

Frank “Big Boy” Goudie, Bob Mielke, Bill Erickson Combo in Stereo Hi-fi Live at Monkey Inn, 1961-62, Volume 1: The Quartet



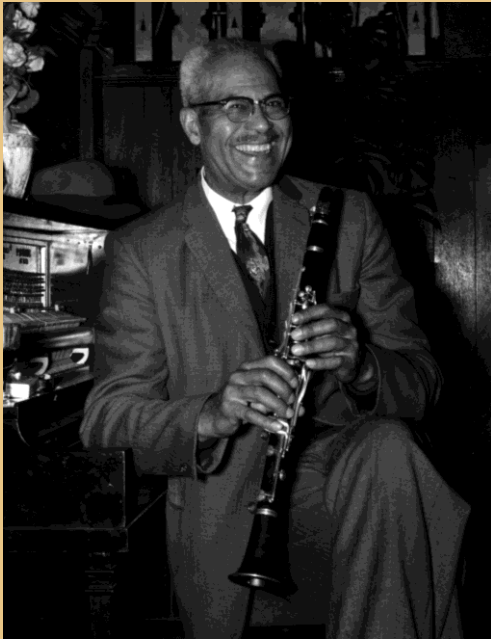
Monkey Inn was a beer and pizza joint in Berkeley where musicians met Thursday nights to play jazz. These cats never sounded happier than when performing the equivalent of an on-stage master class in jazz improvisation, while playing for a mostly indifferent college crowd. Miraculously, a dozen hours of vivid audiotapes survive, preserving a conversation among inspired musicians at the apex of their creativity.

The soloists in this combo played significant roles in the San Francisco jazz revival of the 1950s and '60s:

- Bob Mielke crafted his own powerful jazz trombone style. Bob Mielke's Bearcats Jazz Band was a distinctly independent voice in the mid-century jazz revival, and focal point for the music in the East Bay.
- Bill Erickson was a dynamic jazz pianist and entertainer; a catalytic musician and creative force who led combos and jam sessions at the region's most popular jazz dive, Pier 23 on the Frisco waterfront, and these combos.
- Creole reed player Frank "Big Boy" Goudie had arrived only a few years earlier, returning to America after three decades overseas. His life reflected the story of Jazz itself: origins in turn-of-the-century Louisiana, migration to Europe and Latin America, transition to swing, and recapitulation in the New Orleans revival. Since his passing in 1964 there has been only one title issued under his almost-forgotten name; this is the second.

Frank “Big Boy” Goudie (1899-1964)

From about 1957-63 Goudie was a notable figure in the Frisco revival. The 6’ 5” multi-instrumentalist originally from Louisiana moved to Paris in 1924, South America during WW II, back to Europe after the war, and eventually back to the USA. His globe-spanning saga is only now being fully explored. “*Behind his easy smile lies one of the most colorful stories in jazz,*” wrote jazz scholar and journalist Richard Hadlock in the *San Francisco Examiner* in the early 1960s, “*I never saw a musician more eager to play.*”



In his sixties and still brimming with energy Goudie was known exclusively as a clarinetist in the Bay Area: fertile ground for an autumnal flowering of his music. The former saxophone player developed a distinctive personal voice: a rich, husky tone with flowing lines and a vocabulary incorporating both New Orleans tradition and his decades playing swing tenor. Like his greatest inspiration Coleman Hawkins, Goudie developed the ability to improvise endlessly with ease. Drawing on broad experience that had included jamming with the jazz elite of Europe during the 1920s, ‘30s and ‘40s, he solos at length effortlessly in “Blues my Naughty Sweetie...,” “China Boy” and “Old Spinning Wheel.”

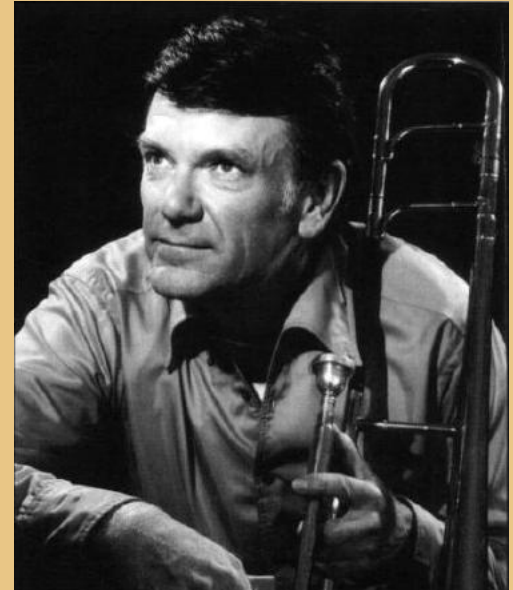
By the early 1960s Frank was playing most nights of the week with any of a half-dozen ensembles, or with Bill Erickson at Pier 23 and Monkey Inn. He had a “continental” manner, wore a beret, spoke with a strong French accent, yet retained earthy traces of his Louisiana Creole origins. His younger associates found him cultured, intelligent, worldly and modest; a charming “gentleman of jazz” with considerable personal warmth, “*though none of us called him ‘Big Boy’,*” noted trombonist Bill Bardin.

The Monkey Inn sessions are by far the best pickup of Goudie’s masterful New Orleans Creole clarinet sound. He poured out his variations with drive and imagination, his eloquent solos opening like blossoms.

Bob Mielke (b. 1926)

Mielke created his own exciting jazz trombone style fusing elements from Kid Ory's New Orleans tailgate tradition, the Harlem swing of J.C. Higginbotham, and Ellington's "Tricky Sam" Nanton. His trombone exemplar for playing New Orleans parts was George Brunis, heard in the 1939 Muggsy Spanier Ragtime Band. As a soloist Bob kept things interesting by being brave enough to take the unexpected path. His support for the other players is strong; his comping alternates between supportive riffs and ensemble counterpoint.

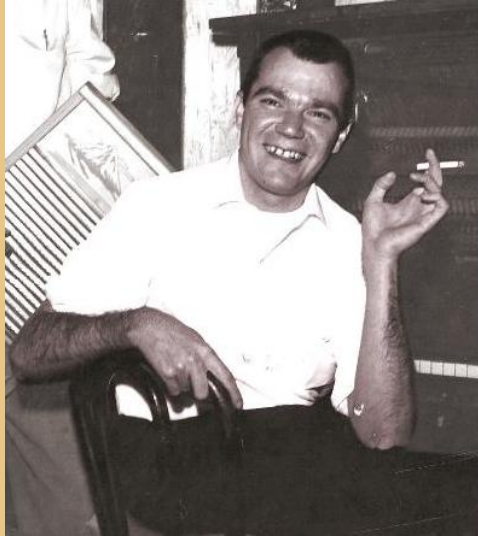
In the 1950s and '60s Bob Mielke's popular Bearcats Jazz Band was at the core of an East Bay/Berkeley contingent in the Frisco revival. Mielke, Erickson, Goudie and company were part of a second wave of jazz musicians who built their own independent Revivalist style. This combo exemplifies their co-operative, adventurous and musically sophisticated outlook.



Bob says he learned a lot working with these more seasoned musicians, though admitting frankly that this quartet - with the clarinet and trombone swapping lead -- was not playing Traditional or even Dixieland Jazz at all, but Swing. Listening to playback, Bob was very proud of his role and astonished by Erickson's audacious soloing.

Bill Erickson (1929-67)

A dynamic force in the East Bay jazz revival, Erickson is almost completely forgotten today. A musical genius and jam session director, he was remarkably skilled at setting the stage for others to shine. Besides playing piano in Mielke's Bearcats when called upon, his main enterprise was directing jam sessions at Pier 23 on the San Francisco waterfront several nights a week, with Goudie a regular fixture.



Leading the Monkey Inn combo from the piano Erickson delivered solid bass support, imaginative harmonics and sparkling solos. These are the finest examples of his piano playing on disc or tape; his improvisations take daring harmonic leaps, presenting brilliant melodic variations.

A gifted all around musician known locally as “Willie the Master,” Erickson was also an accomplished trumpet player, arranger, entertainer and raconteur. For a while in the late 1950s, his spacious Victorian residence became known as the ‘Berkeley jazz house,’ a site legendary for music parties and jam sessions. Members of Mielke’s band including Goudie often jammed there from afternoon until past midnight.

The shock of his 1967 suicide and scarcity of surviving discs extinguished too quickly the memory of this bright light in Bay Area music. This is the first publication of music produced solely under Bill Erickson’s leadership.

Drummer **Jimmy Carter** was an African-American native of New Orleans working regularly at Erickson’s Pier 23 jams, and with this combo. Accurate and supportive he shifts his patterns fluidly, punctuating the action with quick jabs.

Repertorie

Mielke says that the Bearcats and East Bay jazz crew took special pride in presenting a broad repertoire of overlooked music beyond the usual Dixieland canon. Notably, almost nothing appears from the Lu Watters-Turk Murphy Trad Jazz genre. Instead the combo offers fresh perspectives on classic jazz, American standards and the Swing era.

Made famous by the Andrews Sisters, “Joseph, Joseph” may derive from Jewish folk music. “Japanese Sandman” has rarely been recorded since the Thirties. “Ring Dem Bells” is Duke Ellington 1930. “Get Out of Here” dates back to

earliest New Orleans. It's a pity the sweetly melancholic "Breeze" and uplifting "Walking With the King" are nearly forgotten as a jazz songs today.

Goudie is featured on "Petite Fleur" which was little known at the time. His interpretation is straightforward compared to Bechet's bravura stem-winder. Barely audible after finishing Frank says, "*that's Sidney,*" whom he knew and once recorded with in Europe. On "Blues at the Inn" (my title) he wails like a man who caught the blues four decades earlier in New Orleans.

The Monkey Inn tapes

Several revival bands played at Monkey Inn during that era: Bay City, Great Pacific, and Bob Mielke's Bearcats Jazz Bands. Mielke describes the Monkey Inn crowd as "*frat boys out on their first beer benders,*" though another less charitably called them, "*a little pack of thugs.*" Mostly a college-age crowd, they responded to the music with mild indifference or overheated enthusiasm.

These recovered audio artifacts are only slightly marred by minor tape flaws. Plenty of location and performance noise can be heard, like the swinging doors next to the piano: a tired poorly tuned upright. Mielke wanders around audibly, claps, and stomps his foot near the end of each number alerting other musicians to the concluding bars. Captured in vivid stereo with an Ampex tape deck and Telefunken microphones, the sound is surprisingly lifelike; the original dynamics have been preserved with only equalization adjusted.



Bob Mielke and Frank Goudie, late 1950s. Mielke collection

The music in this series is taken from a dozen hours of open reel audiotapes recorded by music fans Alvin and Barbara Bryant, and kept safe for decades by Bob Mielke and Bill Reynolds; its publication realizes a long-held

aspiration of Mielke. Sadly, within two years of these sessions Goudie was dead from lung cancer, Erickson a suicide five years later.

These private tapes of public performances offer a graduate seminar in jazz improvisation. Coalescing their voices, Goudie, Mielke, Erickson and Carter explored the full dynamic musical potential within a few bits of unamplified wood, brass, felt, steel, ebony and skin. Inspired as these four individual musicians were, their blended melodic variations, harmonic modulations and rhythmic syncopations add up to a whole considerably greater than the sum of its estimable parts.

Dave Radlauer, 2015

Award-winning broadcaster, writer and audio engineer presenting vintage jazz since 1982.

Thanks to Bob Mielke for access to his personal collection and corroboration of the liner notes for this series, which are based on interviews and discussions with Bob Mielke and Bill Bardin (trombone), Richard Hadlock (soprano and clarinet) and Dave Greer (fan/observer).

For more recordings of Bob Mielke and Frank “Big Boy” Goudie see Grammercy Records’ *The Odd Brilliance of P.T. Stanton*, and other releases.

Cover photos: Bob Mielke & Frank Goudie, East Bay, Pioneer Village, 1957-58; and Bill Erickson from the late-1950s. Courtesy Bob Mielke.

Find more about these artists, original research, articles, and audio archives at the [JAZZ RHYTHM](#) website.

Track List	Date	Time
1. Joseph, Joseph	2.1.62	6:26
2. China Boy	9.7.61	6:51
3. My Blue Heaven	9.7.61	6:06
4. The Old Spinning Wheel	9.7.61	6:14
5. Breeze	9.7.61	5:19
6. Petite Fleur	9.7.61	4:53
7. Japanese Sandman	9.7.61	5:52
8. Weary Blues	9.7.61	4:46
9. Ring Dem Bells	1.18.62	3:57
10. Blues at the Inn	8.31.61	6:51
11. Get Out Of Here	2.1.62	3:55
12. The Blues My Naughty Sweetie Gives to Me	8.31.61	6:08
13. Walkin' With The King	8.31.61	7:32
	Total	75:29

Frank “Big Boy” Goudie (clarinet), Bob Mielke (trombone), Bill Erickson (piano, leader), and Jimmy Carter (drums).

Track 6 Goudie featured, Mielke sits out
Track 13 add banjo, probably Dick Oxtot

Recorded at: Monkey Inn, Berkeley, CA, 1961-62

Tapes: Bob Mielke Collection

Photos: Dick Oxtot & Bob Mielke Collections

Re-mastering, production, research & liner notes: Dave Radlauer

Transferred and mastered using a J-corder modified Technics reel deck, RME Fireface d/a, Bybee AC filtering, and Pro Tools.



Grammercy Records and Dave Radlauer present **Frisco Jazz Archival Rarities**: unissued historic recordings of merit drawn from live performances, jam sessions and private tapes. These recovered artifacts of the San Francisco jazz revival offer music previously unavailable, long out-of-print, or revealing unexpected aspects of familiar names. Recorded mostly in the Bay Area 1945-75, this is lost sound from a unique time and place: a boisterous musical culture that created an independent jazz style of its own.

Some recordings contain minor flaws of performance and sound quality. The original sources vary from vivid stereo to limited-range monophonic. While a few tracks are incomplete at start or finish, we hope you will agree they are nonetheless worth having.

Re-mastering, research, and liner notes by Dave Radlauer: award-winning broadcaster, writer and audio engineer presenting vintage jazz since 1982. Transferred and mastered using a J-corder modified Technics reel deck, RME Fireface d/a, Bybee AC filtering, and Pro Tools.

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