

FRANK ROSOLINO

As far as really being here, this was my first visit to Britain. I was here in 1953 with Stan Kenton, which was just an overnight thing; so twenty years have elapsed in between. I've been having an absolutely beautiful time here, and enjoying London.

Playing at Ronnie Scott's with me I had John Taylor on piano, Ron Mathewson on bass and Martin Drew on drums. Absolutely great players, every one of 'em. I can't tell you how much I enjoyed myself, and it just came out that way. This rubbed off on the people, too. When you get musicians of that calibre, it's just a happy feeling all the way round; everybody's just grooving together. Every night of the three

weeks has been a complete ball. Also, on a few nights John Taylor was committed elsewhere; so Gordon Beck come in to take his place. He's another really excellent player. You've got some great players round here!

They're equal to musicians I work with in the States. I mean, it doesn't matter where you are; once you've captured the feeling for jazz, and you've been playing it practically all your life, you're a pro at it.

I've heard so much about trombonist Chris Pyne that when I met him I asked him if he'd come over and play some time. So he sat in one night, and we had a nice time. He sounded beautiful; he's a marvellous musician. It amazes me how many good trombone players you

have. Those I've met and heard include John Marshall, Wally Smith, Bobby Lamb, Don Lusher, George Chisholm. I liked George's playing very much; he has a nice conception and feel, good soul, and he plays with an extremely good melodic sense.

As for my beginnings—I was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan, until I was old enough to be drafted into the Service, which was the latter part of '44. I started playing guitar when I was nine or ten. My father played parties and weddings on mandolin, guitar, clarinet and a few things; that's where we get our basic training, you might say. I used to go along and accompany him, until I was around twelve years old. He thought it would then be wise for me

to go on to another instrument; he suggested accordion, but—to put it mildly—I wasn't too keen on that!

Actually, it was my brother Russell who instigated my playing the trombone. He suggested it to my father, and we went to a pawnshop downtown and picked one up. I began to play it immediately; I didn't know what I was doing exactly, but I just tried to get a sound. Being music in the family, I had an ear; so I fished around, finding the notes on the horn before I could even read. Then I took it up in grammar school, and learned the actual positions.

Russell used to practise all the time—almost continuously. I used to listen to him, and try to mimic on the trombone what he was playing on the violin. I probably owe a lot of the technique to that—you know, getting around faster on the horn.

We went to school with Milt Jackson. As a matter of fact, he graduated a year before I did. To this day, Milt will ask me, how's my brother Russell? He remembers that

Russell was a virtuoso of the violin, and he's never forgotten that. I think he was playing mostly piano then; later he started getting into the vibes. They had a stage band and a small group that we could play in; we got the whole treatment there—it was great. The students at the school were eighty-five to ninety per cent black. So I grew in that environment, with jazz music around me all the time; this is where I developed a natural feel for it.

I guess the music Milt and I were playing in school was considered Swing style; it was the days when all the bands, like Benny Goodman, Bob Chester, Gene Krupa, were just playing Swing music. But there were a lot of jam sessions going on all the time then—a lot of small groups and places to play. Before I was really into the horn, reading-wise and learning the techniques of arranging and composing, stuff like that, we were just into blowing all the time—getting out, playing tunes, and just having a

good time and swinging. When I wasn't practising at home, I'd constantly be out on dances or whatever.

I was a slow starter, as far as reading, because I was more into the horn that I was into that—let's put it that way. And I guess, in a lot of ways, that's what made me a better trombone player than I would have been. I wasn't just stuck in the book, learning how to read music, period—that could be accomplished at a later time. I'm not saying that's the proper way to go about it; it's just the way it happened for me.

It wasn't until 1947 that I started playing with a professional band. I got out of the Service in early '46, I believe. I went back to Detroit, and was working around the clubs there. Downtown in Detroit, there used to be a place called the Mirror Ballroom, and it became the spot where, when bands would come in town, they'd come down there to blow. We had some marvellous sessions.

One time, members of both the Bob Chester and Sonny Dunham bands came down to play. They heard me, and I was offered jobs with both bands. So then I started putting two and two together, and I figured it was about time I made the move. I picked Bob Chester, for the simple reason that I thought if I went with Sonny Dunham's band I wouldn't be doing much blowing there, with Sonny being a trombonist himself as well as the leader. And Bob Chester had put together a pretty good jazz band at that time; which I joined—and went out on the road professionally for the first time.

Then one thing led to another. When you start working with a professional band, you're touring around, meeting different musicians, and the word gets about that there's a new trombonist or a new soloist on the scene. From there, in 1948, I had an offer to work with Gene Krupa.

That's when they were calling me Frankie Ross, the Lemon Drop Kid. We did a recording on "Lemon

Drop"; I think ours was the first one out. Chubby Jackson and Terry Gibbs recorded it with Woody Herman just after us; they had a little more exposure and theirs became more popular. But that was one of the first things I did; I had a ball on that, scat singing and playing.

It seems like all my life I've always sung somewhat, from church right on down. I always liked other singers, and it's just something I've enjoyed doing once in a while. I sang a couple with Bob Chester` and with Krupa I did a few, like "Pennies From Heaven". Of course, I didn't do the version of "Pennies From Heaven" that I do on that "Turn Me Loose" album, and the way I used to sing it with Stan Kenton. That was a pure accident, really. I was clowning around one day in front of the Kenton band, and all of a sudden I started scat singing and yodelling. People flipped over it; so Stan said: "Keep that in!" And I've been stuck with yodelling for twenty years!

Yes, right then Krupa was modernising his band; he had changed a lot of musicians. I joined shortly after Ventura had been on the band. I was on records like "Leave Us Leap". Oh, Krupa had a great jazz band then, with trumpet players like Don Fagerquist, Al Porcino, Ray Triscari and a fantastic tenor player, Buddy Wise. It was a great experience. Gene never had an ego thing going like some leaders; he was always very friendly, very nice to work with. He's a beautiful man.

I can honestly say that I've enjoyed every band I've been on. You learn from everything. They all have their own style, and I chalk it all off as worth-while experience.

I stayed with Krupa about a year-and-a-half; then I moved on to some small groups. I worked with Herbie Fields for about a year, had a job with Glen Gray that lasted about six months, followed by a stay with Georgie Auld. Then Tony Pastor—that was another short spell, because

it wasn't really a jazz band. Still, I enjoyed that. From Tony Pastor, I started working with Stan Kenton.

This was in the winter of 1951. I'd gone back to Detroit, and Stan had brought the band to work at an amusement park. They were looking for a jazz trombone player—a trombone player, period, I guess—and they asked me to sit in. Apparently, Stan liked what he heard, since I got the job.

I stayed with Stan for three years, leaving finally in '55. That was a great time; Stan gave me a lot of exposure—as he does all the soloists he usually has. He did a lot for me; he enabled me to make a pretty good name.

About 1953 is when it really happened—that's when the band took a new turn. It wasn't what you'd call a real hard jazz band when I first joined; it was just the Stan Kenton that you always hear. Almost a semi-classical jazz, to a certain extent. Well, that's Stan's bag; everybody appreciates a person for what they

are, and the kind of music they produce. Today, Stan's pretty much that way; 1953 was the only time he's really had a jazz band—and I was fortunate enough to be on it.

He had practically all jazz soloists on that band. In the sax section were Bill Holman, Richie Kamuca, Zoot Sims, Lee Konitz. Baritone man Bob Gioga was about the only player who'd been on the original band; he was there from practically beginning to end, until he retired eight or so years ago. In the trumpet chairs were Conte Candoli, Al Porcino, Ernie Royal and Maynard Ferguson. On trombone he had Bob Fitzpatrick, myself, George Roberts, Bill Russo. Then Bobby Burgess joined a little later, and I believe he and Fitzpatrick were splitting the lead; when Fitzpatrick left, Bobby took over the lead chair. Stan Levey was our drummer, Don Bagley was on bass, Sal Salvador on guitar; Ralph Blaze was on the band for a while, and was replaced by Sal.

That was the band that came to Europe, in 1953. And to this day, everybody says—whether Stan admits it or not; I think he does—that as far as being a real jazz band, it was one of the best bands he's ever had. It really created some noise all over the country. At that time we did that album "Prologue"—you know, where he narrated and introduced each soloist. Which was kind of a fresh idea; something that had never been done before. Among the great recordings we made, that one did particularly well. That became a sort of a legendary riff that I played there on "Prologue"; it seems to have attracted the attention of a lot of trombone players. I didn't know what I was doing—it was just the way it came out!

A true jazz chart has that certain conception and feeling; to me, they felt much more comfortable than playing some of the semi-classical things, which didn't feel as natural. I loved Bill Holman's swinging charts, as opposed to a guy

like Bob Graettinger, who was writing some pretty heavy music. Or Bill Russo—although he could write things that really swung, too. A perfect example was that "Frankly Speaking" he did for me; in fact, that surprised me, because the charts by Bill Russo we'd been playing were more on the heavy side. I really liked that arrangement; it turned out real good, as a showcase for me. I think that was recorded before we got into the Bill Holman things, really. After that, Russo was asked to do an album of arrangements on some standard tunes, which were meant to be more a jazz type of thing, and he did a fine job. He's pretty versatile; I don't put him in the same bag as Holman, naturally, because Holman was just a jazz writer, period.

Sure, Stan has talked more in terms of "jazz" in latter years. But I still say the main bag that he's always been noted for is not hard-core jazz; it's more a concert/symphonic approach, with jazz inflections here

and there. That's been great, and people that go to see him expect this kind of show from him, and he enjoys it, too. Not that Stan didn't enjoy that '53 band—he loved it, but it was out of the context associated with him by the average public; let's put it that way. Of course, the avid jazz fans were tickled to death when they heard Stan's band at that time. His real sound is the one he's kept going—featuring more brass than anything else. That's what makes the world go round, I guess—different types of music and players. If everybody played the same thing, it would be kinda boring.

I enjoyed the other part of it, too—not only the swinging part of it. It was all good; not for just the experience alone, but to play some other music, and hear these beautiful sounds coming out. That was nice. In any case, he did it in such a way that he still left it open in spots, so that the soloists he had were given a chance to play. He would change the mood; whenever you wanted to get

into a jazz solo, it would take on that feel. So you could stretch out—it's just that there was more of it when he had the full jazz band.

I didn't leave the band through any feeling of being restricted. It was just that the band had folded, and we all went our own different ways. I went back to Detroit for a little bit; then I had the offer to work at Howard Rumsey's Lighthouse club, Hermosa Beach. And that's what started my life in California. I ended up in California in the latter part of '55 and I've been there for eighteen years.

LIFE IN HOLLYWOOD

For the first four-and-a-half years, after I moved to California at the end of '55, I worked at the Lighthouse with Howard Rumsey. The club is still going strong—it's been in operation for twenty-five years now, and at one time or another has had practically every jazz musician working there. Howard

Rumsey isn't there any more; he's taken over another club, called Concert By The Sea. That's in Redondo, which is the next city over from Hermosa Beach; it's about an eight-minute drive away. He's doing exceptionally well; it's a very nice club, and he's bringing name groups in there.

The Lighthouse has been taken over by Shelly Manne's partner, Rudy. Because Shelly's Manne-Hole closed down; I understand the music was leaking into a studio right next door. It was Wally Heider, a great A & R man and a good friend of a lot of musicians, who took over the studio; so they finally got together on it. Shelly is in the process of finding another location. I think he might have found one.

We had some marvellous players during my time at the Lighthouse. It started out with Claude Williamson playing piano, with Howard Rumsey, of course, on bass, and Stan Levey on drums. Bud Shank was on alto and flute, Bob

Cooper on tenor and oboe. Plus myself on trombone. Then later on, Conte Candoli joined the group for a while; also Jimmy Giuffre, who wrote some beautiful charts for us. Victor Feldman came in on piano; then he started playing vibes—he had them set up there, and he'd be using both.

That's when I first met Victor, who I dearly love. I think he's an absolutely beautiful person, let alone being one of the greatest musicians of all time. He happens to be one of my favourite piano players. There's a guy who's a master of everything; if he wasn't, guys like Cannonball Adderley and Miles Davis wouldn't be employing him. We have become very close, good friends; we play golf together regularly.

Also I owe it to Victor Feldman that my tune "Blue Daniel" did so well. We were working a casual engagement one time, and when I played this jazz waltz of mine for him, he fell in love with it. He said: "Man, write that out; I'll give to

Cannonball, and maybe he'll record it." That was when he was working with the Adderley band; he had been on a short layoff. So he took it back to Cannonball; next thing I heard, it was on a record. Through that, people started hearing about it, and it got quite a bit of play around. Shelly Manne and Phineas Newborn put out records on it; they did beautiful jobs. I'm the only one who hasn't recorded it !

The studio scene started for me on my arrival in Hollywood. Actually, while I was working at the Lighthouse I was doing a lot of studio work as well. Most of your studio work is done during the daytime; so the calls don't conflict with the job at night. And at that time there was a lot of jazz being played on recording sessions. That's how it started—well, I just left myself open for anything that came around. They would call me to do solo work on various dates, and I started getting into motion picture work, live TV and stuff like that.

I was on the Sinatra movie, *The Man With The Golden Arm*—that was Shorty Rogers' orchestra at the time. Then I did *I Want To Live* with Susan Hayward; that score by Johnny Mandel almost made you cry—it was so pretty. I really enjoyed playing that, and being in the night-club scenes, in a group with Gerry Mulligan, Art Farmer and Shelly Manne. A lot of times, on these picture calls, they'll take a quick shot of somebody blowing, and that's it, but on this particular picture they really held the camera on the musicians. Well, it won the Academy Award, you know—not because of our appearance on it; it just turned out to be a great movie. Of course, Susan Hayward is a beautiful woman; I've always had a crush on her.

Then I did one for one of your arranger/composers here, who happens to be a great writer—Johnny Keating. It was the movie *Hotel*, and I play a love ballad on it, behind a love scene. I was real proud to be on

it; that was the first time that we had been under his baton in America—everybody loved his writing. Marvellous.

Those are the major ones that I've been featured on. Oh yes—and more recently I got screen credits as well on *The Hot Rock* (released here as *How To Steal A Diamond*). Robert Redford starred in it; Quincy Jones was the writer. It was a good movie and a good score, featuring Clark Terry, Gerry Mulligan and myself. That was kinda interesting, the way we just went in the studio and recorded it. Quincy's amazing—the way he comes up with things. He more or less just writes a guide-line for you to go by; in other words, everything isn't completely written out. He leaves the freedom for the musicians to be creative. It's a good idea, in a lot of ways. Instead of body, or jazz-licks here and there, he leaves it up to the soloists to go ahead and do it on their own. He might have a certain theme in mind; you just build around that theme.

Then he just times it, and puts it all together. It came out real great; instead of just hearing the band playing all the way through, it left it much more free.

I've known Quincy and been working for him off and on for many years: he usually calls me to work on his sessions. Also albums, like "Walking In Space"—that turned out to be quite a popular one. Jimmy Cleveland has a beautiful solo on that—he's a great trombone player, as you know. Jimmy's in Hollywood now, of course, and he looks fine, and young—he always takes care of himself pretty well. He's a very kind, humble, beautiful man. We have the pleasure of working together quite a bit, such as on the Merv Griffin Show, which is sort of a talk show, like Johnny Carson and Steve Allen used to do.

Jimmy Cleveland and I also worked a three-week engagement at a place called the Century Plaza, along with Kai Winding and Bobby Brookmeyer. Kai has all these ar-

rangements written for four and five trombones; so whenever he has the opportunity to appear somewhere and work with it, he does. A lot of those charts were recorded before I started working with them; then, of course, we added some new ones. We haven't made a record of this particular group, but it was a real joy, with all the players just digging each other, and having a ball.

My facility on the instrument is natural to a certain extent, but you have to develop it. You can't just say that a guy's a natural, and he gets up and just starts playing all the stuff. It's just from playing constantly. Every opportunity that I ever had in my life to play jazz, I would play. I'm always there. If there's a place to go after the job, I'll go. I always put in a lot of time playing—not necessarily sitting home practising eight hours a day, as you hear guys saying you should. For some reason, I just can't discipline myself to sit by myself and practise. I feel more inspired

going some place and actually playing with a group.

Not that there weren't times when I worked at home, but it's been more the other way around; I was out playing all the time. I've been fortunate enough to keep working, and so I don't feel that I have to come home the next day and practise for three or four hours. I just owe it to being devoted to playing as much jazz as I can. A jazz player will do this; you can talk to most of 'em who are soloists in jazz, and really into it, they're always interested in knowing where you can go and play.

Even when you're on the road—you'd think you'd have had enough of a night, working four hours with a band—right away, it's: "Are there any jazz clubs in town?" Let's face it, when you're playing with a big band you're sort of limited, as far as being completely free to play as much as you would like to play. You can play to your heart's content when you're out somewhere blowing with a small group. So we

always go out of our way to find a jam session and get more loose. All the time I travelled on the road this was the feeling. There was hardly ever a time that we didn't get the word. There would be musicians who would approach you, too: "Hey man, would you like to come out and blow after the gig?" You'd say: "Yeah, crazy." It worked both ways—we were looking for a place, and they wanted us to play.

To be perfectly honest, I was never conscious of developing a particular style; it just turned out that that was my way of playing. Not that I haven't listened to other players—you have to, to learn anything about it in the first place. I leave myself open to listen to all players; even when I was younger, I just didn't listen to trombone players, period. For one thing, I've always thought in terms of playing like a tenor player—more so than like other trombonists.

However, there have always been trombone players I admired. At an early age, before the bebop era

started, I listened to Jack Teagarden, Dickie Wells, Lawrence Brown, Tommy Dorsey. Of course, the way I play now, you'd never know that I was ever an appreciator of the Dorsey style, but I've always loved the way he played. I admire any good musician, no matter what bag they're playing in—as long as it's done well. Naturally, being more involved in jazz, I'm going to be leaning in that direction. Right from the time I started going to school, I was a jazz player. This was my way of life, you know.

Another great improviser on the trombone was Jack Jenny; he played some wonderful things in his time. Everybody knows his "Stardust"—that was a beautiful solo he had on that. There were others; there was a guy I heard by the name of Dick Le Fave, that no one even knows about. He happened to be a great jazz trombone player; he was working with Sam Donahue's band at one time.

Of course, there was Bill Harris—he was a great influence on me. In fact, I have a recording that I made while I was in the Army, on "Rocking Chair"; I did it at a USO building, when playing with a band there—if you heard it today, you'd swear it was Bill Harris. It was easy for me to mimic him, because I was playing with a lip vibrato at the time, too; I'm sort of using a combination of both now. But that's how much I really loved the way he played.

Actually, Bill Harris was one of the only trombone players whose solos and stuff I could really mimic. His style was different and exciting; I really got into that deep, you know. I used to listen to him and admire him so much that I wanted to imitate him, so I could see what he was into. Then later on I went on and started doing my own thing. Yes, I guess to a certain extent I hear players now who are using the same approach as mine, so to speak.

One of my favourites is J.J.—I've always loved his playing. He's

very melodic, he has a beautiful sound, great feeling and everything. He was a fantastic player, and still is today, although he doesn't care to play that much any more—he's into writing. But every time he picks that horn up, though, he sounds as good as ever to me—I don't see any problems in his chops at all. I first heard him after the Bill Harris days; the bebop era, that was when J.J. got into it. I was still involved in playing with bands around that time, and J.J. was getting the exposure, working with different groups.

Although I did have a wonderful experience in the latter part of '47 and in '48, before I joined Gene Krupa. I was living in New York, working my card out—which means that you have to wait three months before you can get a steady job; in the meantime, you just wait that time out, and you only work casuals. I wasn't actually going to school at Juilliard, but I was living right next door to it, at the Claremont Hotel. And I used to hang around the

school a lot, and play with the band there—everybody thought I was a student at Juilliard!

I used to go in town all the time, on 52nd Street. The bebop era was really pretty strong then, and I used to go and sit in at these clubs. Charlie Parker would be working at the Three Deuces with Erroll Garner, Oscar Pettiford and J. C. Heard. I mean, for these guys to let me sit in with 'em—I felt quite honoured, and very happy to be a part of it. And I guess I was just bold enough to ask 'em, because I wanted to play: I just felt the vibrations. Once they heard me, I was always welcome. They would never say: "No, you can't tonight". It was "C'mon, Frank"—Charlie and Erroll were beautiful that way. Oh, I'll never forget those days.

Then at Birdland, there'd be groups playing in there—Miles, Max Roach, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie—and occasionally they'd have me sit in with them. That was sort of the beginning of the bebop

thing for me—I was really getting into it.

Of course, another thing I did—I've always had my ear glued to the record player, listening to Bird, Miles, whoever was popular and up-to-date at the time. Once in a while I take on students, and I tell 'em to listen as much as possible, as well as taking what I or any teacher might give them just to practise. I think listening has a lot to do with the way you're going to end up playing, because it tells you the whole story right there, and it gives you the feeling that you want to project as a jazz player

The more you can listen to a player—the more you listen to music, regardless of what music you want to get into—it really helps. It's helped me a lot. Just listening constantly—then it gets in your brain, and you're starting to think in those terms. You know, the riffs, the licks, the solos they're playing, the way they're phrasing it, the feeling that's coming out. Automatically, then, it'll

be within you. Once it's part of you, that makes it that much easier to produce it out of the instrument. Yes, it becomes a language you've learned.

I really emphasise that also when I do clinics around the country. The Conn Corporation sets them up. I also get direct calls from the band directors at the various colleges. Which is a beautiful thing—I really enjoy doing them. You work with these kids, you bring arrangements to them, you rehearse them. You do a clinic in the afternoon, when you play for them, explain your techniques; then you appear on a concert with their band in the evening.

When I tell them about playing at every opportunity, they always say: "Well, it's difficult for us to try to get guys together." I say: "If you want it to happen, you'll make it happen. If what you really want to do is become good jazz players, learn how to improvise, and get around your instrument, you'll find a

place. I'm sure you can get together at some-body's house and blow, maybe once or twice a week, like we used to do."

I guess what they meant is: probably because of the rock field. In the rock bag, guys don't get together and blow. In contemporary music and bebop, it was the thing for us to do. In rock, it seems like they'll just rehearse for an engagement, or something like that. But regardless whether it's a rock bag or not, I tell 'em: as far as being an improvising soloist and actually playing, you're still going to have to do that, anyway.

Listening has a lot to do with the way you're going to end up playing. It tells you the whole story right there, and it really gives you the feeling you want to project...

Because the rock bag is getting to a point now where it's much more musical—the jazz/rock idiom, you know. And I see this, working these clinics; you've got these young kids writing great compositions. It's not

just hard rock, period—they get into a variety of moods. They'll be cooking for a while, then they'll move into the freer type of thing—actually, they're open to it all. In the future, I think there's going to be a big market for new leaders, new jazz groups in the business, which will include the jazz/ rock bag as well. There's getting to be some fine players coming out of it, because now they're starting to get into the instrument. It's not just guitars and singing, period, and music blasting you out of the place. It's become more musical—which is good to hear.

Music goes on and on. I hear this remark once in a while: "What else can be done on the horn?" Well—I've heard things that other guys might do, and I come up with things myself, that sometimes are accidental, and say: "Hey, I like that; I never thought of this before"—a different approach. I don't know where it's going to go, or what it's going to be.

One of these days another trombone player's going to create something, and you'll say: "Gee, man, I never heard anything like *that* before." There's never any end to it. At one time the trombone wasn't even considered a solo instrument—and look what can be done with it today.

My most recent recording is one I did in Rome, with Conte Candoli and a rhythm section from Italy. It turned out beautiful; we're very happy with it. It's with RCA, and it should be distributed any time now. The most recent one I've done in America is not under my own name. It's a group that I've been using for a long time, comprising myself, Conte Candoli, Don Menza, Frank Strazzeri on piano, Gene Cherico on bass, and Dick Burke on drums; when we have an opportunity to work clubs in the Hollywood area, I use pretty much the same guys. But Frank Strazzeri had a chance to do some taping; for possible sale to a record company. They were all his

compositions, and I can't tell you how absolutely beautiful the charts are—you'd have to hear them. I'm glad I did it, because it's representative of my present-day playing.

Conte Candoli would have probably played with me on my recent Ronnie Scott's engagement, if he hadn't had to get back to Los An-

geles, because he's working the Johnny Carson shows: Yes, he's one of my all-time favourites. He's always been a genuine jazz player, and with the fact that we've been very close friends for so many years, we play together as often as we possibly can. Oh, I love the way Conte plays. When you hear him, you know it's

Conte Candoli. He's listened to Dizzy, Miles and all of 'em, but regardless of who you listen to, it doesn't mean you're going to play exactly like them. He really has a recognisable, personal way of playing.