time?

Horn: Yeah. I was sitting here minding my business, just behaving myself and being quiet, and he said, "Hey, man, you want to record for Steeplechase?"

I said, "What's this? I don't know anything about Steeplechase." I said, "Okay."

So he said, "Well, the guy wants to talk to you."

"Oh, well, tell him to call me back tomorrow," because I was getting ready to go to the wharf or something.

Anyway, he called back the next day and asked, "Do you want to record?"

I said, "Yeah. I could have Billy Hart and Buster Williams."

He said, "Why don't you come Friday?" That was just a few days.

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I said, “Okay.” So I went on to New York. I didn’t know what I was going to do, and I just wrote down some things. Shep drove me up, and that was my introduction to Steeplechase. Oh, boy. Yes, Billy was with me then. He was with me at the North Sea. We did a lot . . . you know, there’s so much love there. It’s like family, you know. I knew his mom and dad. They were lovely people. He’s a sweetheart, you know. He’s just getting a little too fat right now.

The thing was recorded here, *The Main Ingredient*. I had so many drums in these place, I said, god. Billy had two sets of drums. Elvin must have had twenty-five pieces, and Steve had a regular set here, and then he had his extra set here. And he played, but Billy played, oh. I’m so proud of him. You know, he’s everything that I wanted him to be. As a musician he’s polished and he’s beautiful.

Stitt: What sort of rapport or relationship do you have with Lester Williams? He was on the first Steeplechase recording.

Horn: Yeah, the one we did in New York. You know, I’m trying to think who was on . . . oh, Charles was on that North Sea. Buster, Buster is something else. I heard him here. I went down; it was Buster and Ron Carter down at Blues Alley one night, and I’d heard so much about him. I’d heard a little of him on record, and I went to hear him. He was really too much. He’s a playing little fool. He still is. I mean, he’s not full of that wide-eyed enthusiasm he was, but, of course, he’s older now. Good lord, it’s been, I guess, almost fifteen, seventeen years since I met him, but he’s quite a musician. And he was with me on something else, he and Billy. I like to get them. They’ve got a great marriage, you know. They work so well together. But they were on something I did for Verve. God, I can’t remember. I’ve got something called CRS. You know what that is, right? You know what CRS is?

Stitt: No, I don’t.

Horn: Can’t remember shit.

Stitt: Oh. [laughs] I was like thinking [unclear]. From now on I’ll know what it is.

Horn: I just had a friend call me, a drummer call me from Miami. He said, “Hey, Horn.”

I said, “I thought you were supposed to call me last week or something.”

“I’m sorry, man, I’ve got CRS.”

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I said, “Oh, what’s the matter, Ronnie?” I thought it was something serious, right? And that’s what he told me.

Stitt: I just want to back up for a minute. I’m sorry to keep jumping like this, but . . .

Horn: Well, okay.

Stitt: We’re not going too far back, don’t worry.

Horn: All right.

Stitt: But I do want to see about, there’s a club . . . most of the other clubs that we talked about last night, the jazz scene here in D.C. I was familiar with, and have been pretty well documented. But there was a club called The Place Where Louis Dwells, where you had a stay there. Was it Southwest Washington?

Horn: In Southwest, yes.

Stitt: Can you discuss that period, and then that club in particular?

Horn: Well, yeah. That club, how did I go in there? Oh, I used to go to dinner, because my friend was the maître-d there, and I had another friend who was a waiter, and the food was wonderful. It was one of these . . . not a lot of people knew about it, you know, because a lot of the congressmen and what have you used to come late at night. It was kind of like a private club. Well, it wasn’t private after I went there, because they put an ad in the paper and then all of a sudden it was a lot of people.

It was real dark, and it was really just for lovers, you know. So I had my trio. Who was in the band there? There was Marshall Hawkins and Bernard Sweetney, and it really was a place just to have fun. We just had fun. All our friends worked there, and I just did what I wanted to do. The old man that owned the place, well, he didn’t understand the music. He just sat at the front in a rocking chair and twiddled his thumbs, so when he got sleepy and tired he’d leave and leave me the key. “Close up when you go.”

Boy, we used to party. That’s where I met Johnny Pate. That was . . . let’s see, Perception Records, yeah. He came to Washington and . . .

Stitt: So it was obviously then before ’72?

Horn: Girl, I don’t remember.

Stitt: *Embers and Ashes* was recording, and I’m just pinning . . .

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Horn: Oh, *Embers and Ashes* was in '61, I think, '61? I think '61. It had to be '61, because I was in New York in '62.

Stitt: Right, so it was before that. I'm sorry, I said '72. You're right, '61, because '72's not ready at all.

Horn: No, child, that's, mm, mm, mm, telling my age.

Stitt: And how long were you there?

Horn: Oh, a couple of years. I don't remember. It just got with the old man, we just wore him out. He just . . . well, obviously we didn't wear him out that much. The business got so good, and he bought a place down in southwest, some of the big joints, and it wasn't the same ambience. I never worked there, because I didn't like it. But I would think about two and a half years, you know. Yeah, it was fun.

Stitt: We've touched on it a little bit, but if you could go back to, well, no, we won't go there. Talk about when you met Charles Abels, how that came about, that meeting and then the subsequent enrollment [unclear] into your band . . .

Horn: Oh, Charlie.

Stitt: . . . for twenty-four years, twenty-five?

Horn: Twenty-five.

Stitt: You've been together.

Horn: We were . . . what was I doing? I was playing in Baltimore. I was playing an organ gig. No, I wasn't. No, wait, wait, let me see. I went somewhere and Charles was playing, and, you know, I had seen him around a lot, but Charles was always so quiet. He never said anything. He was always the one to stand back in the corner, you know. Right now he's the same. He makes me so mad sometimes.

Stitt: I mean, you almost don't know he's on the gig, you know. [laughs]

Horn: Right, you know? Here we are out there at the [unclear] Grove, where we play all the time. You know, it's where all the stars come. Oh, and I was just so thrilled when I first started going out and playing out there. Oh, one night I was romancing with Burt Reynolds, and all these people. Dionne Warwick comes every night I'm there, because

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all the singers and the writers and all come out. And Charles, I had to make him, you know. “Charles, come over and meet this person.” That’s Charles, he’s just quiet.

I asked his mother. She said, “Well, the child’s always been strange. You know, he keeps to himself.” You know, he does his little devilishment, but he keeps it away from me. Like I don’t know if he’s got a broad in the room. I mean, that’s all, you know.

But I went somewhere and this guy was playing his guitar. I said, oh, that’s, god, what is it? And he was something. He was playing, and he so impressed me, you know. I went to him and I said, “You know one thing? Boy, you sure can play.” I said, “If you played bass like that, you could be in my band.” So he smiled, you know. So I went on about my business, whatever I was doing, hanging out.

And about six weeks later I got a knock on my front door. I had just gone to the market. I’m picking fifteen pounds of greens. And I was surprised. He didn’t call or anything. “May I come in?” I said . . . couldn’t think of his name. I said . . . and he’s quiet. He may be okay. So anyway, I’m in the kitchen and he said, “Can I get to your piano?”

And I said, “Well, come on back here. The piano’s in this room here.” I said, “Let me check my greens.”

He said, “Don’t stop whatever you’re doing. Just go ahead.” I went, what is he doing back there. Anyway, I just stopped everything and came back, and he was playing that thing that he plays, you know, the bass guitar, the electric thing.

And I said, “Oh yeah?” So I played a little something with him, you know, and right away I said, oh, he’s got a good ear and he can play. Just I wonder, could I get accustomed to the sound of that instrument? Well, that took me maybe two weeks, because . . . and then, as it is now, Charles gets more upright bass sound than anyone on the scene. I mean, your Milt Hintons, your Ray Browns, all those guys do not get the sound Charles gets. Guy wrote a big thing on him once, you know, which is the truth. He does not sound like . . . sometime he’ll be doing some little up-tempo or something. He’ll do a little twang to be cute. Other than that he’s, I guess you would say he’s very dear to me. Yeah, it’s been twenty-five, a good twenty-five years, maybe going into twenty-six. Good lord, I’m getting too old. I can’t stand it.

See, I can just about name the bass players. There was first Louis Powers. That’s in the beginning. There was Louis and then Boogie just stayed . . . Walter Booker just stayed with me that three weeks. Yeah, it was Louis Powers. Marshall Hawkins was about . . . you remember Marshall Hawkins, yeah. I guess Marshall was about a year. We weren’t working that much. We did more rehearsing than anybody. I had a little house then.

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We'd get in that basement and we'd rehearse and rehearse and rehearse. Well, that's about it; Charlie, all.

Stitt: So did you actually have to fire Marshall when Charles came over?

Horn: No, I wasn't working enough for Marshall. Marshall got on the map, because Marshall was . . . I had to teach Marshall almost from scratch, you know. He was just getting to know my changes and whatever, but I wasn't working a lot, and he went somewhere with somebody.

Oh, Miles called and asked me could he use him. Yeah. And I said . . . because Miles was in Washington and he came down to the Caverns. He'd come in and see me, because he was at the Howard Theater, I think. Anyway, I'm doing this concert or something, and I said, "Yeah, you can use him. We're not doing anything right now." That was the end of our gig at the Caverns, see. What happened, we stayed there until they got big.

Stitt: Until the Caverns got big.

Horn: That's right, and we was there a year and something, a year and a half. Then this was our last week, and they got bigtime in.

Stitt: You mean they started to book more national, bring in more . . .

Horn: Yeah, brought in [John] Coltrane. Well, after me there was Bobby Timmons. I was hot. I was really hot, you know, although he's a great musician. But I felt like it was my gig, and give me some more money. You know how they do. Anyway, that was it. So Marshall went up two weeks after that, I think, to play with Miles. Well, Miles had heard Marshall play with me. But Marshall went to New York, he was playing differently. And . . . [laughs]

Stitt: Because you all had a synergy, with you and Marshall [unclear].

Horn: Yes. Right. And then Marshall went to New York and he got hip, and Miles didn't want that hip. He wanted what he was playing with me. So he lasted, I think, two weeks. But that was the end, and after that something happened. I don't know what I was doing. I was fooling around with Quincy. I remember when we did the movie themes, maybe during that time. Like they just wanted me to come out and sing, and do it. You know, Marshall went with somebody. I'd like to see him; it's been years.

Stitt: So then the transition wasn't difficult to Charles . . .

Horn: No.

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Stitt: . . . because you were reformulating.

Horn: Yeah.

Stitt: And who were you using on drums then at that time? You had Billy Hart?

Horn: No. At this time Billy was playing; everybody wanted Billy. He was everywhere. I'd hear from him in Istanbul. I'd hear from him in [unclear]. My baby was gone. And that's really, everybody wanted him. Who was the drummer? Let's see. My first drummer was Harold Minor. Who was the drummer? Boy oh boy.

My favorite drummer, Stump, he would drive that cab, was the Stump; that cab was going to be the death of you. He'd drive the cab after we'd get off from work, you know. And you worked at places like the Caverns, you worked hard. I mean, it wasn't any play. I mean, I wouldn't touch it right now for anything, no amount of money.

Stitt: What was the structure, in terms of what . . .

Horn: Off Monday night. You did three shows Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. You did three shows on Friday, and then you did two shows, then you did a breakfast show, and you had a matinee on Saturday. Sunday you had a matinee and you worked until eight o'clock, clubs closed. Then you waited for your money for three hours. I mean, it was rough. You know, I was young and it didn't matter, but it was very hard. Stump was with me for a lot of years, and twice, two times a car ran into the back of him. He's parked, half asleep, right? Then he got sick and he just, well, he passed. He passed a couple of years ago. So Stump, yeah, we had happy times together. That would be Stump and Louis Powers. Do you know Louis Powers?

Stitt: I don't think so.

Horn: He talks like a West Indian, like a Jamaican. He's tall, and at that time he had a waistline was something like nineteen, tall with big shoulders and a little teeny waist. And he talks like this. [demonstrates] "Shirley, Shirley, how are you? Doo, dee, dee, Shirley, Shirley." We used to make fun of him. Nothing wrong with him. He just, that's the way he talks. But we had times, we had good times.

Stitt: Once Charles did come into the band, do you remember who the drummer was?

Horn: I'm trying to think. Okay, Stump was trying to do a little work, but he couldn't. He lost the use of his right hand. He had trouble holding his sticks. And then I'm trying to think; there was somebody in there. Nobody I really loved, you know. It was just a

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drummer here. Oh, oh, oh, okay. Who came through there was Warren Shad, when he was a little boy. I knew his family. I knew his dad since I was about fifteen, sixteen years old. And I said, “When you grow up, you’re going to play in my band. Okay?” So when he was eighteen I took him with me for a while. He’s good. He’s quite a musician. Warren, that’s just about it. Yeah, because Warren was with me just to do rehearsals every week.

I was playing at the One Step Down. We played all Sunday night. [unclear] tired of working there during the week, so I just played Sunday night a little, probably rehearsal. And then one night Warren called me up. “Aunt Shirley, I want to play with this,” somebody else.

I said, “Okay, Warren, but don’t do this anymore now, hear?” So he played with somebody else, sent in Steve.

Stitt: That’s how you met Steve?

Horn: Yes, and boy, he was raring to go. I said, “Boy, you got to whoa, whoa.” The next week Warren didn’t call, sent in Steve. I said, “Oh, well, Steve, you want to go with me to London next week?” So I took him to London, and that was, you know, Steve, he was a cowboy. But we’ve worked it all out. He’s quite the brilliant drummer now. He’s a percussionist, I like to call him, and he’s dead on the case. He’s a nut, but.

Stitt: What did you think about those two gentlemen, though, that one’s such a collegian, and the three of you all really do operate as one when you play; what is it in their playing that kind of makes the Shirley Horn Trio what it is?

Horn: You know, if I could answer that, it’s all in the feeling. It’s all about feeling. Yeah, we just move as one. Sometimes I’m in a bad mood, or somebody has made me mad about something, I can step inside. It’s like on that Paris album we did.

Stitt: *I Love You, Paris?*

Horn: Yeah. We were at the Chatelaine, beautiful theater, old theater, god, and they’d oversold. I mean, it was wonderful, I mean, it wasn’t 3500 people in this small hall, and I was really impressed because most of my audience were teenagers. And we got up on that stage, and I forgot and left my notes at the hotel, and it rained and I’ve got a bad foot. It always bothers me, you know, like now it’s getting ready to rain. And I said, “What am I going to do?” Now, I’m sitting there, all these people. And if you notice, there’s not a sound on that record.

Stitt: Yes, sort of pin drop.

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Horn: Uh-huh. And somebody coughed very . . . I told the people, “Don’t take the cough out. Leave it in. Let them know it’s live, right?” I mean, you couldn’t hear anything until we got through playing, and it was something. I got caught up in that *I Love You, Porgy*, and *Here Comes the Honey Man*. I don’t know where that came from, but I don’t know how long we played. We must have played that song for about twenty minutes, because I couldn’t get out of it. It had us like, I had goose pimples. I mean, I couldn’t . . . I didn’t know how to get out of it, and I don’t like to listen to it, because I get that feeling, like something has just taken a complete hold. I mean, something got a hold on me here. It happens like that a lot, you know, with the guys. It’s about loving each other. You know, real pissed, but I love them. We’ve had some wonderful moments.

Stitt: [unclear]

Horn: Here, let me tell you a little something now. See, when I was a little girl, when it was lightning and thunder, you know . . .

Stitt: We have to stop, that’s what you’re . . .

Horn: Yes, because I’m very nervous.

Stitt: I knew exactly when you started in . . .

Horn: Yeah, don’t talk on the phone.

Stitt: Right. No, my great-grandmother, you would get your hands popped if you even thought about it.

Horn: That’s right.

Stitt: We would sit in the dark on this small little house on 12th Street, and I’d be so mad. I’d be like, “Why can’t we even watch TV?” But you don’t do it. You just sit there.

Horn: That’s right. You just . . .

Stitt: You know, go to bed, whatever you want to do.

Horn: When I’m alone, I get in the bed.

Stitt: Yes, no, I saw the lightning.

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Horn: Yeah. And, you know, we had the worst storm when we were recording here, and everything was plugged in. TV cameras were in there, and this guy was trying to do an interview with me, and I kept . . . I said, “Whoa. Stop.” But God took care of that. He just turned everything off.

Stitt: Really?

Horn: That’s right. We had a complete blowout, the biggest night here. So I had candles and we just worked the bar. [laughs] Everybody had a good time. Richard Seidel was here.

Stitt: Oh, really? [laughs]

Horn: I can’t tell you exactly what I said, but it was, “You can’t mess with that. Ain’t a damn thing you . . .” Everything went off, the streetlights, everything.

[Tape recorder turned off.]

Stitt: You were talking about the Theatre New Chalet in France, that experience, and I was just going to ask you about how winning the Academie du Jazz pre-Billie Holiday, in 1989, how that made you feel, and if you’ve been the recipient of other awards.

Horn: Yeah.

Stitt: I know you won some *Downbeat* critics’ polls, but . . .

Horn: Oh, I got a lot of stuff. I got that . . . oh, god, I can’t think of the name of it. Yeah, I got that twice, the Billie Holiday Award, and I got the little black man. It took me a year to get it, and I didn’t realize how important it was. People die for it, and I can’t recall the name of it. Anyway, it felt good.

Stitt: It was bronze, the little dark?

Horn: Yeah. You know which one that is?

Stitt: I’ve seen . . . Daddy had gotten one, but I don’t know the name of the award, but I remember the little man.

Horn: Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah, he’s in there. It felt good. I just, you know, I never really paid attention to . . . I’ve never been competitive, you know. And like when these nominations started coming in for the thing that . . . you know what I’m trying to . . .

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Stitt: *You Won't Forget Me?*

Horn: Yeah, I got four of them. And what do they mean? After the first one I said, "Oh, that's kind of nice." I mean, I was excited. One of those records was on the charts like for seventeen weeks, number one. That was nice. Then I started, you know, what is this business all about anyway? The Grammy, that's what I'm trying to say. But when I got the lowdown, the Grammys, I was really upset. I was hurt, you know, because it's a joke. You know, it's a joke, and it's not for real. I thought it was because your music was better, or good, and a lot of people voted for you or something, but it's not like that at all. And you know, Joel Seigel is the one who laid it on me. I said, "Tell me about this business."

So I was happy about that I had no idea about the Billie Holiday Award, you know. And the little old guy who gave it to me, this impresario, he's been doing jazz music and what have you, and doing awards and stuff like that for years. He was so short. And he came; he's speaking in French, and I just said, "Thank you." Then I could make it out. It felt good, you know.

Stitt: You don't feel like awards are any sort of affirmation of the public's support of what you do as an artist.

Horn: No. No, just check your record sales. If you're lucky, you'll get some, what you call it, which I've never gotten any? You'll get some . . . boy, I'm at a loss. If you're lucky enough to find out how many albums you've sold, you know, I'd like to have that. I'd like to have that knowledge.

Stitt: You've never gotten [unclear] numbers?

Horn: Mercury was cool, but none since that.

Stitt: The royalty statements, I think.

Horn: Royalty, yes. I've never seen the royalty statement. It's a game. It's a joke. It's not fair, but anyway.

Stitt: Could we just go back; I keep going back. We don't go forward, because we only go back. But you did touch upon something that's interesting. We talked a lot about the D.C. scene yesterday, and then you just mentioned the Baltimore scene, and also having the first integrated band playing in Baltimore . . .

Horn: Oh yeah.

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Stitt: . . . and it sounded like you were playing in front of a predominantly white audience.

Horn: Oh, child, we were, yeah.

Stitt: Can you talk about the clubs specifically that you played in there, and the experience, the audience perception?

Horn: We worked at a joint called The Wheel. It's out on Bladensburg Road, definitely a redneck place. But the drummer knew the owner, and the owner liked my music, so we went out there. It didn't make any difference to me. I just wanted to play. They came in; a couple of my girlfriends came in. Both of them were dark-skinned, and so I was just enjoying myself, you know. They looked at us kind of funny at first, then toward the evening everybody warmed up, the music got hot, and they were dancing and everything. It was great. But the drummer, I mean the bass player didn't feel very comfortable. But I enjoyed it. I enjoyed myself, wherever, as long as there's music.

I didn't realize that until my musicians' union said, "You have the first integrated band in Washington." Could they play? If they're purple, pink.

Stitt: Was the audience receptive?

Horn: Oh yeah. Yes, indeedy, got to be a regular thing. I got tired of going. I was eating too much.

Stitt: How long were you playing there?

Horn: We played out there . . . we went out to do one weekend, and then the guy said, "Will you come back next weekend?" Got to be a regular thing. But see, what I was doing was going out, and they had the best pizza. I was . . . I said, I've got to get away from this place. I gained so much weight. No, we played a long time, and we had a lot of fun, you know. I had to come back in town, come back up on U Street.

Stitt: Right.

Horn: Come home.

Stitt: What other clubs did you play in Baltimore? What clubs did you play in Baltimore?

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Horn: Oh, child, I played at The Tijuana, and I played at the . . . Tijuana, the doctor said, “After you have this baby you’ve got to stay home for two weeks.” And on the fifteenth day I had the gig in Baltimore at The Tijuana, and I had Kita Betts [phonetic] and Stump Saunders. They were good buddies, and I had Herschel McGuinness [phonetic]. We had so much fun going and coming, you know. So at one time Baltimore was like my town. I worked a lot.

Stitt: Was its jazz community thriving?

Horn: Oh, it was like Washington, you know, with all the joints going. Pennsylvania Avenue was loaded. A little place I played at down right toward the center of the whole thing, called The Sphinx Club. It was an after-hours joint. Then I played at one other place for a couple of weeks with Gene Ammons. I just, it got to be too much, you know. I had to come home, and that baby wanted something to eat, and that was a little too much for me, so I kind of chilled out and stayed home.

But I had some fun with those guys every night. I drove. They’d bring their car to my house, and I’d drive, right, so everybody else could drink and have fun, right. I drove, and I laughed so sometimes they’d make me laugh so hard I had to pull over to the side. [laughs]

Stitt: You mentioned something that sparked a question, and I can’t remember.

Horn: You got CRS, too? [laughs]

Stitt: CRS in full effect. Now I do remember, though. Earlier when you mentioned Gene Ammons, that’s what [unclear] me, you talked about doing an organ gig. Have you done a lot of organ work in the past, and do you like organ as much as . . . I mean, obviously, you play piano all the time, but . . .

Horn: I like it okay. You know, I used to do it sometimes when the piano was so bad, I’d play the organ, you know. And it’s fun. I had Walter Hamlet [phonetic], whose organ is in my house right now . . . do you remember him?

Stitt: I do.

Horn: Yeah. He’s my daughter’s godfather, and he’s a very close friend of my family, and I used to go to all the joints, you know. He would play at some joints. I’d go there and sit in with him, cut the foo [phonetic] and all. But maybe twenty gigs I played organ, when I wasn’t just fooling around, you know. But after you get a little bit of that organ in you, you’ve got to get back to the piano. You’ve got to come on home. I do it sometimes now for kicks.

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Stitt: Did you ever record on organ?

Horn: Oh yeah, you know. I did some things on the *Tribute to Ray Charles*. I did a little stuff on there.

Stitt: There's a question now that I want to ask you that's pretty sensitive, so, well, you'll tell me anyway. I was going to say, so you just tell me if you don't want to deal with it, but you'll tell me.

Horn: Okay, sure.

Stitt: But especially as it relates to your time, in terms of even now, I mean, there's always been this issue of the African American [unclear] of light skin and dark skin, and when you touched upon the fact that your two girlfriends who came out to see you at a place on Bladensburg Road were dark-skinned. Do you think that the fact that you were a light-skinned African-American woman at that time—at that time, the fifties, sixties—made any difference in terms of how you were marketed, and maybe the opportunities that you received?

Horn: Well, it hurt me as far as John Levy was trying to get me into, see, he was in with all the movie business and stuff, and even though he had his offices in New York, I was too fair for certain movies, you know. I mean, I'd rather he told me, "You can't act." But don't tell me it's because of my color, you know.

Stitt: You actually were up for roles?

Horn: Yeah.

Stitt: Like a Dorothy Dandridge, almost.

Horn: Yeah, mm-hmm, yeah. So I was too fair, so I couldn't do anything about that. I guess I had a couple of unpleasant occurrences, one in Chicago, but I handled it very well. I just walked right on out the club. We were playing at the O'Hare Field, and there's Billy Hart and Boogie. Yeah. That's another time we were together. I forgot about that. And we had gorgeous rooms at the hotel, but we wanted to stay in town, where all the action was. So we left those beautiful rooms, had to drive all the way into Cottage Grove, and that's where all—McKee's was a joint there—all the musicians were hanging out. I mean, they'd be out in the street. The bands just standing around, going from place, going here to get liquor, going to get ribs, and mostly going to hear Red Foxx, who was. . . a whole month we were there, he was at this joint.

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And then the hotel we stayed at was a dump, oh, but Arthur Prysock's band was there, Wes Montgomery's band, Cannonball Adderly's band, my band, and there was so much stuff going on in that hotel I could write a book. But we came into Chicago. But we were playing this beautiful place, oh god, the lounge, and it was a wrong booking. I shouldn't have gone in right behind this woman named Dusty Springfield. She was a risqué woman. She'd done the dirty songs and here I come along, I don't sing dirty songs, you know. And there was an effort to . . . this guy came in and asked me for some song, which I told him I really didn't know it. I said, "Maybe you can think of something else. You send a note up by the waitress." I was trying to give the message, don't come up and yell out, you know.

Stitt: From the bar, like a brothel.

Horn: Oh, he said, what the hell did he say? Well, I went on, did what I had to do, you know, and mainly was trying to hurry up and get out of there so I could go back in town where the action was. And he told the waitress . . . a ten-dollar bill up there, "Give the nigger bitch a ten-dollar tip. She's not so bad after all."

And I declined, you know, said, "It's time for me to get out of this joint." So I left. I never went back. I said, "John, I don't go for that, right."

So he said, "Well, contract was broken." That's definitely a no-no. I was with one of the biggest agents at the time, booking agents, Joel Glazerman [phonetic], and he used to put me in a lot of joints that I didn't like, that didn't suit me. Above all, I tried to be a lady, you know, and I don't know what he was trying to do. But anyway, that was it, and I had no more affiliation with him or those kind of places. And I didn't belong in Savannah, Georgia. At least put me in Atlanta, you know. When I was in Savannah there was a little upset there, not even worth talking about.

[End of fourth "Track 1." Begin fifth "Track 1."]

Horn: . . . the husband's retired. Now, one woman, her husband runs the street, right, and he was a musician. Now he's too old, but now he just runs the street. He's just hanging out, you know. He was in all kinds of little . . . you know, they get that itch. But I think my husband and I had a good understanding in the beginning, because he knew I was going to play music. It's not just going to; I have to, because God gave me this music. It's got to come out, you know.

I was thinking the other night, I was sitting here and said, you know one thing? I should be playing a gig somewhere, because I get antsy, you know, and I want to. I mean, I get tired of putting on the clothes and going through that whole what's name, but it's necessary to go into places. We haven't had any problems. He doesn't like it; I was

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away for [whispers] almost five weeks, but he don't say anything, you know, because he knew I was going to do it. I told you in the beginning, he thought I was going to have a whole bunch of babies and be home, right. But it's not as simple as that. I have to play. I have to play music.

Stitt: How did you meet?

Horn: Oh, my girlfriend . . . my uncle, Dr. Horn, had horses out at Longview, and he had given me a horse, a beautiful black horse whose name was Imp. We were going to go riding, and my dad was going to take us. Then this terrible thunderstorm came up, so when it slacked off I said, "Mother, we can't go riding. Can I go to the movie?" And I went to the theater around the corner from my house. I was going to buy some soda or something, and this guy was there, and I thought it was the same guy who used to groom the horses for my uncle. And after I looked at him I said, "Oh, I'm sorry, I have the wrong person." And he had a friend with him, so his friend came down and they sat right behind us. That's how we met.

Stitt: And did you start courting immediately after that?

Horn: Well, no. He was going with some girl who lived up the street from my house. And my mother was very strict; like at ten o'clock I was sitting on the front porch, you know. And he'd walk up and down. He'd wave, right, on the other side of the street, never came over across the street. So it went on for, oh, lord have mercy, months. I'd go back to school, then he would pass by going to see this girl, waving.

How did we get together? Oh, I know how. His friend, who was my girlfriend, his friend, since we met both of them at the theater, right, she started going out with him right away, and I really wasn't interested in boys and men, you know.

Stitt: How old were you at the time?

Horn: I met him when I was seventeen, I guess. I just want the music, that was all. In the summertime I was a little lost, you know, because when I was in school I was, well, I might as well say I was in charge of the orchestra. That was my love. I had a friend; I had a little boyfriend who sang. He had a beautiful voice. I don't know how we . . . in fact, I was eighteen when he crossed the street. [laughs] And my mother said, "He looks like a gangster, [unclear]. He's too old for you."

He didn't bother me. He didn't push me or anything, you know. He was just the older man who fell in love, and been there ever since. He's a nice man. I kind of tricked him, because he thought I was going to, he really did think I was going to have a bunch of babies. One thing, I never wanted a lot of children. I had two little brothers, and if you

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know what two little brothers are all about, boy. I said, “I’m never going to have children.”

I don’t know why Mother did that. My oldest brother is ten years between us, but my youngest brother’s ten years between us. So I said, no, I don’t want any children. Ernie was a pest. Oh, he was into everything.

Stitt: Did your husband ever travel with you?

Horn: Lord, no. Uh-uh. No, he has a problem, because you know about people in show business. They hug and kiss, right? Well, I had to stop him from coming to clubs where I was performing, right away, early on, because he was just jealous of everybody. I mean, he would have come to the clubs. He came and picked me up every night.

Stitt: He’d wait outside?

Horn: Uh-huh, he’d wait outside and pick me up. So sometime I was in Paris and I told him come on over, but he kind of doesn’t like to share me, you know.

Stitt: So it’s very difficult. I’ve heard that same sentiment from a lot of jazz wives, like your husband, your boyfriend is no longer yours, you know. You’re everybody’s, and a point, I guess everyone becomes a potential threat.

Horn: Yes.

Stitt: How have you managed to balance that, just speaking frankly?

Horn: Yes. I told him, I said, “You can’t come to the clubs when I’m performing,” because this was something . . . I didn’t know that much about men. My father was a very quiet man. He was a mild man. My mother ran the show, and she was something else. She was a trip. My dad just went along with whatever she said.

One night I was at the club called Abart’s. I was the first . . . I was at Abart’s when the mom and dad were fixing that place up, and why they gave that place to those two nuts, complete idiots. But I was playing and there was a man who was there. He was in there every night, and he’d sit at the bar. Maybe he liked my music, right. And he’d smile. It was nothing, you know. Good-looking dude, too. So one night I was . . . it was on a weekend, and I wasn’t paying attention. The man was . . . I guess he was going to the men’s room. I heard this rumbling. I didn’t pay any attention to it. I went on playing. So then when I took a break Margie said, “Do you know that Charles done threw that man down the steps?”

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Saying, “What?” I said, “That’s the end of that. You don’t come where I work.” Right, sure did. And he’s stupid right now. One day in Hollywood at the City Grill, we all [unclear] kids, all the stars come in, and I’m really excited about it, you know. If they want pictures, I’ll take pictures with them, and this *Mod Squad*, Link, right, and I see my soap people. I said, “Wait a minute, freeze. Got to get a picture. Hold it.” And I’d get autographs and things. It’s really fun for me. But he spent a week with me out there at the City Grill, and I felt he couldn’t handle it. I said, “Well, there’s a lovely suite upstairs. There’s a nice bed, television in the living room, refrigerator with a lot of sodas, and plenty of fruit and stuff like that. So why don’t you just stay upstairs? You know, you can’t handle it. I can see the expression on your face.” So, you know, [whispers] I smoke too much. But he’s as happy, as long as I’m here. I sit here for a year. Every now and then I just fix a little food. [laughs]

But I can stay up, and since he’s got this thing.

Stitt: [unclear]

Horn: When I came home I said I need two days, two days to just rest and try to see if I can catch up, and I still say the same thing to me. I don’t want to talk on the phone, because I was so full, I mean from everything, business and music and traveling, da, da, da, da, da. So for two days . . . well, first day I think I slept. He said, “I want to wake you up, because you slept twenty-two hours, because you’ve got to take your medicine.” Okay.

I said, “What you been doing all the time?”

“I was down there with the computer.” So he’s just there, and I could stay here and nobody comes. He’s just, yeah. He’s harmless. He’s not a [unclear]. He’s harmless.

Stitt: That’s role reversal there, really quite interesting.

Horn: And then, too, you’re going to find this to be true, a black man cannot handle a successful woman, wife or woman, and I see that. We don’t argue about it. He just kind of goes along with the program, which is cool, because I’ve got to play some music, but I’m stubborn as hell. I’m going to play music. And like this, “When are you going to retire?”

And I joke, I say, “I’ll never retire when you retire. What are we going to do with two retired people around here?”

Stitt: Do you ever think of retiring?

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Horn: Yeah, but my retirement's like maybe doing, next year I'll do one concert a month. That's enough, you know, because it's really been crazy. I mean, I've done some . . . the last six years. For three years there I was traveling so much the doctor said, "Well, you're going to have to chill, because you're getting some kind of weird," from flying, meeting myself, passing myself, I mean, crossing Water Street four times. Like this is bad; it's bad on you. And I'm getting old; I feel it. I'm tired. I feel like somebody . . . who was it had the baseball bat on my . . . it's rough. But it's all about when you get involved with the music, you sit down to play with the guys, all that just goes right on out the window. And why did you stop singing?

Stitt: Oh, [unclear] on me, well. Well, I'll tell you, I promise, at the end of the interview I'll tell you.

Horn: I'm curious.

Stitt: I know, I promise. I won't forget. I'll tell you, for sure. We'll go through it. I mean, it's not that big of a deal, but I'll make sure that I tell you, or you can talk me into singing. Maybe if you decide to give me lessons.

Horn: Girl, don't you say nothing about no lessons. I'm the worst teacher in the world.

Stitt: Have you ever had students?

Horn: No. I had a friend that I helped out, but no, I'm not a good teacher at all, and I found that out when my daughter would play piano.

Stitt: What is it about the educational process there that you don't feel like . . .

Horn: I don't have patience, you know, and that calls for patience. I thought maybe, you know, because I get so many . . . this one girl, she wanted . . . she got all kind of money. I said, "It's not about the money. Number one, can you sing?"

You've got to have something to start with," because they would come to me and ask me about, "Well, so-and-so's taking breathing lessons. How do you breathe?"

I say, [demonstrates breathing in and out loudly]. No, I don't have the patience. And don't fool with it if you're not going to be good, because I have had some sorry teachers, piano teachers that didn't give a damn, you know. And I said, "Mother, this one is not teaching me anything. I want to go on to a better one." That's who you should be talking to. You should be talking to my favorite piano teacher.

Stitt: Yes, I know.

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Horn: Yes, indeed. She's something else.

Stitt: Well, that'll be [unclear]. I want to get to these questions, but when you were talking about be good if you're going to do something, and you talked about particularly singing and like having something to say. What is your opinion of a lot of these younger singers now that you hear?

Horn: [whispers] Oh, boy.

Stitt: Shaping or refining their own voice . . . are they doing that?

Horn: You know, Katia [phonetic], I don't listen to my radio.

Stitt: But you hear them at USC or at various festivals, don't you?

Horn: Well, yeah. But when I was first at the North Sea, when I first started doing that I was with masters. You know, I'm the end of the line on this. And I don't know, I don't know. Some of these youngsters, I don't know. I mean, who do they listen to? Who are their influences? Because everybody's gone. Who was your influence? I can't tell, because I know when I have a problem, if you're not . . . if I can't understand the words you are saying, it's all Greek to me, you know.

Stitt: The lyric is important.

Horn: That's number one. That's the first thing I look for in a song. I look for the lyric, and if the melody is cool, then we've got a deal. I can't, I really can't, I cannot comment because I don't know their work, you know? I've met a lot of the singers, and the names I know, but I haven't been, like, to actually hear them.

Stitt: Do you think a lot of the singers that are popular, and this even speaks to you and singers of your generation, because of the marketing? You know, more and more, and I think we touched on it last night when we were talking about the quote, unquote "girl singer," how they were really made to be beautiful and very dainty, very feminine, and you see a lot of that coming back . . .

Horn: I hope so.

Stitt: . . . in how they market the women. Do you think that's a good thing?

Horn: Well, I want to see more of it. I see, because I'm really a TV bug, and I'll sit there and flick, and I'll see what they have, what they're wearing, and the way they use

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their bodies. This has absolutely nothing to do with singing, you know. I have a niece, Tory Horn, do you know her? Well, she was my sweetheart. I gave her her first piano, and I said, well, I'm thinking, and she'll go on and she'll finish school, right, and then if I'm in the catbird seat I can lend a hand, right. Well, I think she got to be like twenty, and she called me up and said something about, "Aunt Shirley, I'm going to sing with Lee Vert [phonetic]."

I said, "What is a Lee Vert?" I'd imagined . . . you know, this is my dream, the way she'd play the piano and sing, and I could open doors for her and show her the way, so she don't have to go through the kind of changes I went through, right.

And whatever Lavert [phonetic] was, she said, "I'm going to be on the television." I turned on the television. I saw these two old men . . .

Stitt: [unclear]

Horn: Yeah, and, oh, they're good. I heard them on . . . I listened today. They were on the *Oprah* show, and they sang a beautiful song, that *You're The Wind Beneath My Wings*, or something like that. That's father and son singing. I thought that was lovely. But when I turn on the TV and my niece is standing there with this little short, skimpy thing on, jiggling her body around, I turned off the television. I said, "This has nothing to do with singing, or playing that piano." I said, "I'm ashamed."

And this is her mother's way of thinking. Her mother said to me one time, "Well, she'll have to get it the best way she can." What kind of thing is that to say in front of your daughter, or about your daughter, you see? Anything, everything, it's not such a thing as anything goes, you know. So I think it's embarrassing to me as a woman to see these women with all these various things, and the movements. Most of them look like they should be in the bed, and I just . . . and the way they dress.

Well, I hope it's going to become again, I hope it's going to righteous. I hope it's going to be dainty, dressed, you know, classy, but in acquired elegance and stuff like that, you know. But their day will come.

Stitt: So you don't see a way that a Sarah Vaughn or an Ella Fitzgerald, you know, in a very tight satin gown, you don't see those as the same things, as risqué for that time, and as a marketing ploy to make these women sensual?

Horn: [laughs] [unclear] Yeah, but the fitted clothes were decent then. Sarah was on television not too long ago. She must have been twenty. She had a little thing on with a little crinoline, and she looked cute, right. But those years passed on. I can't talk about my baby. And Ella never did very well in the glamour department. Honest to God, she's

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a sweetheart, and I'm getting ready to do a tribute to her. Now, you take your Lena Hornes, now that was class, you know, quiet elegance. She didn't have anything popping out of her bra, and the stuff was covered. She was all in good taste.

Now, I remember one, Della Reese. You remember Della Reese?

Stitt: Sure.

Horn: Della Reese came to Washington. She was down on the corner at a fine joint, and I was at the Brass Rail, but I had a good audience. And I had to go to see her, because John Levy was in town. He said, "I want you to, when you get done, we'll go down and meet Della." Well, when we walked in the door, Della was, boy, she was laying somebody out. Boy, she could do it, and she was built, I mean, really built. Everything was so tight, it was like she could hardly breathe, and these things were bulging out, and then she had a backless dress on, it was almost cut down to her [unclear]. Well, that was a little bit much. But she soon got away from that, because right now, you see her? [laughs] I mean, I can't . . . I didn't know it all.

You remember someone named Damita Jo?

Stitt: Oh yes, she was beautiful. She was beautiful.

Horn: Yes. Yes, she was.

Stitt: My mother had a picture of her, I mean, like stunning.

Horn: Yes, yes. And she dressed in good taste. She was cute and she did it nicely, because there were some hags that had the clothes on, all that kind of stuff. Then the miniskirt came along. That just was disgusting, you know, to me. Oh, I saw these old women with those big knock knees in miniskirts. [laughs] I'm not going to call any names.

I don't know what marketing they did with me, because I sort of just floated in and out, you know.

Stitt: Even now, I mean, I've been looking at these for today. I remember when they came out, the album came out.

Horn: Yeah.

Stitt: And, you know, the elegance, the class, very feminine, again.

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Horn: Yeah. You know, the Verve people have been very good. I don't know how they're marketing me, because I feel like one of the boys, right, playing the piano, right, because they're all about the singing, you know. I don't know quite how to answer that. Like I said, I kind of floated in and out all those years, you know. I just kind of was . . . all of a sudden I happened. [laughs]

I know a lot of people didn't know what to do with me. Quincy didn't know what to do with me. He said, you know, I've got a video with him talking, because he didn't know what to do with me. He did me, the second album he did. I wanted strings, so, because you're going to have strings, right?

I'll tell the story about not wanting to go into the room. Oh, boy. But this was a smart thing he did on that particular album. He had, I think, every . . . he only did two songs for me. He only arranged two songs, and the other songs were arranged by other writers, *The Romanticist* and what have you, which was smart.

But then where do you put me? And where do I belong? I'm not hardcore jazz. I'm not . . . I don't consider myself a jazz singer. Sometimes I think I'm not a jazz singer, and who's a jazz singer? There's Betty Carter and there's Sheila Jordan, right. I just like to be referred to as a good singer who picks nice material.

Stitt: A balladeer?

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Horn: Something like that, maybe. This next album, child, I'm just doing all those sexy slow songs and things. I don't know where I belong, you know? You tell me, where do you think I belong?

Stitt: Okay. They're not going to care what I think. Really, who is this woman talking to her? We just want to hear more of her. [laughs]

Horn: Well, I don't know how much you know about my music, you know. I don't know where to put it. I kind of fall somewhere in there in the mix with Earl Garner and Oscar Peterson and Ahmad Jamal, pretty good company.

Stitt: Certainly as a piano player. I mean, definitely when you listen to your music you are torn. You don't know what you want to listen to. I guess words appeal to me. I tell you, the best way I can describe it is that if I could find a man that loves me the way you sing about love, I would be set for life.

Horn: Aw.

Stitt: That's the way I see it. That's why I said a balladeer, but maybe not strictly that.

Horn: I don't know. I get asked that all the time.

Stitt: Once you get the lyric and the melody together, how do you go about developing a song?

Horn: I live with it, you know. I have it in my head, and then once I get it in my head I say, "This is what you want to do. This is what we're going to do, guys. This is it." I have all head arrangements. I was never allowed to use the music onstage. I memorized everything. I hate it now. I'd rather read from a lyric. I have a little rehearsal with the guys, but see, this is the beauty of knowing each other so well, because I can talk an arrangement over the phone; we're going to do it.

Stitt: Do you do all the arrangements?

Horn: Yes.

Stitt: Have you always done all the arrangements?

Horn: Always, yes.

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Stitt: And what would you say, once this whole process is complete, what makes that song a Shirley Horn song? Like your rendition of *A Taste of Honey* or [unclear] or . . . I mean, you've put an indelible stamp on those two. What makes them yours?

Horn: Because I fall in love with it. I literally, yes, I fall in love. I fell in love with *The Island*. Do you know *The Island*?

Stitt: Yes.

Horn: I heard so many people fool around with it, because I wanted to do it about five or six years ago. I said, "I'm not ready," because I didn't know what I was going to do with it. But now I have it, I have it, and it's gorgeous. I can say that it's gorgeous, and mean it, because I love it. It was good for me and I was good for it. I fall in love with the music, like I fall in love with the musicians. Music's all about love.

Stitt: Talking about both music and musicians, maybe it's a good time to talk about Verve and the beginning of your relationship there, how that came about, and your experience with them, as artist and record company, again.

Horn: Well, I was playing a little joint in New York called The Circle Bar. It was a dump. I mean, it was a cute little place, but they had a little speaker up there. The cuteness was the fact that the piano and the bass and drums were so close together on this little teeny-weeny stage. But the first night, well, we got there to do a sound check, right. It was raining; I was in a bad mood. The foot was kicking up with me, and the owner . . . we got there at two o'clock. He comes downstairs at four o'clock.

Now, he was entertaining a lady upstairs, right? Well, where's the engineer? I mean, who's running this show? Okay, he came on down and meet and greet us, he'd be down a little later. I said, "Well, this is it. I've got to go," because I had to go change clothes and catch a cab and come back to perform. So we were playing, raining like cats and dogs. He hadn't advertised, and I said, now what am I doing here in this dump? Then some people came to the second show. Well, the sound system was terrible. I said, "Steve, see if you can do something with it," right. Okey-dokey. And I said, "No, this is not right. Your job is to play the drums." I said, "Let's see what we can get going."

So I said something to the waiter. Poor boy, I don't know why I said it to him. He had a tray of drinks; he went down to switch some buttons around like that, and went on and served his drinks. So it was funny the first couple of nights. Then I said, "This is ridiculous. I want to get out of this contract." People were starting to come in, right. Okay.

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And one night this Richard Seidel comes in, and he's real nervous. He's still nervous right now, because I give him the blues every time I . . . "You want to record on Polygram?"

I said, "What's a Polygram?" And he gave me his card and I'm standing looking at him. I'm standing on my foot, which is hurting, and I said, "You sit down. I'll talk to you later on." I said, "Things are not right here." So he came to say something to me. I'd forgotten all about him, because some friend of mine had come in. I was just sitting at the bar, just moaning and groaning, and bitching and everything.

So he came the next night, brought this other dude with him, and, "Do you remember me? I was in last . . ."

I said, "Oh, I remember you. You're the Polygram person. What is a Polygram?"

Anyway, he hounded me for about six months, and everybody said, "You ought to go," because I asked around.

I asked John Levy. He said, "Yeah, it's a good label. Joe Williams is on the label."

I said, "Oh, I hadn't even noticed." Okay, so I signed, and then the first one was *Live at Vine Street*, I think, and that was a fiasco. I mean, we had no control. We had rock and roll people doing the setting up. They set up between these big baffles, and our thing is eye contact. I've got to see Steve, and Charles has got to see my left hand. That's absolutely necessary. And when I got there I had the flu. I'm sick, but I said, "Well, the show must go on." I never missed a job because of being sick.

And I don't know what to do. I'm in the toilet. I'm trying to do the thing; place is full of people. John Levy came. I said, "John," I said, "you've got to help me. I don't know what to do."

He said, "Number one, they have taken your dressing room and turned it into a storage place for them."

So I said, "Well, I didn't know what to do." Carmen McCrae comes in. She heard on the radio I was there. She was shopping.

She said, "Girl, I heard you were here, and I dropped my bags in the trunk of the car." I said, "I'm going to see Shirley," and she came in and raised hell. "Take that down. Take that . . . you don't need all that." And she had worked there, you know, and the guy knew not to bother her. And she said, "Take all this stuff out of here so she can have a dressing

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room in peace.” Okay. And I was really sick, had a temperature of 103, and John wanted me to stop.

I said, “No. All these people came in. I’m going to do the best I can.” Well, that was the beginning with Verve. I was a little, what the name in the beginning, a little trinket in the beginning. I think they thought I was easily moved. I’m not, you know, and I know what I want to do. I know what I’m going to do. This is the deal. You do your part, I’m doing my part. I don’t need you to help me. You can’t pick my tunes for me. If you want to get lyrics, you get the lyrics, but I’m going to sing, and I run my band, you know, take care of my part.

And there were some fights. I mean, I wanted out in the beginning, but they didn’t want to let me out.

Stitt: Were fights generally over artistic things?

Horn: Oh yeah. I said, “I must have . . .” I can’t . . .

Stitt: [unclear] the producer in that way.

Horn: Hell no, I produce my own stuff, you know. And Richard Seidel, oh, man. He thinks he discovered me. And I looked at him, I said, “You’re such a silly little boy. I’m dealing with little boys here.” It’s all about him getting his name on as producer. And the first couple of times I didn’t pay attention to it. I said, “Wait just a minute. I’m doing the producing.”

He came all the way to Boston. I was there to do the Boston, the song with the Boston Pops. I was thrilled. I would be there with John Williams and all those musicians and things. He came to bribe me, and he did, bribe me to put his name, bribe me with a little machine so he could put his name on as producer. This looks good to the people upstairs, right. And I said, “I’m producing it. I got the musicians. I made all the arrangements. Everything is done.” I said, “Any time that you want to be producer, I’m going to lend you my wig and my red lipstick, and you go do it, baby.”

He’s still the same Richard. He’s afraid he’s going to lose his position, and it’s a wonder they haven’t gotten rid of his what’s-name, but he’s still on as A&R man. So he came all the way to California; cost me a whole bunch. It was on my budget, cost me a lot of money. Then he sat there and he couldn’t find anything wrong. But I said one word that I had chose; I chose through change, and he pointed that up. It was three o’clock in the morning. I’m recording at three o’clock in the morning. I want to get it all over. I don’t have to go back to New York for anything. I want to do it all now. I said, “Richard, you

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mean to tell me you are bothering me over one word that I said I want to change to another word, right?" Oh, man, he's a trip.

I've been there through two presidents now. It's time for me to go. [laughs] I like one. But one, I don't hang around them. I don't need to meet any more people. He was running a whole bunch of people by me, and sending people to meet me and get to know me, and to come to my house and take me out to dinner. Shit, don't come to my house. Don't bother me. When I'm not in an office, don't bother me, you know. I'm doing my own thing.

And I'm just kind of like a rebel, you know, because one thing, I'm too old and I'm not going to let them push me around. Number one, I don't need to make any more money. It's not about money in the first place. See, they use that money. You know who's on that label, and I see what's going on in there. They're breaking up families, and I mean, doing a lot of other things that I don't approve of. Then who am I? So we get along fine. Now I've got to ride out . . . a little trick was done, because I wanted to be done with them on this record here.

Stitt: You mean the one that's out now, *The Main Ingredient*?

Horn: No, the one that I just recorded.

Stitt: The one that's not out.

Horn: Yeah, I want to be done with that, with them, and they don't want to let me go. So somehow I overlooked something in that seventy-five-page contract, and they're coming . . . my lawyer said their lawyer said, well, I've got to do two more records. I don't have two more records in me right now. But it's going to be done on condition I'm going to have an A&R man from Paris, who is a doll, Jean-Philippe [phonetic]. He's going to be coming in to just be there, because I do the whole thing. We don't need anybody, you know.

Stitt: Is this the first time you've encountered this kind of control in your recording career, from what you said about the other labels.

Horn: Oh, I never had to really stand up and go to bat with them, because they didn't give me any problem. It was simple, because you had, what, eight different arrangers do the music for me. It was no [unclear]. I read the music, I sang the song, that was it, right. But it's different now, and like I said, I'm dealing with youngsters. It's all about their thing, and who gets credit on the album. I said, "I'll get credit."

Stitt: As the producer.

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Horn: Right. I know who's helped me in, so they all get credit. Oh, child, I've been . . . this one man's got a secretary. She thinks her name should go on everything that's recorded. I said, "Not on mine." You know what I'm saying? What did she do? She's doing her job as secretary, right.

Stitt: Has Verve been accountable in terms of sending you budgets of what they are recouping, specifically what they're recouping from your record sales? You know, they have a whole list of what the recording cost.

Horn: Yeah. Well, I had [unclear]. That one they always . . . half a million dollars, that one.

Stitt: *Here's to Life?*

Horn: Yeah. Oh, they'll send you all these papers. I've got papers and papers, you know. Well, if you tried to understand and to read all that crap, you'd be crazy, you know. So I just say, okay. Carmen told me something years ago, because we were hanging out in Holland, and I had just signed with them. She said . . . I'd like to make some money. Not that being famous is that important, but you've got to have a certain amount of fame in order to make the money. She said, "One thing I can tell you, baby, is get the money up front." And that's what I do. Just give me the money and you can leave me alone. I'll take care of all my stuff.

So they send all kind of papers and things. I get . . . see, I recorded with Toots Tillman in Paris, right, and I get information from them that's right on the case. But here in the United States of A, honey, the stuff is so complicated, and by the time . . . it's cost me \$5,000 with the lawyer telling me what the statement is all about, right. So, okay. I've got to make some.

Well, I would like to record both of those albums this year and get them out the way so I can be free. I don't like to feel like I'm under somebody's thumb, you know, because it's ugly, the b.s. that you encounter. And it's just, it's nothing big I can say, "They did that to me," and so and so. Just a little bit of sneaky underhanded stuff that goes on. That's right, you know. I don't like b.s. It's the real thing, baby.

Stitt: Have you had a similar experience with management? What has your experience been with management? You mentioned John Levy. I know that Joel Seigel worked with you.

Horn: Oh, child, Joel was my friend. I thought he was my friend. But Joel got carried away with . . . I think it happened to him in Hollywood. We went to the City Grill and all

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the stars showed up and stuff, and I looked, and Joel was in the pictures before I was in the pictures. You know, he got all slap happy with the show business, you know, and then being what he is, he was more . . . all this stuff you can't write down, if I say something. He's more bitchy than I, you know. You know he is.

I mean, he's okay, but I found out he really wasn't my friend. I enjoyed him for years. Oh, we used to have so much fun. In fact, I talked to him for a year and a half before I said yes to doing that concert at the Corcoran. You know, he used to do that series there, right? And I got to know him over the phone, and I looked forward to his call. He's funny and he's witty and he knows a lot about music, and we'd talk about people, like two women get on the phone and talk, you know. And it was fun, but it got a little . . . just got a little too busy for him.

Stitt: How long was he your manager?

Horn: You know, I never called him my manager. He was just a friend. Because he never did anything. I'd get the jobs, right. I'd get a call and say, "Joel, here's a call for some . . ." This was a perfect example. I've said I want to go to . . . Atlanta was doing a thing. That's cute. And I said, "What I want you to do is write up the contract and make the reservations and stuff, right?"

"Okay." For that you get 10 percent. It means you write up the contract and you make the . . . come time to go, plane reservations weren't made. I never did get a copy of the contract. So I went without a contract.

I said, "Well, I know what it's supposed to be all about." Got down there and Joel had put me in a little tiny hotel that was where the ladies sat and had tea and cookies at four o'clock in the afternoon. And my suitcases are big. I couldn't get them in there and sit on those things. I panicked. But see, by this time I had . . . Sheila Mathis was with Verve, and I'd known her about five years, and I always admired her because one thing, she's smart. She knew the business. And whenever I called anybody to get some information, I always called Sheila, right. So I got to know Sheila.

So I said, you know one thing, I called Sheila. I said, "Sheila." She thought they were going to fire her, because they had a thing about they got rid of all the Jews at some point. Anybody who wasn't a Jew, they fired them, right.

Stitt: Who wasn't a Jew.

Horn: That's right. So I said, "How would you like to manage me?" I said, "We'll work the details out when I get home."

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She said, “Okay.” She took all the business, changed some stuff. She straightened everything out. I’m not getting Joel Seigel. [laughs] I had to laugh after it was all over.

“Well, I didn’t know I was supposed to do all that.”

“What you going to do? You’re going to type up a contract and make my hotel reservations, and my traveling things, right.”

Stitt: Had he managed other artists before?

Horn: No. He was my friend. We would get together. After I finally got to see him, we would get together and talk. We’d always go somewhere and eat. That was our thing. We’d hook up. We used to go to the Sezchuan, the Hunan place downtown, and we’d sit there and eat, eat, eat, eat, eat, eat, eat, eat. We’d split the check and I’d come home, he’d go home, and he always made me laugh, you know. And he came along when I needed some . . . I had some deaths and stuff that I was trying to handle. But he’s fun. He’s very witty, but also he’s got that sharp tongue, and he wasn’t nice.

After I decided that Sheila was going to, then he got mad at Sheila, because he wanted to split the commission with Sheila for managing me. And he told her, “Well, you know, you have to do all the work, because I’ll just be in the pictures, because I don’t know anything about the business.”

I said, “Sheila, if you’re going to be by the door,” I said, “I’m not going to be bothered with you.” So she’s fine, you know. She has knowledge of the business, and what she doesn’t know about the booking and the management, I’m helping her with that. So I had no problem.

John Levy was a dream, you know. He was a good friend, and I trusted him implicitly. He did good things for me in a little quiet way. He didn’t make a big to-do about anything, you know. See, when *For Love of Ivy*, when that came out I think I was hurt more than anything in the world because I didn’t get to sing that on the awards. And, well, Abbey Lincoln was the star, and she sang it.

Stitt: You recorded the soundtrack, but she sang . . .

Horn: She sang. I mean, that was her option. She was the star. Of course, she blew it, you know. She told me it took maybe thirty years, but she said, “You should have sung that song.” I wanted to sing it. That hurt me. I think I cried for two weeks.

Stitt: What awards ceremony, just to be clear?

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Horn: Yeah, it was the Academy Awards. Yeah. But John was there for that. He tried, and I didn't know until later. He pulled every trick he knew how to try to get me in there to do that. But she was the star of the show. She chose to sing it, and when I look at this . . . oh, I looked at the thing. I was crying, and she was . . . I was really hurt by it all.

Oh no, you know, I've had it good. I didn't pound the pavement, so to speak, because doors would just kind of open for me, because I went in, I mean, one opening and met Quincy and Miles, and John Levy. See, then I knew all those old musicians because John had made sure that they would come and see me, and meet me and stuff.

Stitt: How long were you with John Levy?

Horn: I'm still with John Levy. We never had a contract. We shook hands; I guess I was eighteen. I was eighteen, yes. And I said, "Are you going to be my manager?" Ai, yi, yi. But, you know, he had all the big people. He had the big acts. He tried. He tried. He tried hard. But when I said I'm going to stay home and take care of my baby, you know, and I had to do that; I mean, it was no other way for me. I mean, I couldn't live with myself, because I'd seen so many cases where, oh boy, it's sorry. And I'm sorry, you know. But he's still . . . something I can't handle, I just, "Hey, babe."

"What you want now?" Oh, I'll send Sheila to him.

I said, "Sheila, check with John." He's an angel. He's eighty-five years old now, and he doesn't look it. He has no big stomach. He still dresses sharp. Boy, he's the sharpest man, wow. And he still comes to the clubs and hangs out, and the women are still looking at him. [laughs]

Stitt: Talk about . . . you touched on it, and then I want to go back to the Verve recordings, but you just talked about the decision to stay home. Was there one incident that prompted that, or was it just a feeling that it was really time, and Rainy was at a critical point?

Horn: You know, young people started going into that teenage; you know, that's a trying time for them. Yeah, that's rough for kids, you know. And I had seen a lot. I can't call the names, but I had seen, I mean, famous women who left their children, and what happened to the children, you see. I knew all this. I saw that very early on. But anyway, I was . . . my mother's house is right through there. You can see her garage, right; a very close family, and my mother was there for me and both those other two idiots, you know. I mean, she was there. She was a mother, and that's what I was accustomed to.

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You know, I tried, but I couldn't . . . and Rainy needed me as much as I needed her. And she was a big . . . my daughter's real tall. She was a big girl for her age, and I'm looking at the dudes looking at her. I said, "Mm-mm. Time for mother to stay home." And I think all mothers should be home at that time. I mean, mothers should be there, period, you know.

Stitt: But certainly in that transition.

Horn: Oh yeah, yeah. This is a hard time for kids. I feel sorry for them. Good lord, I've got a little grandson there. Boy, he's trying so hard to grow up. Good lord.

Stitt: You have one grandson?

Horn: No, I've got actually two. I told him the other day, "Boy, you're just tall, that's all."

[End of fifth "Track 1." Begin sixth "Track 1."]

Stitt: But I wanted to just talk to you specifically about the *You Won't Forget Me* album.

Horn: Oh yes.

Stitt: And those books that you recorded on, I know it was a homecoming of sorts, I guess, for Miles, certainly, and for Toots Tillman, for that book, early on in your career, and Winton and Branford were here as well. Can you discuss that experience, and the musicianship of what each of these gentlemen brought to that, their musicianship, and what each of these brought to this project?

Horn: Well, it was simple. And it was funny. I mean, it really got funny. Toots came in. We did one take, that was it. We had allotted four hours for everybody, right, and Branford came in; we did two takes. Wynton, we did two takes. Then we had a party. Then the food came and we had fun, child, laughing and talking and everything. No, I'm wrong. Yeah, we had a party, and then there was time in between.

Well, Miles had to have a limo to bring him down one block, a stretch, and we didn't want Branford, I mean Wynton there when Miles came. They'd be trying to get the guys out, those two especially. Okay, Miles came early. I said, "Oh shit." Wynton had just gone out the door, and it was funny. The engineer, everybody was in on it. We were laughing. It was really funny. And everybody was scared to death they would . . . but Richard had said, "Don't anybody say anything to Miles. Don't anybody say it."

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“What has this got to do with it, Richard? You stay back there in the control booth. That’s where you belong. Stay back there with your clipboard and your . . . “ He has a clipboard and a time thing. So Miles came in. We were all talking. We were sitting back way over in the corner. We were talking about old times. We talked about our . . . but the suspense was too much, and Steve comes out.

Steve, my drummer, started this mess. Told. . . I heard this, “Richard is . . . you’re the producer. This is your project. You ought to go out there and meet Miles,” because Steve wanted to meet Miles. Oh, they just come on out and meet Miles. Miles is a beautiful man, right. And Richard came out and there we’re sitting there. Miles was drinking tea. He was talking about his stomach, and he told me about these cigarettes, and he’s “drinking that sweet shit,” da, da, da.

I said, “I don’t change that much. See, you’re too fat. You’ve got to come over the house.” Anyway, Richard met Miles. I said, “Richard Seidel, this is Miles Davis.” And Richard didn’t know what to say.

He went to reach to shakes Miles’ hand, and it looked like a little noodle. He was . . . and Miles said, “Man, I like a man with a handshake. Let’s just have a handshake here.”

So Richard’s standing, not knowing what to say. First thing he comes out his mouth was, “Miles, what about your intonation?”

I said, “My god, what is this?” And just at the nick of time Steve walks in the door.

Miles said, “What’s he talking about my intonation?”

I said, “Lord have mercy. Richard Seidel, you’d better get away. Go, go, go.” So Steve came in. I changed the subject. What’s a stupid . . . what a thing to say to Miles, his intonation, right? I said, “Okay, Richard, see, you didn’t need to come out at all. You should stay right back there in the control.”

Anyway, that went on and we did a song. He’s busy complaining. “You make my lip hurt,” because he hadn’t played like that in a long time, you know. It was a lot of work for me to put it together, but he, number one, he didn’t know the song. He had lost the tape.

So I’m coaching him, and I said, well, I’m just going to let him go ahead and do what he’s going to do, and I will . . . David Baker, the engineer, I said, “I can straighten this out. We’ll go in the studio with this.” And he hung around a long time, and we talked, and we cried a little, you know. It just hurt me to see him looking so bad. Well, I was

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busy pumping him, saying, “Now I’ve got three more songs I want you to do.” And on this thing right here? I said, “Well, I’ll bring them up to your house.”

Anyway, next couple of days I went by his house. He was sitting up there getting his hair curled, and his little beautician. He was so cute, like an old butterfly. He was just . . . he said, “What do you think?”

I said, “He messed up your widow’s peak.”

He said, “Fix my widow’s peak.” He wanted me to stay, but my limo driver was going to drive me all the way to Washington.

And I said, “Baby, I’d like to stay and hang with you, but I’m going to get a ride home.”

[Imitating Miles’ voice] “I bought this \$200 wine for you. You going to leave?”

I said, “I’ve got to go.” But I left a tape. And he was so small. He had on some pants like, you know, that look like skirts now on the men, you know, and his little legs were so little, I said, “Mm, mm, mm.” I said, “You going to do the songs?”

He said, “I’ll do anything.” Last thing he said, “I’d do anything for you, baby.” And I kissed him and left, and that’s the last time I saw him.

Then he was Paris, I was San Francisco; he went in the hospital. Then I was Japan, and how I found out he was dead, when I went to check in the hotel—oh, it must have been about eight o’clock in the morning—this woman called me. She wanted to get some comments. I said, “What?”

“About Miles Davis.”

I said, “Miles Davis is very sick in the hospital in San Francisco.”

“No, Miles Davis died.” That’s the way I found out about it. It was hard, and a part of me is gone. You know, he was so dear and so special. But doing that, it was really fun doing that. It’s fun. You look at the so-called, the bigwigs in the record company, and they were coming in like little children, wanted to get a look at Miles. You know, president came, and this one over there, and then Richard was there making a perfect fool of himself. Look, that’s just like a regular circus.

And I had to say, “Did you call come to have some of the party or something?”

“Where’s Miles?” Miles is gone, you know.

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Stitt: What about the Kettle [phonetic] collection? You were to have recorded that some years earlier.

Horn: That's right. I did that in the Vanguard, and I found out my grandmother had died. My grandmother was so special to me, and I couldn't sing the song. In fact, I couldn't finish out the week. I said, "John, I just can't do it." I couldn't sing. I couldn't do anything. So he got Tommy Flanagan to finish out the week, and I was saying goodbye to Miles. I said, "I've got to go. Grandma's gone. But that song," I said, "we're going to record that one day together."

And he says, "A beautiful song." *You'll Never Forget Me*, that was it, and that's back in 19, I guess about '63 or something like that. Good lord, I'm just telling my age. Wow, '63.

But we had wonderful times together toward the end, because we were in Paris together. We did that outdoor theater that was magnificent, more than ten thousand people. It looked like they were standing straight up. The seats were just up like that. We were there together. We were at the beautiful theater in Philadelphia. We had dressing rooms right across from each other, and we used to . . . "How you think my hair looks? What should I put on?"

I said, "Those colors are kind of clashing to you."

"You don't like this costume? Hell, no." Oh, boy.

Stitt: But you also talked some about your relationship with Carmen McCrae last night. I know you recorded an album with her, *Sarah, Dedicated to You*. Can you talk a little about that experience and your relationship with Sarah Vaughn?

Horn: Oh, Sarah's a sweetheart. Last time Sarah was in town . . . she was here right before she passed, too. Damn. So I went by to see her. She was at Charley's, lived down there, and I said, "You coming over the house tonight when you get done?"

"You got some food?"

I said, "Yeah." And I had fixed a lot of food, you know. I remembered she liked meatloaf, so I had that fixed, but I had other stuff I had to heat up. Well, she got into the meatloaf right away.

"Give me a piece of bread. I'm starving to death. I lost ten pounds."

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I say, “Where?” And she ate and ate and ate, and I had a couple of people; Bill Harris was here, and Fanny and a couple of musicians. So when she got through eating she came to the piano. The piano’s right here, and she came in and she played, and it was right down there. She started playing. I said, “Don’t nobody say a word.” She played and sang, and I couldn’t get my machine. I wanted to push the button to record this. I guess maybe it wasn’t meant for me to. I couldn’t get that button, that damn thing to work, and I couldn’t make no noise, and I didn’t want nobody to move. But [unclear] beautiful. She sang beautiful songs, and just sang and played, and it was just quiet.

Then the chauffeur was out in the limo. I said, “Come in. Be quiet. Sit in the kitchen and drink.” And she sang and played till wee hours in the morning. It was daylight when she was leaving. You know, when we’d meet in town, I’d go see her, she’d come see me.

Stitt: Did you ever work together?

Horn: No, no. I played for her a lot of times. We’d be hanging out or something. No, we never worked together. And Carmen, we just met through music. Carmen used to come to see me all the time. She came one night, I was at a place on P Street, a beautiful hotel, had big chandeliers and stuff, and the guy who owned the club was a big fan. His name is Fred White, and he’s still got a club down on 17th and [unclear] Avenue.

So I’m sitting there and playing, and it was quiet, and I’m singing some love song, and this Anita O’Day was there in the hotel. So she’s loud, she’s raunchy. [unclear] were digging me. I never met the woman in my life. I mean, I [unclear] like her singing, but I mean, I would have given her respect. But she was talking all loud, and laughing and stuff. Now, this is what I heard, that Carmen told the waiter to go over and tell her if she didn’t shut her blank mouth that she was going to beat the ___ out of her. And she didn’t stay long after that.

Okay. Now, I’m wondering who this was. This woman was sitting over in the back. In the same hotel, there was Carmen, and boy, we laughed about that. Boy, she told stories about Anita O’Day. Anita O’Day I understand was quite a terror, you know. She was, what do you call it, she was a man’s lady. Carmen talked a whole bunch of crap about her. Then she went to the piano and she played and sang. We didn’t leave there till ten o’clock. They were doing breakfast.

Stitt: Ten o’clock in the morning.

Horn: Ten o’clock in the morning, you know. And we’d been drinking all night, and it was just, well, the time just went, you know. And Carmen said, “I haven’t stayed up this long since I used to stay up with Billie Holiday.” But she said, “I’m going,” and went upstairs and got into bed. But that was a thrilling night for me. And then she came over

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here quite a few times. I'd go to her house, and she loved my greens, fixed mustard greens. I used to leave here and carry seasoning meat with me from Virginia, you know, [unclear], carry it in my suitcase, and when I'd get there in good time I'd go and cook for her. She's a great lady.

Stitt: How did the idea of the album come about? Was it more of a record company decision?

Horn: No. Sarah died. Well, I had said to Larry Closier [phonetic], I said . . .

Stitt: Who was Carmen's manager?

Horn: Yeah. I went to see her one night, and we left there and went to my friend's house up on . . . to wherever she lived, and we were just drinking, and I was sitting in front of the fireplace and just thinking about Carmen. Saying but she didn't come with us. She went to the hotel, because she was tired. And I said, "You know one thing? I sure do love to accompany. I'd sure love to play for Carmen."

He said, "You would?"

I said, "Yeah. Of course I'd love to play for Carmen." Then they got it all together. Okay, Sarah died, and I think a friend of mine had written that song. You know the song is . . . it's a beautiful song. I can't think.

And she said, "I want you to play." And the same thing, you know, she saved me up the Vine Street. We went to the studio. I felt sorry for those guys, because they had spent a lot of time putting those baffles together, right? So I was there early and I was just running over some things, and the guys were setting up. She comes in the door. "What? Take this down. Take it down. I want her at the piano right there. I'm going to sit right in the kidney, and the bass player over there to her left, and the drummer right there, so we could see each other, right." And they had spent many a dollar and a lot of time spilling their stuff, you know; took it all down. And you want to say [unclear], that's a good record. But to Carmen it was like, I want to go back and [unclear].

She said, "Oh, you always want things to be so perfect. Next." And we'll do this. "Next." And we had a good time. Everybody had a good time, engineers. We laughed and talked. That's a good album. I didn't have a copy for a long time, and I've still got to listen to it. Hey, that's . . . I only played one time, too. She's something else.

She threatened me. She left me three threats of songs that I had to do. You know one thing? She did something one night that was really strange, one morning. She called me on the phone and talked for about, oh, I guess about half an hour, telling about the torch,

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because I had told her, I said, “Carmen, I’m tired of this mess.” You know, I’m tired of the packing and traveling and catching trains and planes and all that. Prior to that she had come to the club three nights in a row, and that was unusual. But Shirley Thomas says she doesn’t go anywhere. She doesn’t go to people’s houses.

But then she came one night and was sitting; she stayed for the whole two shows. I was surprised. She wasn’t feeling well, and so after that we went up to my suite. So we were talking, John Levy and Carmen. They go back a long way, and they would talk about old times, and cutting up at each other and stuff. John left; she was still there. So I said, “I’m going to call down and get some more ice.”

“No, I want to talk to you a little while.” And it’s almost like she was telling me she was not going to be here long, and she was telling me why I should carry on the torch.

I says, “Carmen, I don’t want to hear about that. It’s too late. Let’s just get drunk. Let’s cut the fool. I don’t want to talk about that.”

She said, “I want to say this to you now.” And it was strange. I told Steve.

He said, “Man, she’s trying to tell you something.”

I said, “No.” But there she just died. I really wasn’t ready for that. That was something like . . . I mean, she wasn’t feeling well, but Carmen, she always had a way about . . . she was always, she was funny. She used to talk about people, make you die laughing. I mean, she called people all the names and everything, talked about everybody. [laughs] But she was a sweetheart. I guess she had to keep that coarse outer side, you know, to protect her, to protect herself, because women coming up during those times had it hard. When she told me the story of her life I said, “What?” You know, “All this happened to you?”

She said, “Hell, yeah.” She had unhappy marriages, and men, and it just made her coarsen, but inside she was just like a little power puff.

Stitt: Have you recorded those songs?

Horn: I just did one. I did [sings] “From too much talk to silent touches, sweet touches, and morning, da, da, dee, dee.” *Love Wants to Dance*. She threatened me with that. I said, “I’ll do that one.” There’s another one. There’s two more she threatened me with, and she didn’t do it nicely.

“Second alphabet, you’d better record it.”

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“Okay, baby, okay.” Okay. You know, I haven’t talked this much in my life.

Stitt: And your life’s not over. Just think how much more talking [unclear].

Horn: Oh, I’m going to beat you [unclear].

Stitt: Well, actually, we have five more questions. I see you were telling Steve Williams that my time was over, and I said [unclear] with confidence. These next round of questions are really more about the American scene versus Japan and Europe.

Horn: Child, mm, mm, mm, I could go on for days. I didn’t know what a receptive audience was until I did . . . the first stop was at the North Sea. And I didn’t realize how many people were in this huge place until I was on the stage and way in the back somebody opened a door, and then I saw a glimpse of heads. I said, “I didn’t know there were all these people in here.” Good lord, I got a little nervous, but there wasn’t nothing for me to do but just go on and play and sing, you know. And the thunderous applause, like in Paris. They don’t applaud while you’re doing it, but once you’re done, oh, god. In that *I Love You, Paris* thing, boy, they were just crazy.

And Japan, same thing. They respect the musician. They respect musicians and baseball in Japan, and they’re so respectful. I just . . . after being there for a month, I said, “Steve, something is missing,” because after a certain hour there’s nothing to do, and you get tired of drinking liquor and eating sushi, and you can’t get anything on the television. But the only thing you can get just about every day is *Murder, She Wrote*. I can’t stand it. That’s the only thing that come on in English. So Steve and I would be in the room, just drinking and looking at *Murder, She Wrote*. [laughs]

Stitt: What do you think cultivates this respect, that American audiences just . . . admittedly, of course, there are American jazz fans, we know that, and supporters of the music. But you’re right, it’s not the kind of reverence, and certainly, especially with like the Parisians, I mean, the French, they love the artists.

Horn: Oh, boy, they love . . .

Stitt: I mean, they really do need fun and love . . .

Horn: Yes.

Stitt: . . . and you are their [unclear], and you can’t tell them differently, and don’t try to. What do you think cultivates that difference?

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Horn: Well, see, one thing they do . . . I think the answer to that question is that most children are coming up, especially the jazz enthusiasts, they're hearing these American jazz artists, right, and they studied it in school, right? So right away, you know . . . I mean, I doubt seriously if they are playing any James Brown, you know.

There was a little boy who came to the North Sea Festival, and his dad was a fan, and he was like twelve years old, and in between the shows . . . oh, this is a huge place. Anyway, I was sitting outside the door of the concert hall, and I wanted to there, but I was in a wheelchair. And he said, "Miss Horn," a little boy, a cute little Dutch boy, "you all right? You want me to get something for you? You want a Coca-Cola, or you want a beer?"

I said, "Will you get me a beer?"

"Yes, I can get it for you."

So I gave him the money. "Go." He came and brought a beer back. Well, it wasn't Heineken, but I drank it anyway. Okay. He was out there every night. Obviously, his dad was inside, right. And this went on for four years; every year I'd see him. He'd come and I watched this kid grow up. But listen, he knew so much about the American musician it embarrassed me, because he'd ask me questions, I didn't know what the hell he was talking about, honest to God. It was an embarrassment to me, you know.

And he said, "Well, we studied in school, we study Coltrane, we study Miles Davis." And this is where it starts, in the home.

Japanese, I will tell you this little story. I mean, I had a fan club. All these women came and bought me flowers I had never seen in my life, the most beautiful flowers. There were like ten of them. And I don't speak any Japanese, they don't speak any English. But there was an interpreter there who wasn't too cool, and she was telling me this was my fan club, and what they do. They have regular meetings. They discuss my music. This is some strange stuff now.

Anyway, when they left I learned how to bow. The younger you are, the deeper you bow, right. And all these old ladies, I was bowing down hard. I mean, everybody's so polite. Charles lost his wallet; it was returned to him, money and all. No tips; it's an insult. Steve and I were looking at *Murder, She Wrote* and I said, "Steve, something is missing."

He said, "What?"

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I said, “Just something is missing, you know what I mean?” I said, “I haven’t heard m.f. or f___ you. I haven’t heard any of those things. It’s almost two weeks. It’s odd.” And we both laughed, and it was the truth. I mean, it really helped us. We got off the plane, got off in JFK, first thing we heard was m.f. [laughs]. “Steve,” I said, “well, we home.” Then the hands out for the tips. In Japan at the airport it’s so polite, and they just . . . oh, it’s just wonderful. Japan is good for me, because it just calmed me right on down. It’s so regimented. Everything is at nine o’clock, and it’s ten o’clock, and it’s eleven o’clock.

And after the first couple of days I said, “Wait a minute. I can’t handle this.” Because being onstage at eight o’clock, I couldn’t handle that. Maybe five minutes before eight, or five minutes after, but at eight o’clock, it’s oh, very precise. Well, that’s enough about that.

[Tape recorder turned off.]

Stitt: You’ve talked a great deal about the audiences in both Japan and Europe. In terms of making a living, why do you think that there are still so many jazz musicians, and maybe it’s just an extension of the first question, but why are there so many jazz musicians still really reliant upon those two, particularly those two places, to make a decent living? I mean, most could not make a living from what they do solely in the United States?

Horn: Another thing, it’s soothing. It’s a soothing balm. It makes you feel good. You’re respected as a musician, you know. It just makes you feel good. And then there’s so much respect for the music and the musicians. You know, they pay your hospital stuff and they pay your house rent and all that kind of stuff. They take care of . . . they treasure their artists.

I had a girlfriend there who was a Dutch girl, singer, and she’s another one that didn’t eat meat. She had these beautiful cats. I’m scared of cats, don’t like them. They make me . . . but she didn’t eat meat, and she had a meatless dinner for us. Me and Charles went, right, with some of her colleagues. And the cats had these great big beautiful shrimp. And I’m looking, thinking, “When we going to have shrimp?” The cats were eating shrimp, and we’re eating this meatless . . . I said, “Girl, you’d better go.” I said, “Charles, we’re going leave. We’re going to someplace and get some meat. We’ve got to go get some meat.”

But anyway, she hipped me to it, you know. She was dying of cancer. Well, she’s kind of crazy. She was in love with a couple of black musicians, Americans, right, and both of them—I can’t call their names, you know—didn’t mean her any good. But she took me to her place. She had a lovely apartment with a courtyard, high ceilings, and it was cute. It was on Rachmaninoff Street and Beethoven Avenue, and she told me everything. They

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paid her hospital bill. If she wanted to go for whatever kind of treatment she'd want, they'd take care of that, and give her money when she's not working, you know. We don't get that, nothing like that. And they had a special nurse to come in when she really got bad off, a special nurse.

She'd gotten hooked up in something that was . . . I don't believe in hoodoo, and I don't . . . I'm on the fence. But she had this witch doctor that was coming there. I was there one day when she came in; I left immediately, you know. I mean, I didn't like the way she looked, and this ain't for me. Anyway, she could have had the finest doctor, medical care, but she didn't want to. She thought this woman, this witch doctor could get rid of the cancer for her. You're a fool. Girl, go on, that's . . .

Stitt: Just in conjunction with that question, and this is rather personal, so you don't have to give me figures, but just so we have some idea, what percentage, would you say, of your income is made in the United States, and what percentage is made outside of the United States?

Horn: Well, let's see. When I was doing those three years, we were everywhere but home. I made a lot more money. Well, it's especially good right now in . . . okay, I'm sorry. Since I'm well known in France, I make a lot of money in France and Japan, and you don't have to work yourself to death. Like you go over there and you do one show, right, and they don't call them shows; they call them concerts. You do one concert. You're going to get twice as much money for that one concert.

Here, Chicago wants me to come in and do something, and I said, "No concert, right?" Yeah, they want me hooked up with some ladies, women in jazz business. I said, "I'm going to do one. If they want one, okay, then I cancel." You know what I mean, because they're going to take me through a whole bunch of changes. But 75 percent more money than, you know, I make here. They don't work your ass off either.

Stitt: Yes, it's harder [unclear]. You spoke a little bit about the education process for jazz in other countries. We didn't talk too much about the jazz press in Europe and Japan. But again, how do you see the jazz press in this country, and do you think that they serve to really educate and enlighten the public about the music?

Horn: A few writers that know what they're writing about, that I respect. But the majority of them will look at your bio, or look at another article, and take from that. I think a writer should go . . . if the situation were reversed, I would go and listen to the artist and then write about the artist, but a lot of cases I get, you know, they'll read something that's written by somebody else, or [unclear] does all this stuff. In this one mistake, he'll get that mistake, and then the next one will do that and he'll get that mistake, and it goes on and on and on.

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Now, the jazz press in here, it's funny because I have articles, I have magazine covers, newspaper. I was on four whole pages; it's all in French. I haven't gotten anyone to read them to me, so I've got a lot of stuff to . . . but I know it has to be good, because they're good to me. Then we'll be going back in December, go back to all that good food and people. It's just kind of nice when you're on the big major avenue, and people pass you on the street and wave in the cars, and stuff like that. It feels good.

Stitt: So they know who you are [unclear].

Horn: Yes, and I try to look nice, but I don't always look nice, you know. But they know me anyway.

Stitt: How would you compare American promoters to European or Japanese promoters, in terms of standards? You touched on the fees that are paid, but we know the gigs are more than just the fees, because there's a whole standard there.

Horn: Well, American promoters I suppose are better, because one thing, it's language. It's a language problem there. American promoters, because they're . . . I can't use that word now. I don't want to make myself a slicker, you know. I've got more honesty in dealing with the promoters in Paris, but the American promoters are smarter.

Stitt: Do you think they're more apt to meet your conditions?

Horn: Yeah. I can just talk about the French. The French and the Japanese meet all the conditions, but their approach to dealing with an artist is almost artistic, you know, rather than American promoters; bim, bam, thank you ma'am, right? Black and white, business, you know, which that's what it's supposed to be. But it could be a little niceness somewhere.

Stitt: Are there things . . . what do you foresee . . . well, what would you like to do still that you haven't done?

Horn: I want to go fishing so bad. Musically, right? I want to record with Oscar Peterson. I want to sit down and just sing with him. I want to do the same with Ahmad Jamal. I want to do the . . . for the writing team, the husband-and-wife writing team; they're brilliant. I want to do that songbook with Johnny Mandel. They wrote all that good music. What are their names? Good lord, CRS is really taking on. The Bergmans, you know the Bergmans songwriting team, husband and wife?

Stitt: I probably know their songs, but I may not know their name.

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Horn: Oh, child, they've got all kind of stuff, and they came to see me a couple of times in Hollywood. I told them I wanted to do their songbook. They were thrilled, and Johnny Mandel. But I've got to get another record company, because well, Johnny didn't part company with them on good terms, which just comes down to they owe him a lot of money. I want to eventually. I'm going to go with another label. I've got a couple of offers, very good offers, but I don't want to get strung out. I just want to do, one year do two albums, and that's it. That's enough, because you find yourself being, feeling close in, and they got to know too much of your business, and they know where you are before you know. I had to look at my itinerary. They know where I'm supposed to go and all that, you know. I don't like that. I'm not used to that.

Stitt: [unclear]

Horn: Yeah. I'm the control freak myself. Don't tell me where I'm going.

Stitt: Is there anything else that you'd like to do?

Horn: Mm-mm, not really. I just want to make good music. If I keep getting these things every year, I just want to have one whole wall for my nominations. [laughs]

Stitt: You can build it. You can erect it yourself.

Horn: I don't want much. I like a lot of peace. I like peace. I need to clean up my house and get some of this dust around here. I'm getting ready to put the carpet down in there. I don't want to go out of town for that, but I'd be here. So much to do, get all these records and tapes organized. Shoo. Want to hear one of my songs?

Stitt: Oh, I'd love to, really. I just want to ask you a few more things, and again, well, you know, I won't say again, but just now you told me yesterday not to go there, but just now you mentioned wanting to record with both Oscar Peterson and Ahmad Jamal, and it's so clear how important they are to you, and how important they were to your development.

Horn: That's right, yes.

Stitt: So would you say a few words about both of them, not together?

Horn: Oh. Well, you know, I told you, I think, my composers, my favorite composers were Rachmaninoff and Debussy, and Oscar Peterson is my Rachmaninoff.

Stitt: In terms of power?

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Horn: Yes. And Ahmad Jamal is my Debussy, you know, the lyricism.

Stitt: How is his lyricism different from that of, that you talked about quite extensively in Earl Garner, for you?

Horn: Oh, you know, it's not that much, because when I hear the old Earl Garner, if I name the songs, you don't know who I'm talking about. You know, Earl Garner wrote *Misty*, right? But he wrote some even more beautiful songs than *Misty* early on, when I was eleven, twelve years old, a world of beautiful stuff. Well, you know, Ahmad Jamal . . .

Stitt: Concert by the Sea . . .

Horn: Well, he had gotten a little commercial, but I'm talking about the very early Earl Garner. You know, and I think about it. Ahmad Jamal, his lyricism is more fire and ice. You know, his attack is a little more fire and ice, and that early Earl Garner was just pure velvet. See, I'd have to play . . . but then I think about his ballads, and they're very similar. Yeah, yeah. See, Ahmad uses a lot of rhythm patterns, intricate rhythmic things. Sometimes he'll do a five-four, five-eight, or something like that, and follow through with the chords to match, where Earl Garner was a straight, almost a straight four-four man, because he kept that going with his left hand. He really didn't need a bass player, you know.

Do like Carmen, "Next."

Stitt: Well now there's just a list of people I'm going to run down, and if there's anything else you want to add, if it's someone we've talked about before, in terms of influences, mentors, or someone that we haven't really talked about, if there's something that you want to say about them that again is really short, brief. You just spoke about Earl Garner, Oscar Peterson, Ahmad Jamal. You talked about Miles Davis pretty extensively, unless there's anything else that you want to say.

Horn: No.

Stitt: You didn't talk about at all Louis Armstrong, actually.

Horn: Louis is the swinging-est, singing-est. Oh, I was hip to him years ago. God, I don't know what to say, but he'll outswing, oh boy. He's just fantastic. I don't have . . . the words have all been said about him. He's just brilliant, and effortless. I don't know if you're hip to his singing. Yeah, he swings. He's gorgeous, that old pops.

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I remember him when I was three or four years old. I had an uncle who loved him, and whatever he was doing then, he was hot. I mean, he was hot before he did *Blueberry Hill* and those things.

Stitt: Quincy Jones, is there anything you want to add there?

Horn: No. I should know what else he's going to do. He's just doing it all. You know what he's doing now? It's something called, boy, he's got a new thing on a new album. It's about somebody's house, I think, when he was explaining on *Oprah* the other day. Years ago they had . . . the blacks had nowhere to go, right. There weren't restaurants. There were houses, and they'd go in and dance and sing and drink and do all that stuff, you know. Oh, you know what I'm talking about, because it's going to be hot. He aired it on Oprah's show. It's going to be really hot. There's a lot of people involved in it.

Now, he's got an interesting young lady who's seventeen years old. I don't remember her name, but she's got a kind of . . . Moesha?

Stitt: Yeah, she's a comedian.

Horn: She sings.

Stitt: Does she sing also? I didn't know she sang, but she used to have a show, if it's the same actress. She's really cute.

Horn: Yeah, she's seventeen. She's got those things like you've got.

Stitt: Braids.

Horn: Right. She really can sing.

Stitt: Can she? I didn't know that.

Horn: Oh yes, she was on Oprah's show. I had to stop and listen, you know, a very, very . . .

Stitt: She's funny, too. She's a comedian.

Horn: Yes, and a grown-up voice for such a little girl. She's got a lot of character in her voice. She's good, Moesha. That's some kind of name, Moesha.

Stitt: From the seventies Black Power name. [laughs]

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Horn: Yeah. Child, don't you say a word. I've got . . . my youngest brother had two babies, and I said, "What did you name them?" Well, I can't remember their names. I know there was one boy and one girl, and I asked the boy, "How do you spell your name?"

He said, "I don't know, Aunt Shirley." And I don't think the mama knows how to spell it either. Well, why would you give . . . Moesha. Is that what that is, a Black Power name?

Stitt: I don't know, it just has that sound.

Horn: Oh, child, please.

Stitt: There are a lot of kids you see that age with names like that. Let's see, Dinah Washington?

Horn: Hmm.

Stitt: Okay. Did you shake your head to say . . .

Horn: See, it's all . . . people like that, these dynamic personalities and musicians and vocalists, it's all said once they sing a song. That's it. What can you do?

Stitt: Even in terms of the impact they have on you?

Horn: Oh, shit, she had a great impact on me. Number one, during that time she was the only one you could understand the lyrics. Even Sarah, you know, Sarah would slur those lyrics sometimes. What you saying, baby? You know. But Dinah was there. She was hot stuff.

Stitt: And we talked about Carmen, unless there's anything else.

Horn: No.

Stitt: And Sarah Vaughn we also talked about.

Horn: What did I say about . . . Sarah came and ate a half a meatloaf before the rest of the food was ready. She was a good girl, she's a good girl. And she was unaffected by the whole thing. You know, God gave her the most beautiful instrument in the world, and she was just sassy. It didn't mean anything. She just went on and did it. That was it, went on about her business, and let's party. She wasn't serious at all. Well, that's good, you know. I guess it's good to be that way, because you don't get gray hairs. She didn't worry about a damn thing. [laughs]

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Sometime I asked about her husband, she said, “What husband?” [laughs] And she had a couple of dogs, too. But she sang. She sang *Look to the Rainbow*. It makes me cry every time I hear it.

Stitt: Peggy Lee, is there anything else you want to add?

Horn: No.

Stitt: Lena Horne?

Horn: Oh, she’s just fabulous. Well, see, when she married Lenny Hayton [phonetic] I started paying attention, because not only, you know, he taught her everything. He also picked all those great songs that she was singing. He did all those arrangements and stuff. So she doesn’t have a great voice, but she can put on that song. That song she does in *The Wiz*?

Stitt: Oh yes.

Horn: That’s her song, honey. She put a period behind that thing. Yeah, you know what I’m talking about? Yes, she does the stink out of that.

Stitt: Billie Holiday?

Horn: She’s the lady. She’s the lady. I think she opened the book on emotion, but she was all emotion, and she sang; she sang her life. She really did. No, I don’t have any more to say about her.

Stitt: Ella Fitzgerald?

Horn: Oh, the grand duchess, the queen. See, whenever I do interviews somebody says, “You never talk about Ella Fitzgerald.” What can I say about her? It’s all been said. Like I say, just listen to her sing.

Stitt: Melba Liston?

Horn: Melba, she was a great jazz artist. I told you I saw her. She had a good band. I mean, certain instruments I just . . . there are certain instruments I think a woman does not have the strength to play, you know what I mean? There was a weakness somewhere in the woodwinds with the orchestra, and I don’t like female drummers. Oh, it was swinging, but it left a little something to be desired, for me.

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Stitt: Actually, we didn't talk about Ray Charles, and that was my thought, but it completely slipped my mind. I know you did the tribute album to him in 1993.

Horn: Yes.

Stitt: What influence did he have on you?

Horn: Singing all those cowboy songs and making them sound good.

Stitt: Making them swing.

Horn: Uh huh, yes indeed. You know, he came right up and took over. Honestly, you know. [sings] "You give your hand to me," I mean, right on . . . when I was getting ready to record that, I called the office and told them send me a list of Ray Charles' things he had recorded. Girl, I must have gotten 2,000 songs he's recorded, you know. I said, what is this? And I kept reading, and he really got into a lot of semi-classical stuff that I had no idea he'd done. But he took all those cowboy songs, honey. I said, wow, because I guess around '60 he was red hot. Everybody was singing those songs. He did country western, yes, that's what they were.

Anyway, you know, after I did that *Here's to Life*, that was rough on me. I've had some deaths of people who were so close to me. I think I sang out, out of those deaths, and that *Here's to Life* is a very emotional album, and I didn't have any more of that in me. I said, well, I want to do something you pat your foot. I said, a tribute to Ray Charles. And we were getting ready to go and do one thing with him in Boston, do a concert with him. We did, and that was fun. That was five days of fun. I can't think of the saxophone player's name, but he was . . . and then I used . . . Charles was playing guitar, and I had Mooney [phonetic], a stand-up bassist, and it was five days of laughing. I mean, Steve and this saxophone player—now, I can't call names—they made me laugh so hard I had pains in my side. It was funny, it was crazy funny.

I went to see him once, see him at Vegas, went to see him backstage and he said he really dug the place, and he really dug the album. [imitates him] "Sometimes I thought it was me." Give me a break. Okay, that's it. Okay.

Stitt: Unless there's anything else.

Horn: No, darling, I can't think of anything. You've been straining my brain. [laughs]

[End of interview]

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