

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

Presents **COCO**

RECORDED BY LES BAXTER

ARRANGED BY LES BAXTER

PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY ROB DUBOFF, DYLAN CANTERBURY, AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

FULL SCORE

JLP-7937

MUSIC BY LES BAXTER

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LES BAXTER SERIES

COCO (1959)

Les Baxter Biography:

I was privileged to have known Les Baxter, and honored that he thought of me as a close friend. He was a completely unique musical mind, and in every way a singular man. I had never met anyone like him, and have not since. His death in January 1996 robbed music of a one-of-kind composer, and robbed me of an irreplaceable friend whose spirit and memory have stayed with me, as have the musical lessons he was so generous to teach.

The picture of the Complete Les Baxter begins, for me, with a Hagspiel baby grand piano. To see Les play this instrument was to see him at his most regal. It was there he would sight-read the piano music of Maurice Ravel, play bits of his own compositions, or — on a very lucky day — improvise thematically on an old standard song such as Stardust or Darn That Dream. His Palm Springs house did not look it, but it was a place of music. Les would sit out by the pool, his dog Blondie at his feet, recalling all sorts of musical memories — memories of Louis Armstrong, of making exotica, of going to Brazil and hearing the carnival drummers.

Les was born in 1921 in Mexia, Texas, and spent part of his childhood in Detroit, where he attended the local conservatory and was considered something of a prodigy. He appears to have been fluent at an early age on piano and most woodwinds. I have seen a picture of him as a child where he is playing either a soprano saxophone or a metal clarinet. I never heard him speak of his father nor of any brothers or sisters, but apparently his mother was a wonderfully encouraging woman who saw the spark of music in her boy.

By the time he was in his teens, he was working in California in various dance bands as a tenor saxophonist and arranger, and also attending Pepperdine University as a music student.

Les was very much a product of the big band era. He counted legendary tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins as a personal hero. This is typical of any young saxophonist of the period — Hawkins was a huge force on his instrument, and his 1939 Victor recording of *Body and Soul* was the Rosetta Stone of saxophone up to that time. Les knew and loved that record, and I can still recall him sitting by his swimming pool in November 1994, singing Hawkins's solo.

Les's worship of Hawkins was supplanted by his hearing Ben Webster - Duke Ellington's featured tenor saxophonist of 1939-41. Webster was bluesier and had a darker, gauzier tone. He was the Barry White of tenor. Les spoke often and rapturously about seeing the Ellington band during that period, and was influenced deeply by what he heard.

Also, he got to know many of the Ellingtonians on a personal friendship level, giants such as Tricky Sam Nanton, Johnny Hodges, Billy Strayhorn, Jimmy Hamilton, and, of course, clarinetist Barney Bigard.

Bigard gave notice to Ellington in early 1943, during the band's engagement at Los Angeles' Trianon Ballroom. He then formed a sextet with Les, a trumpet player, and a rhythm section of piano, bass, and drums. Les called it "the first progressive jazz group." How progressive it actually was is a matter for conjecture. Bigard was an old-line New Orleans clarinetist whose style was rooted in something earlier than the style represented by Benny Goodman or Artie Shaw. What is for sure is that Les and Bigard were absorbed into the band of boogie woogie pianist Freddie Slack, whose popularity skyrocketed with his finding a large-breasted teenaged white girl who sang black. Ella Mae Morse was the featured girl singer, and her *Cow Cow Boogie* was an important early hit for Capitol Records.

The Slack band was a unique one. Although known mostly for boogie specialties, Slack, to hear Les tell it, "could play anything. It's just that his boogie woogie things were the most commercial." The band featured Les, Bigard, Morse, and Aaron 'T-Bone' Walker, the first important electric blues guitarist (and a great vocalist whose *Stormy Monday* is a true classic). Freddie Slack and his Orchestra toured widely and recorded prolifically, probably Les's first prolonged exposure to this sort of professional musical life.

He left the Slack band roughly a year or so after joining. As he was 4-F (it has been reported for asthma, although he wasn't afflicted with this when I knew him), he was exempt from the draft that so affected the availability of musicians during the Second World War. He joined a young Mel Tormé's Mel-Tones as a bass singer and vocal arranger. The group was by the era's standards a modern vocal group, similar in sound to the Modernaires (who were featured with Glenn Miller). A fellow Mel-Tone was Ginny O'Connell, later Mrs. Henry Mancini.

The Mel-Tones recorded with Artie Shaw, the first notable American musician to show an interest in the sort of Dark Continent program music that would later grow up to be exotica. Shaw's records like *Dr Livingstone, I Presume*, *The Chant*, and *Serenade to a Savage* show him striving towards something Les would later perfect. Les left the Mel-Tones after an unspecified amount of time, and got the gig singing the commercials for the *Maxwell House Radio Hour*.



His real break as an arranger came in either late 1947 or early 1948, when Broadway composer Harry Revel called Les to arrange a bunch of [Revel's] songs that had been written to feature the theremin, an early electronic music instrument which produced a high-pitched unearthly wail, and was featured heavily in the scores for the films *Spellbound* and *The Lost Weekend*. As on those scores, the Revel set was to feature thereminist Dr. Samuel Hoffman. It is widely supposed that Hoffman's doctor credential was in music. It was not. The good doctor was a podiatrist and amateur violinist. Violin training helped Hoffman — the theremin is not an easy instrument to play in tune, and Les recalled having difficulties getting Hoffman to do just that. The resultant album was called *Music Out of the Moon*, and it remains a masterpiece of musical futurism. The unlikely instrumentation (drums, bass, guitar, piano, choir, electric organ, and theremin) is truly other-worldly, and Les's arrangements are shimmering and gorgeous. (The theremin is, by the way, an instrument with a fascinating history, and the curious reader is urged to rent the documentary film *Theremin* for a wonderfully in-depth look at the instrument, its virtuoso Clara Rockmore, and its creator, the brilliant Dr. Leon Theremin.) The record is notable on several levels: it was the first record Capitol issued in all three of its early formats - 78 rpm album, 45 rpm album, and 10" 33 1/3; and it was the first record cover to feature a full-color photograph. It was also an unlikely runaway hit. No less a musical futurist than jazz avant-garde space traveler Sun Ra was heavily influenced by it. And, of course, it launched Les Baxter as a force to be dealt with.

The follow-up Revel/Baxter collaboration, *Perfume Set to Music*, was released on RCA/Victor, and included the hit *Jet*. Again, it was marked by unusual instrumentation and a thematic concept tying the songs together, this time musical depictions of different perfumes. Again, it was a smash. Capitol soon after came up with the commercially phenomenal/artistically disastrous idea of pulling Nat 'King' Cole from behind the piano and putting him in front of a huge string ensemble. Les was called in and conducted Nelson Riddle's arrangements of *Too Young* and *Mona Lisa*. Cole, the genius pianist, was pretty much silenced by the success of these two hit records. Les was proud of himself. I never forgave him, personally. Soon after the successes with Revel and Cole, Capitol assigned Les another singer to work with. Her given name is a string of unpronounceable Peruvian syllables. Her stage name was Yma Sumac.

Everything about Yma Sumac is subject to speculation, and this is putting it mildly. The one exception to this is her astounding range — easily five octaves, probably more, no singer in any style ever showed up with such a range and such outrageous ways of putting it to work. She could imitate the growl of a pre-eruptive volcano, the chirp of an exotic bird, and literally everything in between. Her rhythmic playfulness, exotic mystique, and sheer pyrotechnical prowess marked her as a unique talent by any yardstick. It was up to Les to shape her music together for her debut album, *Voice of the Xtabay*. Most of the compositions in it are attributed to Vivanco or Vivanco/Baxter, with one being credited solely to Baxter. Yma denies Les having had any real hands-on involvement with the music in any way. I may have taken this claim a little more seriously had I not stumbled onto an orchestral sketch of Tumpa in Les's own penmanship. (Si Zentner, who played trombone on one of the Xtabay sessions, recalls Hal Mooney conducting. More conflicting information.)

Les took Yma's Incan melodies and arranged them with a very Ravel-influenced string section, underpinned brilliantly by Latin percussion. *Xtabay* is not only Yma's best record, it is her best-selling, and has been issued literally in every commercial format. What makes this record so special? The uniqueness of Yma's vocal talent is a strong answer, but the bottom line is really that everything about the record fits together so beautifully. Les had perfected an exotic style that drew on the lush harmony of French impressionist composers Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy, the striking orchestration of Igor Stravinsky, and the Latin rhythms that had come to attention in the music of such Cuban bandleaders as Machito and Tito Puente. The success of literally everything touched by Les Baxter at that point led first to a series of singles that commenced in 1951 with *Because of You*, and would continue with such easy listening hits as *Unchained Melody*, *Wake the Town and Tell the People*, *Lonely Wine*, *April in Portugal*, *Blue Tango*, and, most notably, the 1956 blockbuster *The Poor People of Paris*. Les never really took a whole lot of artistic pride in these records - all of which he arranged, but none of which he composed, although he would always be very quick to point out his success as a hitmaker.

The most important part of this story at this time - 1951 - is that Capitol gave Les the go-ahead to make an all-original album. Given his druthers, Les Baxter would always opt for the exotic, and his inaugural album as composer/arranger is the first real show of firepower we have of him. The resultant LP, *Le Sacre Du Sauvage*, was issued as a 10" 33, and as albums of 78s and 45s. From the first notes of the opening cut, *Busy Port*, it is clear that this record is something different. It starts with a giant orchestral sweep à la Stravinsky (who Les idolized), then goes into a jerky, odd 6/8 rhythm, finally kicking into a Latin groove underneath mind-altering orchestration. Few records ever kicked off with such a striking entrance. The album also featured cuts like *Jungle River Boat*, *The Ritual* and, most famously, *Quiet Village*. (*Le Sacre Du Sauvage* contained six songs in its original 10" issue. The later 12" issue contains additional tracks. It is supposed that these were outtakes from the original 1951 sessions. However, the handwritten Baxter score of one of those additional cuts - *Sophisticated Savage* - is dated 1957, which means it could not possibly have been recorded before then.) The title of Les's debut points right to Stravinsky, whose *Le Sacre Du Printemps* (English title: *The Rite of Spring*) is a work Les claimed "changed the world". *Le Sacre Du Sauvage* is more often referred to by its English translation, *Ritual of the Savage*. It does not tax credibility one iota to say *Ritual* is the record wherein exotica is crystallized once and for all as a genre with stylistic standards and practices. Certainly it marked a stylistic jumping point for Les Baxter, who would turn again and again to music that certainly makes its initial statement on this record. *Ritual* was another hit for Les, and it was the record in which he took the most pride. Until his death, it was the one he spoke of most often. It included the only Baxter composition ever to be a hit, *Quiet Village*, which went Top 5 in 1959 when recorded by Martin Denny for Liberty.

The fifties were a golden time for Les Baxter. He was indeed Capitol Records' Golden Boy, a fact he recalled with bitter irony when he couldn't get anybody at the label to return his phone calls in the early nineties.

The Eisenhower Decade was a prolific one for Les, and this is putting it mildly. He made many successful easy listening singles (anthologized on the deceptively titled *Baxter's Best*), albums of tangos and waltzes for Arthur Murray's School of Dance (also on Capitol, also unlistenable), and more brave conceptual albums, some exotic, others not. When Les was a guest on the Dorsey Brothers' television show in 1956, his *Poor People Of Paris* was the number one record that week. The other musical guest that night was Elvis Presley, who was about to start having number one records of his own. Les could not deal with rock 'n' roll. Its simplicity alienated him. Its overt sexuality offended his Puritan sense of propriety. His one flirtation with rock 'n' roll — as the arranger of the Cheers' hit *Black Denim Trousers* - was terrible and unrocking, and when he had to come up with rock-like music for film soundtracks in the sixties, he generally farmed the job out to somebody else.

So, Les did not give in to the Big Beat. Instead, he unleashed albums that probably had most of Middle America daydreaming more strangely than ever before. The James Michener-ized Afro-Polynesia of his exotic works such as *Tamboos* and *Sacred Idol* certainly enforced his standing as the principal exoticist in music. He stretched his exotic borders to feature tenor saxophonist Plas Johnson on the two albums *African Jazz* and *Jungle Jazz*.

Capitol's attempt to create another Yma Sumac (the old one must have been causing headaches) led to their pairing Les with female cantor (Jewish liturgical singer) Bas Sheva. The resultant audiophile album, *The Passions*, is, without a doubt, the strangest assemblage of violent orchestration and vocal histrionics ever disguised as mood music. Les takes us on a compositional journey via tracks such as *Terror*, *Lust*, *Joy*, etc, while Bas Sheva alternately grunts, groans, shrieks, screams, and, on occasion, sings. The cut *Joy* bears a striking resemblance to the theme from E.T., and, in fact, E.T. composer John Williams played piano on this Baxter date (and others). A court in California didn't agree, but it does bear mentioning. (Another bit of business worth mentioning is that Bas Sheva, whose real name was Bernice Kurtzer, died of insulin shock on a cruise ship not too long after recording *The Passions*.)

Les also recorded two unjustly neglected classics of thematic mood music - *Space Escapade* and *Jewels of the Sea*. The former concerns itself with outer space musical imagery. Its cover has been compared to Ed Wood. Much of its music is actually Les's most gentle - even sentimental - side. Especially gorgeous are *The City* and *Earthlight*, which reveal the influence of Ellington collaborator Billy Strayhorn. *Jewels* was the last all-original album Les would make for Capitol. It was recorded in 1961, and is in many ways a close spiritual cousin to *Music Out of the Moon*. Les shaped a great deal of the *Jewels* music around the Novachord, an early electronic organ, and let his more ethereal colors show once again. In addition to *Jewels*, 1961 saw the release of his *Music of the Sixties* LP. This was an album of Baxter arrangements of standard songs such as *I Could Have Danced All Night* and *Calcutta*. Corresponding with the album was a syndicated television special of the same name, the only comprehensive video document of Les Baxter in performance. He features himself as pianist and conductor.

Les Baxter's own music of the sixties was mostly soundtrack work. He made a few albums for Reprise: *Soul of the Drums* (which featured the great Olatunji on percussion), *The Primitive and the Passionate* (an exotic record), and *Les Baxter's Balladeers* (an attempt to cash in on the folk boom which featured a pre-Byrds David Crosby). While each of these records has its moments, none is exactly on par with his best Capitol's. Unfortunately for Les, the soundtrack work was very nearly anonymous. He scored over one hundred films for American International Pictures, the most successful B movie mill of the time. Everything was done quick and dirty. The players who worked on the recording sessions remember recording everything at the speed of light, with mistakes being covered by sound effects in the dubbing. While Henry Mancini was making his legendary reputation with such scores as *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and *Shot in the Dark*, Les was hard at work on such low-budget epics as *Dr. Goldfoot and the Girl Bombs*, *The Dunwich Horror*, and *Pit and the Pendulum*. Ironically, some of the best and most interesting music of Les's career was composed in the service of these pictures. His score for the Japanese feature-length cartoon *Alakazam the Great* is Les's finest hour as a composer of serious music, rife with references to favorite Stravinsky pieces, as well as some of Les's most arresting and unexpected (even jarring) moments since *The Passions*. American International tried hard to make a legit film with *Master of the World*, which starred the studio's biggest star, Vincent Price. This was the one score that Les claimed was granted a reasonable budget, and he was quite proud of it.

The grind of scoring as many as ten budget pictures a year took its toll on Les's presence in the record marketplace. The job paid well, between the actual paycheck for the assignment and the composer's royalties that were generated every time one of the movies was shown publicly or broadcasted. But the stock of Les Baxter as recording artist went down, and towards the end of the decade, he was recording for GNP/Crescendo records, with ensembles smaller than he was used to. He had not lost his touch, but he wasn't the kind of man who liked working with small groups. A reunion with Yma Sumac resulted in the less-than-successful *Miracles*, an unfortunate attempt to get Yma to rock. The album is a camp classic, but does nothing to live up to the magic of *Voice of the Xtabay*.

As the seventies came in, Les was still on the B movie treadmill. He also started recording for Alshire's 101 Strings imprint, for whom he made his last exotic record, *Que Mango*. *Que Mango* shows us in no uncertain terms just how much firepower Les had in reserve. He made it in an age of Bacharach, Mauriat, Alpert, and other Beatles-era instrumental music. The whole 'jet set' easy listening attitude had taken over where Les's Capitol output had left off, and, to those who were still looking, it must have seemed like the music of Les Baxter was banished to the ghetto of records to be sold in supermarkets (which was where 101 Strings were stocked). It is always unwise to rule out a formidable mind of any sort, and in no instance is this illustrated more blindingly than by hearing *Que Mango*. It sits very comfortably beside any of Les's earlier works, and shows that his abilities as an arranger for strings were never more sharp. His command of Latin and African rhythms is fierce and authoritative. The album's most notable cut, *Tropicando*, is a close cousin of *Savage* cuts *Simba* and *Quiet Village*, but it is far from a retread. Its insistent, pulsating bass line is deceptive. It is catchy, yet also is dissonant. Les splashes lush, thick string textures like seaweed in what amounts to his last moment in the exotic sun. He would never again make an all-original album, although he would continue through the seventies as a composer of music for film.

His spark was never completely dulled, despite that the films he worked on were generally mediocre at best. The 1972 shocker *Frogs* featured the first all-electronic Baxter score. He was constantly looking for new things to try within his own musicality. Les Baxter's artistic problems had nothing to do with his skills, which remained formidable to the last. It had more to do with living on the hamster wheel that is life in the low-budget film industry. His tenure at American International unfairly stigmatized him as a B composer. He was never offered scores for films that did justice to his creativity, neither in their budgets nor their content. He coasted into and through the eighties on this low-rent sled. His last film assignment was for an early-nineties telemovie, *Lightning in a Bottle*, starring Lynda Carter as a woman involved in a drunk driving accident. It is a terrible film, but the music is always good, even occasionally breathtaking, especially the ending theme song, *Somehow I'll Go On*, which features a gorgeous tenor saxophone solo by Plas Johnson. The late eighties saw Les Baxter languishing away in Palm Springs, living comfortably and working sporadically at one-shot assignments that did not befit a composer of his stature. Some of his last assignments were a Christmas album for a California boys choir, and show music for the Ice Follies. Much better artistically, he also composed words and music for a show intended for Broadway, *Cinderella in Rio*, which contains much fine music.

Most happily, Les Baxter was invited to have his compositions performed by the Los Angeles Composer's Guild. This is something that composers are usually charged for, but they made exceptions for two composers: David Raksin and Les Baxter. He took great pride in finally being recognized by as a composer, not just as a guy who wrote B movie scores. He turned in some truly excellent music for their concerts, up to October 1994, when he made his last public appearance, conducting the LACG through two compositions: the new (and, as of now, still unrecorded) *Metamorphosis*, and a strings-only transcription of the *Tambo* cut *Havana*.

Home at this point was a comfortable, cozy, and impeccably decorated three bedroom house in Palm Springs. His days' activities were mostly centered around local restaurants and movie theaters. His Capitol scores lived in boxes in the garage, and the only tipoff that a musician lived in that house was a Hagspiel baby grand in the corner of the living room. The backyard, however, was the playground of an exotic. It was such, even dense, with various tropical plants, trees, and flowers. There was a swimming pool, and a lily pond whose cement floor was always cracking (and always being repaired). There was a stereo with indoor and outdoor speakers, and the biggest television I have ever seen in a private home.

The early nineties brought a resurgence of interest in the music of Les Baxter, one of which he was not particularly aware. The post-punk record collecting public had found their collective way to the thrift stores, making many of their choices based on record cover art. The rediscovery of exotica was largely to cover design; the way records by Les, Martin Denny, and Korla Pandit looked. Fifties easy listening went from being a neglected genre to a subterranean collector's movement, and Les was nothing less than an icon to these consumers. In the early nineties, Les granted New York disc jockey David Garland a phone interview for the WNYC program *Spinning On Air*. It is perhaps the best interview Les ever gave. Garland's encyclopedic knowledge of Les's records, his insightful questions, and the acerbic and witty sharpness of Les's recollections conspired to make it a shining hour both for the interviewer and his subject. It is a moving portrait of Les at his happiest and most expansive. An inkling of this reached Les via a 1994 Time magazine article on lounge music. But still more was going on with him as an oblivious center of attention. RE/Search Books, in 1993, released their first *Incredibly Strange Music* volume. It was a veritable guidebook to forgotten music genres, and, largely due to RE/Search's street credibility, legitimized its subject matter. Les was discussed throughout the book by various collectors and by Martin Denny. A full-fledged trend was in the works. Les was also venerated in Joseph Lanza's history of mood music, *Elevator Music*. Various fanzines wrote about Les, and James Call and Peter Hustis did an expansive, wonderfully in-depth interview for the glossy subculture zine *Hypno*. David Garland devoted another show to Les Baxter, this time with yours truly as the interview subject.

When Les was finally made aware of all of this activity, he was delighted. He had been waiting for vindication from an industry that had long since cast him aside. The post-punk collectors had taken him up in a big way, not least of all Dead Kennedys leader Jello Biafra, who praised Les at length in the second RE/Search volume of *Incredibly Strange Music*. An accompanying ISM CD included *Terror* from *The Passions*, and sold 20,000 copies. (Shortly after this, Jello was injured by a gang in a San Francisco nightclub, and Les sent him a get-well letter.) It was a very happy time for Les. He began to brag to his Palm Springs friends about his cult status. He was quicker than before to sit at the piano and play *Quiet Village* or one of his other Capitol classics. Lounge aficionados tracked him down (not hard — he was in the phone book) and, for the first time in ages, there was actual fan mail.

Worse, the strain of caring for her father became too much for his daughter Leslie to deal with, and he finally was moved to a facility in Orange County. It was sadly inevitable. The backyard on which he had lavished so much effort and care was now full of overgrown and unkempt plants and weeds. And Les could scarcely take care of himself. There were stories in such papers as the L.A. Weekly, but tacit agreements were made with journalists that any quotes from Les were to approved by his daughter and/or publicist. The need for this was especially apparent when the late KCRW disc jockey Warren Kolodny attempted to do a phone interview with Les, and Les couldn't remember large chunks of his own personal history. Stories such as the one in the *Weekly* were welcomed, but also dealt with as delicate situations that could potentially be unflattering to Les.

In the fall of 1995, this correspondent was called upon to help produce a concert of Les Baxter's music, to be presented under the baton of nouveau loungemeiseter Joey Altruda. The original Baxter scores were used, with me and Altruda working side by side, 50/50, on the orchestrations. On November 16, an audience of roughly 2,000 people saw a nineteen piece ensemble play the music of Les Baxter. In the case of every composition - with the exception of *Quiet Village* - it was the first time the music had been played to a live audience and not a studio situation. Plas Johnson was the featured soloist, reprising his work from the original records.

It should have been Les Baxter's finest hour. But his health made it impossible for him to travel, and his senility made it impossible for him to process the information that his music was to be performed in a matter befitting its greatness. I read a statement to the audience on behalf of him, and Joey Altruda conducted a concert of some truly astonishing music, performed by a truly glorious bunch of musicians.

Around this time, Captiol began releasing their monolithic *Ultra Lounge* series. A mammoth two-disc Les Baxter set, *The Exotic Moods of Les Baxter*, was released. It fared less well than expected in the marketplace. Shortly before his death, compiler Brad Benedict finally gave Les something he wanted for years - a phone call from somebody at Capitol to say there was to be a reissue, and to ask what he would like to have included in it. But it was too late. Les couldn't remember much about his own work. At that point, Les couldn't remember his own phone number, let alone song titles from forty-five years ago. His ability to recall his own music was gone, and his ability to process any kind of information was gone as well. It was too little, too late. While it was nice to see Les get his due, it was depressing to know that senility had robbed him of the opportunity to bask in the glow of his music's rediscovery. And his health and mind were such that nobody would even hope that he'd pull around and light up again. The last time I saw him, he was sitting alone in his dining room, frightened because the sun was going down and he didn't know where the light switches were anymore. Nothing ever felt worse for me than to have seen him like that.

The last two months of Les Baxter's life revolved around the indignities of being shuttled between hospitals and critical care facilities. On a sunny California January morning, Les Baxter gave up the ghost, leaving behind him a son, grandson, daughter, loving friends, and cult status. The good years were good to him. He was a man that loved his work, his daughter, and Blondie, the dog that was his boon companion in the last years of his life.

But the industry he helped build did very little for him, and - for all the great music he made - there is no way his story can be told without some distaste about how an ungrateful business left him to rot like fruit in the sun. But the business and the music are two different things. Les would have been overjoyed to see how much of his work has enjoyed reissue, and would have felt vindicated to know that the hip-hop guys were sampling his music onto hit records. He'd love the many entries that pop-up on-screen when you type his name into an Internet search engine. He thrived on attention, and loved knowing that his music meant something to the people who heard it.

You would have liked him very much.

– *Skip Heller*

The Music:

This arrangement of *Coco* is from Baxter's 1959 album *Jungle Jazz* written to feature tenor saxophonist Plas Johnson.

Beginning with a piano solo (all piano parts were fully composed by Baxter) the arrangement kicks in with the woodwinds and one of the horns in F playing the chromatic melody with the rest of the ensemble providing punctuating backgrounds. This section alternates between Latin and swing feels. An 8-bar piano solo sets the stage for the tenor saxophone solo, originally played by Plas Johnson. After the band rejoins to state the melody the keyboardist moves over to the Novachord for 13 bars. This instrument was the first synthesizer, having been originally built in 1939. Assuming your ensemble does not have a Novachord available, this section can easily be played on a conventional synthesizer (musically, this section consists of held chord and one whole-tone scale). The arrangement then comes to an end with your tenor sax player throwing in a few more fills before the piano player wraps things up.

Note: included are alternate parts that avoid the need of horns in F. The two horn parts may be played on an additional trumpet and trombone (providing a need for 3 of each).

This publication was prepared using the original set of parts from the 1959 recording session - this is not a transcription.

Skip Heller and Rob DuBoff

- August 2023

TENOR SAX
"PLAZ"

4

8500

Handwritten musical score for Tenor Saxophone, measures 1-32. The score is written on a grand staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like *mp* and *mf*. Measure numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, and 32 are indicated. A section labeled "Solo" begins at measure 25. The score concludes with a final chord progression: F, Gb9, Cm7, F13, Bb.

Handwritten musical score for piano accompaniment, measures 1-64. The score is written on a grand staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like *mf* and *mp*. Measure numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 45, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 59, 61, and 63 are indicated. The score concludes with a final chord progression: F, Gb9, Cm7, F13, Bb, A7+.

Above is the original tenor saxophone soloist part as-used by Plas Johnson for the 1959 recording session.

COCO

RECORDED ON JUNGLE JAZZ

SCORE

COMPOSED AND ARRANGED BY LES BAXTER

PREPARED BY ROB DUBOFF, JEFFREY SULTANOF, AND DYLAN CANTERBURY

MEDIUM LATIN ♩ = 160

①

Flute

Clarinet

Piano Solo

Brushes

The score is written for a jazz ensemble in 4/4 time. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Woodwind 1:** Flute/Clarinet. Part 1 (Flute) starts at measure 7 with a melodic line.
- Woodwind 2:** Clarinet/Tenor Saxophone. Part 1 (Clarinet) starts at measure 7 with a melodic line.
- Woodwind 3:** Tenor Saxophone. Part 1 (Tenor Saxophone) starts at measure 7 with a melodic line.
- Woodwind 4:** Baritone Saxophone. Part 1 (Baritone Saxophone) starts at measure 7 with a melodic line.
- Trumpet in B♭ 1 & 2:** Both parts are silent throughout the score.
- Horn in F 1 & 2:** Both parts are silent throughout the score.
- Trombone 1 & 2:** Both parts are silent throughout the score.
- Piano/Novachord:** Features a piano solo starting at measure 1. The right hand plays a melodic line, and the left hand provides harmonic support with chords and bass lines.
- Acoustic Bass:** Silent throughout the score.
- Drum Set:** Uses brushes. The part starts at measure 7 with a rhythmic pattern.
- Percussion 1:** Güiro (or reco-reco). Part 1 starts at measure 7 with a rhythmic pattern.
- Percussion 2:** Cabasa. Part 1 starts at measure 7 with a rhythmic pattern.

The score is divided into 8 measures, with measure numbers 1 through 8 indicated at the bottom.

9 SWING

Ww 1 (FL.)
Ww 2 (CL.)
Ww 3 (T. Sx)
Ww 4 (B. Sx)
Tpt. 1
Tpt. 2
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
Tbn. 1
Tbn. 2
Pno.
Bs
D.S.
Perc. 1 : (Gro.)
Perc. 2 : (Cab.)

mp *p* *sfz* *mp*
mp *sfz* *mp*
mp *p* *mp*
mp *p* *mp*
mp *p* *mp*
mp *p* *mp*

To Hat
To Hat
In Hat
In Hat

$B^b m7$ $E^b 7^{(b9)}$ $A^b 6$ $F 7$ $E 9^{(11)}$

9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16