

Ted Panken - tribute to Dan Morgenstern on Record Album Notes

Transcript:

Well, I guess I first encountered Dan's work in the '70s, from some of his liner notes on Prestige, historical reissue albums, and things on Onyx. They were very thorough and I learned a great deal, I was a little young to be reading Downbeat in the 60s, that's basically my first relationship with Dan's work, with his marvelously detailed, and ebullient, and loving liner notes. You are reading someone who is an extreme fan, and someone who has a very strongly typed aesthetic. And someone who really gets into the granular aspect of listening to music on these notes. Which comes out more, I mean it's really... I brought this up here for a reason. I'm sure that everybody has "Living With Jazz". But a lot of these liner notes would just be buried somewhere, you wouldn't be able to find them. But they are all collected in the book, and the totality of Dan's aesthetic really comes through in reading this.

Later, I actually have a passage I would wouldn't mind reading if I have the time it's a very brief passage, it's on page 588 and it's Dan's liner notes for the Keynote sessions, and particularly the Kansas City Seven date. And he's writing about the personnel. So he writes:

"Close listening reveals that Joe Jones didn't bring his bass drum. He works with just snare hi hat and ride cymbal. This was a late night session, and he probably didn't feel like lugging his heavy bass drum case to the to the studio from the Times Square movie theater, where the band was appearing. Or perhaps he'd been thinking of the famous Smith-Jones Inc. date of 1936, Lester's [Young] debut on records, when he also worked without a bass drum."

I mean, that's sort of says it all to me somehow. The level of detail, and obsession, and just close listening that kind of brings the whole scene to life. And his liner notes were full of those moments. And then I got to meet him personally at some point in the 1980s. I was on an ill starred mission to write a history of jazz on the south side of Chicago. Towards that end, I wanted to read the oral history at the Institute of Jazz Studies. Musicians who had been in Chicago and been a part of that. And, Dan and Vincent, who was there then. and Ed Burger, couldn't have been more supportive, or collegial, or informative. I mean they treated me wonderfully well, I spent a lot of time there going through the archives. I was telling Vincent before, it's an addictive place to be. You go there you just want to you want to come back. And I think probably since the atmosphere of a place reflects the person who's in charge of it, I think that reflected very much Dan's, and Vincent's, and Ed's personalities. So that's... Then subsequently, after I started writing professionally I'd run into you, and you would say I was doing well. You would be supportive. So all of that has been very important to me and I'm really honored to be up here for this tribute.

[applause]