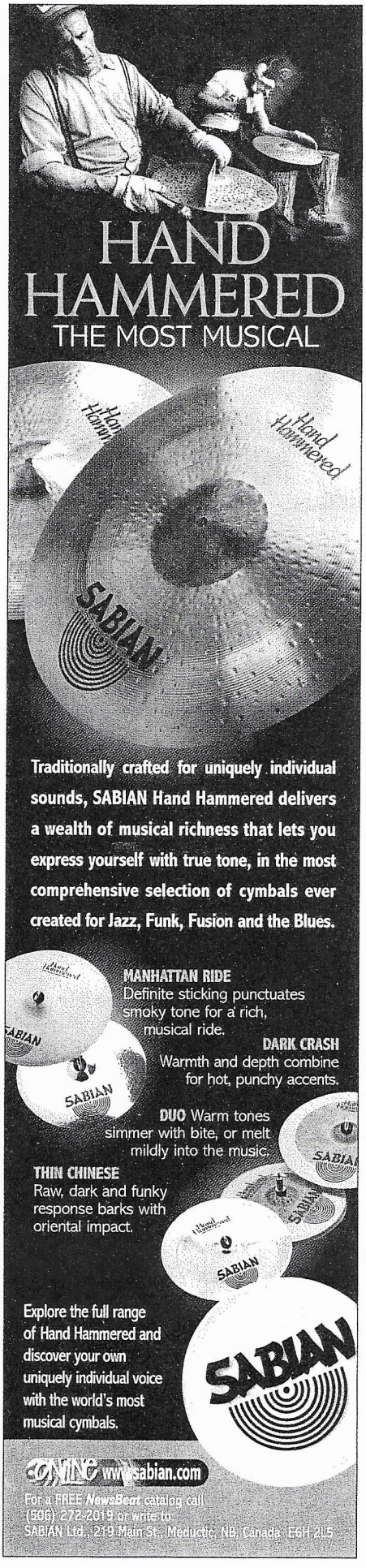


artfarmer: 1928-1999

Art Farmer, one of the greatest flugelhornists in jazz, co-founder of the Jazztet and the leading exponent of the flumpet—a trumpet/flugelhorn hybrid—died of a heart attack in Manhattan on Oct. 4, 1999. He was 71.

"In the entire repertoire of modern jazz trumpet players, Art Farmer was unique," says tenor saxophonist and composer Benny Golson, Farmer's friend and co-leader of the Jazztet. "He didn't just play the music; he held one-way conversations that we all delighted in because of what he consequentially had to 'say.' His chronology belied any moribundity of style or purpose. In fact, he was metaphorically like a bottle of rare wine. He got better with age."

Born on Aug. 21, 1928, in Council Bluffs, Iowa, Farmer and his twin brother, bassist Addison, were raised in Phoenix, where Art played the violin, tuba and piano before he started trumpet lessons at 14. Farmer and his brother moved to Los Angeles in 1945, attended Jefferson High School and studied with Samuel Browne, who also taught Frank Morgan and Don Cherry. A fixture in the city's prime jazz strip, Central Avenue, Farmer worked and toured with Horace Henderson, Johnny Otis and Floyd Ray. In 1947, Farmer gigged in New York for a year, studied with Maurice Grupp and returned to Los Angeles and worked with Benny Carter, Wardell Gray, Jay McShann, Gerald Wilson and Roy Porter. In 1952, Farmer toured with Lionel Hampton's big band—which also included Clifford Brown and Quincy Jones in the trumpet section—and relocated to New York that following year. He started a combo with alto saxophonist Gigi Gryce. His earliest recordings as a leader were released on the New Jazz, Prestige, ABC-Paramount and Argo/Chess labels, including *The Art Farmer Septet*, a string date, *Last Night When We Were Young, Modern Art* with Bill Evans and the *Aztec Suite* with Chico O'Farrill. He also worked and recorded with Horace Silver, Gerry Mulligan and George Russell, and played on the movie soundtracks, *I Want To Live* and *The Subterraneans*.

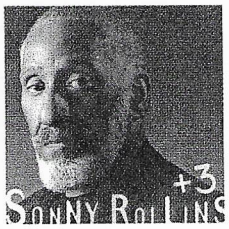
In 1959, Farmer and Golson, an alumnus of Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, formed the Jazztet, a mainstream/hard-bop ensemble, which featured McCoy Tyner. The group stayed together for three years. During this time, Farmer switched to the flugelhorn, opting for its full-bodied tone. He formed bands that featured pianist Steve Kuhn and tenor saxophonist Jimmy Heath, and he moved to Vienna in 1968, where he joined the Austrian Radio Orchestra.

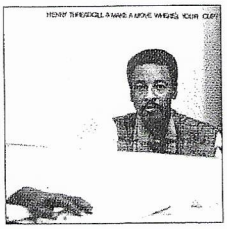
Farmer recorded with Inner City, CTI and Mainstream labels in the '70s, and although he toured Asia, he rarely appeared in the United States. In the '80s, he worked in America on a regular basis and revived the Jazztet with Golson in 1982.

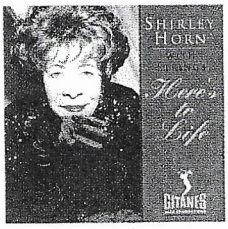
Since 1991, Farmer played the flumpet—a new instrument designed by David Monette that combined the flugelhorn's warm tone with the trumpet's facility. His last major CDs were *The Company I Keep, The Meaning Of Art* and *Silk Road* on Arabesque, and *Live At Stanford Jazz Workshop* (Monarch, 1997).

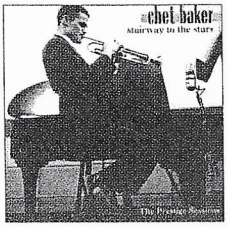
Farmer was one of the most swinging and sensitive improvisers, a player who extracted the essence of a composition's melodic and harmonic content through his ebullient and efficient improvisations. "His absence from the jazz scene leaves a void that will not be filled in my lifetime," Golson says. —*Eugene Holley*

SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S EDITION



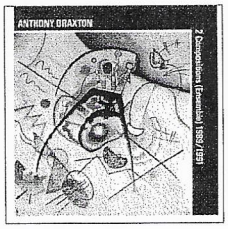
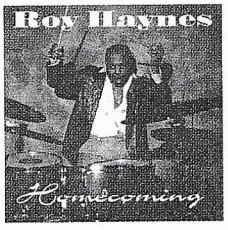
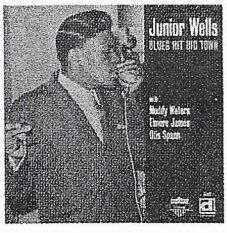
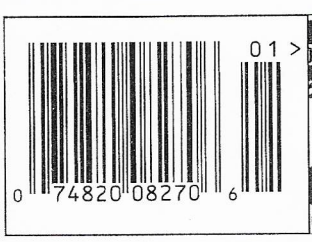
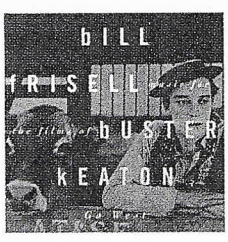
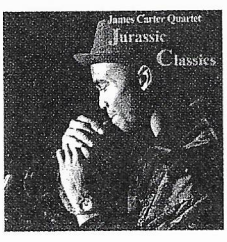
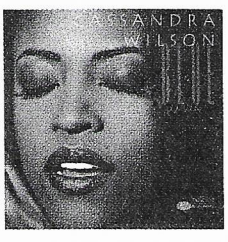






DOWN BEAT®

Jazz, Blues & Beyond

January 2000
U.S. $3.95 U.K. £2.95 Can. $5.25
www.downbeatjazz.com

Best CDs of the '90s