

year career. It brought him a major label recording contract with CBS/Columbia under the expert guidance of Michael Cuscuna. He also ran a regular quartet which peaked with the presence of pianist Kirk Lightsey and drummer Eddie Gladden, touring extensively.

In 1980, this led him to Down Beat's Hall of Fame and a vote from the magazine's readers as Jazz Musician of the Year. Behind the triumph, though, lay some personal sadness — and the future was closing in. In Denmark, he had remarried — his first marriage in about 1952 had fallen victim to his narcotics problems and imprisonments; now his second marriage was on the rocks and by 1982 he was again divorced. His drinking increased and in 1984 he began to suffer a series of illnesses, culminating in emphysema and a long period of recuperation.

But the scene was set for his final triumph. The French film director Bertrand Tavernier had determined to make an authentic jazz movie, based on a character combining elements of the lives of Bud Powell and Lester Young. He was equally determined that Dexter Gordon should play the part: 'I saw something that no actor could give me . . . The way he sits, the way he moves. He is bebop in walking . . .'.²

It provided not only the startling evidence that Dexter Gordon was also a considerable actor, but also his only recorded work between 1982 and his recent death, apart from two sides with Tony Bennett. But it is his richly-layered portrayal of the poignant Dale Turner that provides the poignancy that lingers. At one point, he voices the thought that might serve as his epitaph: 'You just don't go out and pick a style off a tree one day. The tree is inside you, growing naturally'.³

References:

¹ Ira Gitler: *Jazz Masters Of The Forties* (Collier Books Edition, 1974).

² Stan Britt: *Long Tall Dexter* (Quartet Books, 1989).

³ 'Round Midnight (Warner Bros, 1985).

Chris Sheridan

Chris McGregor

Pianist and bandleader Chris McGregor died of lung cancer in hospital in Agen, France on the 26th May 1990. To the outside world it came as a tremendous shock. There had been no outward evidence that all was not well with the tall prepossessing South African, who had always been as strong in health as he had musically and morally. In fact, he had only become aware of his health problem several months before his death.

He was born, the son of a British missionary, in Somerset West, South Africa on the 24th December 1936. His formal training came at the Capetown College of Music but he received extra-mural coaching at the feet of local Xhosa musicians. It was classical music by day and jamming in the township bands by night and, by the early sixties, he had formed the Blue Notes with Dudu Pukwana, Louis Moholo, Johnny Dyani and Nikele Moyake. Their Africanised brand of hard bop took them to the 1964 Antibes Festival. Not surprisingly, they found the freedom outside their homeland attractive and stayed on in Europe. A spell in Copenhagen's avant garde hot house, the Montmartre, changed their musical direction and gave them their first taste of free jazz. Mongezi Feza was in the trumpet chair when the band moved to London in 1965 and the group had by then adopted a freer

approach to improvisation.

In 1970, McGregor entered the big band league, forming The Brotherhood Of Breath. Frequently appearing in one long-line across the stage, they were visually dramatic and their music brought together elements of free form, South African high life, bebop and the Kansas City riffs of the thirties. Seeing the band perform live was always a magnificent experience but the economic problems of leading such a large aggregation finally proved too great and the leader was forced to disband. He continued to perform in smaller units but in the eighties moved to France, where he lived until the end.

As a pianist, McGregor was as impressive as the bands he led. After his move to Europe he was influenced to some extent by Cecil Taylor but his style was always fiercely individualistic. His stabbing left hand provided harmonic signposts and his flowing clusters were infectiously exciting. He built an almost telepathic understanding with drummer Louis Moholo but he was almost as powerful on his own.

McGregor wrote of his friend Mongezi Feza: 'May the light which through him shone so clearly make all hearts glad'. We could say the same of this very special man.

From Britain, critic/photographer Valerie Wilmer and long time friend Hazel Miller joined the family at the funeral but all will have an opportunity to pay respects at a memorial tribute to be held at London's 100 Club on the 30th July.

Barry McRae

Emily Remler

Guitarist Emily Remler (interviewed in *Jazz Journal*, March 1988) died in Sydney from a heart attack on May 4 this year, aged 32. A graduate of the Berklee College of Music she had been playing professionally since she was 17, paying her dues from New Orleans and New York to the European Jazz festivals and Australia. Rhythm & blues, New Orleans, mainstream — you name it Emily played it, and over the years she developed a tremendous versatility and vitality, becoming highly regarded among her peers. Firefly, her debut album on Concord, was an immediate hit, and Concord boss Carl Jefferson became her mentor. Five more albums, including her Wes Montgomery tribute *East To Wes*, brought her further acclaim. She joined other Concord artists, recording with Ray Brown on *Soular Energy*, with Rosemary Clooney on *Sings The Music Of Cole Porter*, with John Colianni, and with Susan McCorkle on a CD due for release in the autumn. From 1982 she has been a consistent Downbeat poll winner and was lauded in many other jazz columns.

Her last performance was on May 2 in Brisbane after an exhausting two-leg six-hour flight from Perth during the day, which left her little time for a rehearsal with the local rhythm section. Support during the evening was unsteady in places, and never really inspired, and there were major problems with guitar amps. The audience

