



Most nights, Ku-umba Frank Lacy steals the show.

The Fickle Hand Of Fame

by Frank Alkyer

When Down Beat's John Corbett sat down to interview Ku-umba Frank Lacy for this month's cover article (beginning on Page 14), even Lacy had to ask, "Why are you guys doing this?"

Lacy isn't the most obvious choice to grace Down Beat's cover. He's not a household name, but he should be. He records sporadically as a bandleader, but he should have a multi-year, major-label contract. He makes the majority of his musician's living as a sideman adding punch to the dreams of others, but Lacy should have an opportunity to explore some dreams of his own.

Every time Lacy passes through Down Beat's home town of Chicago—be it with McCoy Tyner's Big Band or with Roy Hargrove or any of a host of others—he quite simply drops a bomb. The same holds true wherever he plays.

Lacy solos bring audiences to their feet. His showmanship gives them their money's worth and more. He is as much great performance artist as great musician. Most nights, he downright steals the show.

So, why hasn't he gotten more opportunities as a leader?

Perhaps it's his instrument. In some circles, the trombone isn't considered the sexiest ax in jazz. You know the old joke: What do you call a trombonist with a

beeper? An optimist.

But that never stopped J.J. Johnson, Jack Teagarden, Steve Turre or Ray Anderson. It won't stop Lacy.

Perhaps it's his outspoken nature. In this interview, Lacy laid his views on the line for Down Beat, pulling no punches. It's guaranteed to raise a few eyebrows and draw a few letters to the editor.

And, some record execs might shy away from that kind of candid, on-the-edge honesty. On the flip side, let's not forget, it worked pretty well for a guy named Miles Davis.

Or, perhaps, Lacy just hasn't been touched yet by the fickle hand of fame.

Lacy represents thousands of great musicians out there trying to make a living, trying to get their music heard, trying to take their art to a larger audience. It just takes a bit of luck, or for some record executive to take a chance.

And that's exactly what Down Beat is doing. This story started with a conversation about great sidemen who deserve the cover. Lacy simply topped the list.

So, this one's for every musician fighting to be heard. We wish you well and look forward to covering your story. In the meantime, somebody please sign Ku-umba Frank Lacy.

JOHN ABBOTT

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CONTRIBUTORS

Austin: Michael Point; **Boston:** Fred Bouchard, Frank-John Hadley; **Chicago:** John Booz, Aaron Cohen, John Corbett, Jim DeJong, Ron Heard, Dave Helland, John Janowiak, John McDonough, Paul Natkin, Howard Reich; **Indiana:** David Whiteis; **Los Angeles:** Fred Shuster, Zan Stewart; **New York:** Larry Birnbaum, Teri Bloom, Michael Bourne, Herb Boyd, Bill Douthart, Enid Farber, Ira Gitler, Eugene Holley Jr., R. Andrew Lepley, Jim Macnie, Howard Mandel, Alan Nahigian, Mitchell Seidel, Kevin Whitehead, K. Leander Williams; **Ohio:** Elaine Guregian; **Philadelphia:** Jon Andrews, John Diliberto, Russell Woessner; **Rhode Island:** Ken Franckling; **San Francisco:** Stuart Brinin, Michael Handler, Dan Ouellette, Robin Tolleson; **Seattle:** Thomas Conrad, Paul de Barros; **St. Paul/Minneapolis:** Bob Protzman; **Washington, D.C.:** Geoffrey Himes; **Germany:** Hyou Vielz; **Great Britain:** Clive Davis, Brian Priestley, Chris Sheridan; **India:** Vinod Advani, Niranjan Jhaveri; **Italy:** Ruggero Stiassi; **Japan:** Shoichi Yui; **Netherlands:** Jaap Lüdeke; **Norway:** Randi Hultin; **South Africa:** Don Albert; **South America:** Max Seligmann.

EDITORIAL, ADMINISTRATION & ADVERTISING OFFICES

102 N. Haven Road
Elmhurst, IL 60126-2970
(630) 941-2030
Fax: (630) 941-3210
e-mail: downbeat@worldnet.att.net

ADVERTISING SALES

Kevin Maher
(630) 941-2030

EAST COAST ADVERTISING SALES

Bob Olesen
720 Greenwich St.
New York, NY 10014
(212) 243-4786

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