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HUBERT LAWS
NEA JAZZ MASTER (2011)

Interviewee: Hubert Laws (November 10, 1939 -)
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Brown: Today is March 4th, 2011. This is the Smithsonian NEA Jazz Masters oral history interview with Hubert Laws in his home in Los Angeles, California, conducted by Anthony Brown and Ken Kimery.

Good afternoon, Hubert. How are you doing?

Laws: I'm fine, man.

Brown: The last time I saw you was at the NEA Jazz Masters awards in January. You provided the first musical number, a duet with Kenny Barron, playing *Stella by Starlight.* I have to say, that was the high point of the evening. It could have stopped after that. That was, oh, incredible.

Laws: It's kind of you to say that, because I felt very good about that collaboration with Kenny. It's so interesting, because we were supposed to have had a rehearsal that morning. We met in this little room on the side and we ended up – I said, "You know what? Let's do – let's just play for a while, and then we'll lead on into *Stella.*" I said, "We may do that, or I may do another tune." He said okay. That's what I love about professional guys like him. They're so flexible. We didn't know what we were going to play in the beginning.

Brown: It was definitely exploratory, and man – but I could tell, soon as you hit those first of *Stella,* and Kenny's right there. As a matter of fact, as I mentioned off mic, was that the last interview that we did was with Ken – the last interview that I did for this program was with Kenny, and he said the exact same thing.

Laws: Really!

Brown: Exactly. Almost verbatim.

Laws: Really! I love that spontaneity. And with people of that caliber, it makes it so much easier. I loved it too. I loved the way it grew. It blossomed like a flower. Kenny's so humble. He hangs his head, but he contributes so much, because without him, it wouldn't have worked. It couldn't have gone too far.

Brown: Kenny – well, I have a special relationship with Kenny, because I studied with him at Rutgers. So . . .

Laws: Oh really?

Brown: So Kenny for me looms very large.

Laws: Oh yes, very large. Heavy, heavy, heavyweight. I felt so privileged, just to be in that environment with those guys, because – and I found myself very blessed to be in, throughout my career. Somehow or another, I weaseled in, got in there, and became a part. Then I look back. It's like I remember Jack – what's his name? – John McEnroe make this statement. He says, "The older I get, the better I used to be."

Brown: I'm not going to let the public be fooled by you, Mr. Laws. You bring so much to the table. That's why you're with them all, because it's birds of a feather. Y'all are just – anyway, before I begin the formal interview, I just have to say that your music – because in the early '70s, CTI was the soundtrack to my college days. I was just getting into jazz, like I mentioned earlier, with James Newton, as a kid in junior high school. But CTI and you – man, I'm telling you, that that was some of the brightest memories that I have, an association with that music and my experiences.

Laws: Anthony, I don't know if it's too much of a sidetrack, but I must tell you how that whole relationship with that label came about. At the time I had already done records with Atlantic. Yeah, I'd done some records with Atlantic, with Chick [Corea] and Ron [Carter] and those guys. But I was doing that time a t.v. show with Billy Taylor's group. He put this selected group of guys together. He had convinced the producers that they – we're special. So that's why he explained to us, we should not take off. In other words, don't take off on this gig, because I've convinced these producers – it was "The David Frost Show," the best-paying gig in the city at that time. I was playing – it wasn't flute. I think I was playing saxophone in that band. Frank Wess was in there, and Jimmy Owens

on trumpet. I think Bobby Thomas was on drums, and Bob Cranshaw, he was on bass. Some other guys in there.

But what happened was, I had to take off twice. The first time I took off, I had to go to the Assembly. Very important. It was a spiritual assembly. He was agreeable to doing it. He said, "Okay. You" – Billy's a nice man, nice guy. The second time I got this call from Memphis, Tennessee, where Creed Taylor was down there with a rhythm section. I think he had that rhythm section mainly because of the success of a record that Herbie Mann had done, *Memphis Underground.* He wanted me to come down there to record with that rhythm section, because he had scheduled them to play, I think, with Stanley Turrentine and somebody else, and they didn't show up. Maybe Hank Crawford. You know Hank.

So he called me up. I don't understand why I did that. I dropped a gig. I was making a lot of money on that. So was everybody else in the band. For some strange reason, I was convinced to go down there, with no real hope in advance or anything. CTI was not an established label at that time. But Creed had me come down there, and I recorded my first record with them, called *Crying Song*, the first record. As it turned out, that was one of the best decisions I ever made. If you could understand the residual effect – it continues to this day. There must have been some kind of almost divine guidance, because, career-wise, it was one of the best decisions. I look back. I even saw – at the NEA, I saw Jimmy Owens. He's still functioning, but that band and that whole situation is almost forgotten, but CTI is still in the memory of a lot of people. See. So that was a strategic decision to make at that strategic time.

Brown: You were truly blessed, Mr. Laws. That's what I can say.

Laws: Yeah, I am.

Brown: Let's talk about in the beginning. In the beginning of your life – if you could, for the record, state your full name, your place and date of birth.

Laws: I'm Hubert Laws.

Brown: No middle name?

Laws: No middle name. Hubert Laws, Jr. I'm a junior. My dad's the senior. I was born in Houston, Texas, November 10, 1939. Do you need me to tell anything about the siblings now, or what?

Brown: We'll get to that. I want to know about your parents. If you could talk about what your mother and father – where they originally came from, and their occupations.

Laws: My mother and father – my mother was born, I think, in Houston or outside of Houston. Maybe Chenango. That name comes to mind, Chenango, Texas, which is right

outside of Houston. My dad was born in Burton, Texas, which is not too far west, somewhere near Prairie View, which is the college there. He basically was just a hard worker, a manual laborer. He retread tires and he also – he had two jobs. He retread tires from like 7 in the morning to about 12 or 1 in the afternoon. Then he had an hour off and he'd go to this parking garage. It was Fuller's Garage in Houston. He'd work for another 8 hours or more, up until it closed at 12 midnight. That was his schedule for a good – I don't know – 35 or 40 years. He did that. Now that, for me, was a role model. That's why I felt, my dad could do that. I always kept that in mind. My dad can do that, hey man, I can practice my flute 8 hours at least. Really. That was an incentive for me.

My mother was the – she was a seamstress, homemaker, and also a pianist with the local church choir, Baptist choir. That's how I guess – we had a piano in the home as a result of that. My mother tells me when I was 5, I used to get up there on the piano stool and began – played my own melodies – I ended up – by ear, because I had no lessons at that time. Then she sent my sister Blanche and I to have piano lessons, but it was – the lady was very limited. So we really didn't get that much of an education in terms of reading. I didn't get that education. I didn't get that education until later, when I went to elementary school and I ran into this teacher. His name was Carl Owens. You don't hear of him now, but he was very impressive, as many people are, and you don't hear about them. They just don't ascend to any notoriety. But he was – he, as well as a high-school teacher, was influential – were influential to me, as well as Crusaders, the group that ultimately became the Crusaders.

So that's my mother and my father.

Brown: And your mother's name?

Laws: Miola Laws.

Brown: Could you spell it please?

Laws: M-i-o-l-a. Her middle name was Luverta. Remember that: Miola Luverta. L-u-v-e-r-t-a.

Brown: In one of the biographies I read that your father player harmonica?

Laws: No. I'm glad we can get that straight. My father did not play. He pretty much sang in the church choir. It's my mother's father who was a harmonica player. He was almost like a traveling – what do you call those people who travel around?

Brown: Itinerant musician?

Laws: There's another word they use. I can't remember. But anyway, he traveled around. My mother didn't really know him that well. She heard stories of him. She tells me –

incidentally, my mother's here. She's 91 years old. She's here. We brought her here for health reasons, to get her some treatment. But anyway, she's the one who gave me the information about her dad, which she got from someone else who knew him. So she didn't really know her dad on a regular basis, because he was a musician. He traveled around, like musicians are. You know.

Brown: A traveling troubadour, wandering troubadour. Is that the word?

Laws: That's right. Apparently so. I wish I had got the chance to know him, but I do know her stepfather.

Brown: What was his name?

Laws: Ike. Ike Alexander. So he was really responsible for rearing her, he and my grandmother, her mother. Her name was Winnie, Winnie Alexander.

Brown: You mentioned your sister Blanche. Because when I look at your other siblings, Ronnie, who was probably the most other – shall we say, successful. He's so much younger than you. So Blanche was probably more contemporary in age with you.

Laws: She's a couple of years older. Blanche is right now head of Angelus Funeral Home, right here on Crenshaw [Boulevard]. She ended up – she started out as the organist/singer, and she just stayed with that business until she's ascended to be – she's the head person in charge right now. I don't even think she sings any more. She just does all the administrative things there.

Brown: Let's go back to your original home in Houston. Could you talk about the neighborhood, or identify the neighborhood?

Laws: Oh yeah. We lived first – I can remember, when I was a toddler – I do remember this, because I remember my mother talking to her friends on the sidewalk – a place called the Cuney Homes. That's right behind TSU – that's Texas Southern University. That's a little project. It's a government-funded project. See, I didn't know all this until later. It's tantamount to being – what's that government funded?. What's that stuff called?

Brown: Section 8?

Laws: Section 8, yeah. That's what it's tantamount to being, for people who are lower income. We were there, I think, until maybe I was about 4 or 5. That's when we moved into a place called Studewood – S-t-u-d-e-w-o-o-d [pronounced with three syllables, as stew-dee-wood]. Studewood is where we spent – I spent most of my life in Houston, until I left.

Studewood was across town from where I went to high school. I went to junior high school in Studewood, which is called Burrus Elementary. I went there until I was in the ninth grade. When I graduated from there, I was looking for one of the three high schools to go to. Normally I would have gone to Washington. There were three. One was Washington, Jack Yates, and Phyllis Wheatley. My mother knew about – this is where my mother comes in to be very, very helpful, because she knew about the music program there. The most influential music director, of the band, was Sammy Harris, okay? So, she made it possible for me to enroll, although I was not in that zone or that vicinity. I had to travel crosstown every morning. I got up with my dad, who got up very early to go to his job, rode downtown with him, then got the bus on to fifth ward. Fifth ward is where Phyllis Wheatley still is.

That's where I met Sammy Harris and also the members of the group that's now known as the Crusaders. Stix Hooper – or Nesbitt Hooper. We call him Stix – was the pioneer for the band. He used to put everybody together. In fact he recruited – they were already playing. I was the last one to be added. There was a bass player. Called him La La – Henry Wilson. There was Joe Sample, Wilton Felder, Wayne Henderson, and myself, along with Stix. There were six of us. At that time we were called the Modern Jazz Sextet. That's what – I think Stix decided on that name.

After school – we had a high school dance band, as well as the marching band that played football games, stuff like that. Out of that dance band came those guys. After school, we'd go over to Wilton's – as I can recall, to Wilton's place, Wilton Felder's place, and we would rehearse. We played local stuff. In fact, one of the highlights for that band was, we won a local competition. It was a t.v. – the first time we were on t.v. I've got some pictures of that, too. Black and white t.v. Wasn't even color. We won this competition. We won some kind of a hi-fi set for the school, which stayed there for a while, but subsequently just sort of disappeared.

But after that group formed – see, I don't want to get away from your question. That's how I got to Phyllis Wheatley, and it's also being at Phyllis Wheatley was one of the ways I got introduced to playing the flute.

Brown: We'll get . . .

Laws: You want to do something else?

Brown: We'll back up, because we'll get to the flute. Can you – let me just return to your neighborhood. You mentioned you lived in two different neighborhoods. Presumably they were segregated . . .

Laws: Oh yeah.

Brown: . . . communities, and by the fact that one of the schools you went to is Phyllis Wheatley, it sounds like an all-black school.

Laws: It was.

Brown: So were you growing up in essentially a segregated environment?

Laws: Yes. What is so interesting is that I didn't feel deprived of anything, because there was this strong family tie that we had, regardless of all the other stuff that may have been – because we were not aware, I guess, as kids, of as much. Even though, as I recall, going back, I remember that they had separate locations on the bus. You had separate drink – water fountains, separate facilities where we could eat and drink, but I guess, being kids, we weren't – I wasn't focused on that. I wasn't, anyways. I was focused on the music. We were focused on the music.

Now Stix, he's always been cognizant of things like that. He's always been politically minded and all that. But at the time, I was not at all. My focus was so much on playing music, developing myself, developing my skills as a musician. I didn't think too much about that segregation thing. I think it was – it contributed. Maybe that separation contributed to what developments we had, because we probably never would – I went back recently to that school, the same school, and I gave a lecture. I talked to the young kids. It's mixed. A lot of Spanish, some white, and some black, but the whole direction seems to be so dispersed. There's no camaraderie. They didn't seem to have any direction. I asked some pointed questions to them, because I thought it could help them, because I tell you, today, it's totally different. The educational system, I think, is failing. It's really failing. I think there was more direction at that time, because I never will forget a lecture that Sammy Harris gave to us during band period. I never will forget it, because he played Cannonball [Adderley], Miles [Davis, John] Coltrane, and then he told us how we had to work our behinds off to exceed – to succeed, rather. Exceed as well, because you had to do something – other people – in order to be successful.

Brown: You had to be twice as good.

Laws: Yeah, something like that. But I never will forget that. It's so interesting. I must have been no more than 16, because I finished high school at 16. Maybe 15, when he gave that lecture. That tells you that at an early age, you can understand things. That made such an impression on me. That's why I think it's so important. If I'm given the opportunity to participate in something that contributes to the young people, I know that's where the future can lie, with those young people, because I know the impression it made on me. So I just assume it can make a similar impression on other people, if they get the chance to hear things that I heard, like from Sammy Harris.

Brown: Let's go back to the beginning of your – well, before we even go back to the beginning of your musical pursuits, how were you as a student, overall, in general education?

Laws: I was straight A's. There was – I'm trying to think of that name, that woman – that teacher. She always – [Wineffie?] gave us a dollar for each A we made. So I wanted to get those dollars.

Brown: Call that incentive.

Laws: I think her name is Miss Washington. Yeah, I was pretty much straight A's. I did really well in high school. I made pretty good grades.

Brown: The teachers predominantly black as well?

Laws: They were all black.

Brown: All black, okay.

Laws: Some were very light complected. So they must – they could have been mixed. I remember the principal was Dr. Caldwell, and there were a couple of others who were light complected, but no, they were all – I think there was one who was working in the office. Her name was Farnsworth. But they were mostly black. Everybody was black.

Brown: You already said that you started piano early, getting lessons. I guess you said age 5. Is that correct? But that didn't pan out, because the teacher didn't really – wasn't that qualified.

Laws: It wasn't – I tell you one thing. I didn't give up playing piano. It became instrumental in me writing music later on. In fact I still use that to write music. That piano's here, because sometime we have music here. I've had – invite my neighbors over, and we play music. Have my band to come – [John] Leftwich and [Ralph] Penland, we'd come over, and we'd play some music together. But I use the piano as a means, and I always tell the young kids to learn to play the piano. I don't care what instrument you play. Learn to play piano, because it gives you at your disposal the harmonies, the rhythm, and the melody, and it helps you, especially in your harmonic development.

Brown: After the piano, where did your interest in music lead you to?

Laws: In elementary school they were offering instruments for the kids to select from. I just happened to get in on the last of the selection. So I ended up selecting the mellophone. A mellophone – in fact, I found out, when I was doing research on Freddie [Hubbard], when I taught – when I gave a discourse at his funeral, I found out that he started on the same instrument, the mellophone. I didn't know that until after he died. I

mentioned that during that – I said, "Little did I know that he and I started on the same instrument." I said, "But I'm sure glad he didn't go to flute." I'm glad he chose another instrument.

What happened was, I chose that mellophone. That was that Carl Owens, the piano player I was telling you about earlier who was also influential. He played jazz. He was an improviser. I remember he was a whiz at what he did, and that also made some impression on me, but I didn't have a very long experience with Carl Owens. I remember he was very eccentric. He – people – of course, I guess all jazz musicians are oddballs. He was so – I remember he seemed like he would get angry about something small, and he'd stare off into space. Now I can understand why, because you're abnormal when you're in this world. When you deal with this music, you're abnormal, you see? They call me – my own family calls me an oddball, but I don't care. They come to me when they get in trouble. They do. It would not –

We were in the Philippines just the other day, my daughter – I mean my sister, Debra. Boy, they lean on me, both of them. We have meetings right here, right in this little area. When it comes to making decisions, we are totally opposites. I'm talking about business decisions. They think with their heart, and I think with some facts, some reasons. My mother tells them that, too. She says, "Look at" – the master teacher says – and I often quote that – he says, "If you don't believe me, believe the results I get." See? But he used another word. He said it like this – I want to use the words correctly – "Wisdom is proved righteous by its children." One place. The other place, he says, "Wisdom is proved righteous by its fruits." Makes sense, doesn't it? Everybody can't get that, but it's true. So, you don't believe me, just believe what results you get. If it takes hard work, hey, do hard work.

My son just left here, a tennis player. That's why I got this place. It's got a tennis place back there, because I wanted to help him aspire. But I found out something. You have to be self-propelled. I didn't have all those things. I was poor, poor. My first flute was given to me. A struggle, a struggle. Sometimes – he thinks that there was a secret to success. We used to do little things to make him focus. I used to tell him certain things about focusing, because the discipline is different in music, but it still can be applied to tennis. Hard work. Get up early in the morning, when everybody's asleep. Do what you do. That's what I tried to get him to do. But somehow or another he thought there was a secret. I said, "The secret is hard work." So, "Wisdom proved righteous by its children."

So what was – see, he teaches tennis. He was trying to be a pro and all that. I'm talking about stuff that's probably irrelevant, but it still establishes a principle of hard work, and I tried to instill that into him.

Also, you can't give people what they can't use. I used to – they need to work for it. They have to be self-inspired. I used to wonder, God, this guy's got everything. I used to get up in the morning. I'd make his – get everything, wake him up. Nobody woke me up. I'd

wake him up to go – he had tennis matches to play. He was in a junior tournament. He won. Up to 14, he did real well, because we were out there practicing more than the average guy, plus he had the advantage of having his own court in the backyard.

I found out later, though, you pamper them too much, that's another saying too. You pamper a person from his youth up, he'll become a spoiled one.

Brown: Words to the wise.

Laws: Yeah, but that's from the Bible. "Pamper one from his youth up, this one will become a spoiled person." Now he's seeing some of the stuff come true. He's trying to tell me. I couldn't explain it to him. Now he's got his own kids. Now he's bearing the brunt of it.

Brown: We saw he can bring the hammer down. So he learned something from Pops. That's for sure.

Laws: Yeah, but sometimes I think he's a little bit too stringent, when it comes to his kids. You have to have a good reason. There's no reason for them not to take their little pup with them. That's not going to hurt anything. There's some other things that can hurt far worse than that. It wasn't like she was stealing it. I think it was hers. I think it belonged to her, and she had left it here. She just wanted to take it back. But he's over there at another place now. He just moved. He's been here up until about a month ago. But he decided he'd go over there with the mother of his kids.

Brown: Let's go back to hard work and you now having the mellophone. Did you embrace it? Did you develop a passion for that instrument?

Laws: Not really. I played it as long as they let me use it. I didn't buy my own. What happened was, locally they had this big hit on the radio of Tab Smith playing *Because of You.* I heard that saxophone sound. Boy, I was so enamored with *Because of You.* I was a paper boy by that time. I was throwing the *Houston Chronicle.* Had about a hundred customers. I was saving up my money to buy an alto saxophone so I could emulate that sound from Tab Smith. Did you ever hear of him?

Brown: Yeah, he was with Fatha Hines or something. I know when I was doing more research . . .

Laws: Tab Smith, he had this beautiful – then I learned later why he probably had that hit. I listened to this program here in the morning on weekends, Chuck Cecil. He has this radio program. He always plays this stuff from the '30s, '40s, '50s. He calls it, "Music from the Swinging Years." I learned that during that particular – I put it together, the elements that I heard him speak about. Tony Bennett had a hit back there – it was during the '50s – of *Because of You,* a vocal. Now you know what usually happens. You have a

vocal hit. It comes instrumentally. People start to record the same thing instrumentally. I'm sure that's what happened to Tab Smith.

As a result, *Because of You* was the only tune I learned to play when I got the alto saxophone. Then I increased my repertoire to *Sunny Side of the Street* and *Night Train.* Participated in a local talent show in Houston – Trummy Cain's talent show – and I won it three times. Then I became so-called 13-year-old sensation for about four years.

Brown: Marketing.

Laws: That's it. They did it even back there. My dad, because he thought that – I got offers to play in these local clubs, as a result of winning that talent show. My dad didn't want me to play, because he felt like it was – you know, he's a deacon in a Baptist church. He thought that was the devil's music and all that. But when he took me out there to one of those places, it was funny. I started walking on the stage. I was playing that saxophone. Those people started throwing that money at me. Boy, I heard him on the phone next morning, talking. "Hey, man, you should have seen my son out there. They were throwing that money at him." Boy, he was glad to take me to my next gig. So money had a strong influence on him.

So that was the beginning of the alto saxophone. That's how – actually, that was the main instrument I played when I went to Phyllis Wheatley, because, like I said, I finished [junior] high school at 13 and went to Phyllis Wheatley that year, and I was there for three years. I finished at 16, finished high school there. That's when I ran into the Crusaders, that group.

Brown: Your mother, what did she think about the music you were playing?

Laws: She was a supporter. She's always a supporter. She didn't – she felt my dad was too restrictive. Of course the only thing my dad ever understood about any music I played was one piece. I recorded it for him, and that still became – as a matter of fact, at that NEA award, they had on our tables what was supposed to be a hallmark for each honoree. It had to be *Amazing.* I got it right here. Oops, I can't get up. It's right there on that silver plate. *Amazing Grace.* He happened to – one day, after coming from fishing, he was humming it. I was there. It was maybe in 1970. He was humming *Amazing Grace* while he was cleaning the boat, washing the boat down after all that salt water and fishing. When he said – I said, "Dad, I'm going to record that for you." I went back to New York, and we had a meeting, Don Sebesky, Creed, and I. Started discussing repertoire. That's when we came up with that CD called *Morning Star.* On that we recorded *Amazing Grace.* That became – it's still a strong favorite of so many people.

Brown: Talking with James Newton last night. He said, "Ask him about *Amazing Grace.* What was the influence for that?" So you just gave that.

Laws: Yeah. That was it.

Brown: Did you feel that the gospel and the spiritual tradition really loomed large in your musical . . . ?

Laws: Absolutely. Oh yeah, man, the feeling part of it. Gospel music is really, I think, the root – really this music is the root of all music. I did some research on it. It's really the root of it all. It became in some ways perverted, because music in its purest sense was featured with pure worship. That's what it was all about, pure worship. But, like many other things become perverted over time, becomes contaminated with other elements.

Now, what comes to mind – not to say it's contamination – but what comes to mind: when Mongo [Santamaria] came from Havana, Cuba, he came to the U.S., and they call what – he started combining jazz with the Cuban rhythms. So, Afro-Cuban. Not to say it's a contamination, but it's like an amalgam of elements from various – but now let's say that this music was just, from the very start, had a certain sound, maybe a certain rhythm, that has the strong rhythms, the pulsating rhythms that we see today, but still, they may have been a pure form.

But we know that religion – in fact, see, I'm a student of the Bible as well, and I found out, the Ark of the Covenant – next to the Ark of the Covenant were the Levites. The Levites had the beauty of presenting the music. It was right next to the Ark of the Covenant, and it was in the purest form. So that's why I know that everything sort of stems from that element.

I know for me, religious music, that was the first thing I ever heard. Across the street was a honky tonk too, and I could hear very strong similarities to the music I heard, people shouting and jumping in church, in the Baptist church, and I heard some of those same elements across the street from Miss Mary's place, out of the juke box.

It's so interesting too, because I heard some music later on that was claimed to be written by some of the artists we hear of today, and I had heard – like *Bridge over Troubled Waters*, man, it was another name, but I heard it when I was a little kid. It wasn't written by – who was it?

Brown: Paul Simon.

Laws: It wasn't written by Paul Simon. It really wasn't. And I hear some other – there was one tune that I – *Let it Be,* that the Beatles did. They didn't write *Let it Be,* because that was another religious song that I heard years ago. But the name was changed to protect the guilty. Yeah, I'm serious.

Brown: We know about that whole history of appropriation. Maybe we'll touch on that a little later.

Let's talk about your meeting with the members of the Modern Jazz Sextet. I have here liner notes to *The Best of Hubert Laws,* your Columbia release. There's a reference from Dan Morgenstern about the Swingsters. Was that ever a name for the group?

Laws: Yeah, that was one of the evolving names. I think that's when we came to L.A. They called us the Swingsters, because right up here on Cahuenga, we played a place called the Tail Spin, and maybe the club owner put that name to us. We kept that for a while.

Brown: Okay. Let's go back to Houston, before you come to L.A., and the formation of that group, your repertoire, the dynamics, who handled the business. What were the group dynamics in there?

Laws: Mainly, like I said earlier, that Stix Hooper was mainly the one who was the coordinator. He put the band together. It was supposed to be a co-op band, because we all made the same amount of money, but he seemed to emerge as the organizer. As a matter of fact, that's why we came to Los Angeles, was because of him. He had relatives here, and he felt that we could do better by going to a place that would probably give us more exposure, this, that, and the other.

We waited until after we finished high school, that is, Stix, Joe Sample, and myself. When we finished high school, we went to Texas Southern, just waiting for them, the rest of the guys, to finish high school. We would have gone to L.A., which is what we ended up doing. We had a caravan of big vehicles. We got together. I had the worst vehicle. I had an old '50 Plymouth. Joe had just bought a brand new '56 or '57 Chevrolet. I remember Stix had a Mercury. All of them were newer than mine. In fact my car broke down in Van Horn, Texas. There's another story I can tell you about. We finally got here, though. I drove that same car on up to New York when I got the scholarship to Juilliard. I did.

Brown: Did it break down en route?

Laws: It broke down again. It broke down in this – where is it? Somewhere in Mississippi.

Brown: Oh no.

Laws: My brother. Boy, let me tell you. That was another thing, because you know, going through the South during that period of time, we couldn't stop and use the restroom. We had to have bottles to pee in, and stuff like that. And it was raining. I think it was Memphis, Tennessee. That's what happened. That was the first – it was raining cats and dogs, and one of my valves burnt. It was a '50 Plymouth, 6 cylinder. Had I known, I would have just disconnected the spark plug, and it would have still gone on up

there without putting. But it putt a lot when it had to have power, because it was still connected. That valve was sticking. Man, you should have seen the body English, trying to get it up the hill. It's kind of funny. We were youngsters. I was only 20, and Johnny was just 18. So here we are.

Brown: Let's go back to the trip to Los Angeles. You get to Los Angeles. Where were you staying? Did you have a gig? Were you going for a gig?

Laws: We didn't have any gigs, but what happened was, we traveled right along this street, Rossmore [Avenue], from Crenshaw [Boulevard], because most of our – I lived with my aunt. I had the best of everybody, because I was with my aunt, who – she had the best food. These guys used to come pick me up. La La's eyes looked like saucers, looking at the food while I'm eating. I was eating better than everybody. They were staying with his Uncle Fred. They called him Uncle Fred and Aunt something – there's the mother. La La was – I forgot her name. But he was staying with – most of them stayed with Uncle Fred, that is, Stix, Wilton, Wayne, and La La, the four of them. Joe Sample was with his parents, because his mother, they came here. They had their own place. So Joe and I pretty much had it much better than all the other guys. They got their food. They ate. But they didn't eat as well as I did. I was staying with my aunt, who was a great cook. Had a very clean place. I had my own bedroom.

But I worked hard there too. I did everything I could to help around, because I didn't have money. I didn't have a gig at that time. But eventually we got a gig. We used – we traveled right along this street from, like I said, Crenshaw. We'd get on Wilshire [Boulevard], make a right turn, come on up Rossmore. Rossmore turned right into Vine [Street]. Right up the street there is Local 47. That's where we used to go a lot. We used to pass through this neighborhood and just be in awe of these huge houses. Stix said that the other day, before I went to New York. He said, "Don't you remember, man? We used to come through there, talking about, boy, I'd like to get a house over there one day." He said, "And man, you got a house over there." I never knew it was going to emerge. It wasn't really planned. It just kind of grew into that. Like I told you, I got this house because it had a tennis court, and my son was aspiring to be a pro tennis player.

That's how we eventually got that gig up there on Cahuenga. It's no longer there. Right now, it's a used car lot. The Tail Spin was the name of that place. It was our first gig I remember we got together. Then the second one was we got – it was a place in Lakewood, out near Long Beach, called the Squires Inn. We worked pretty steadily from the time we got the first gig.

We always worked. In fact, when I got – I auditioned for that scholarship to Juilliard, that's when I got ready to leave the band, because I was – that summer, I went down to Santa Cruz and worked for the whole summer to be able to build up my – whatever bank account I had, because I was anticipating going on to New York. But I was being so naive about that, because I thought that scholarship would not only pay my tuition, but

also my living, my lodging. I was rudely awakened when I got there. Just a scholarship to the school. But that panned out too, eventually.

Brown: I want to return to – back to Houston, because you picked up the flute, or received your first flute, as you said, in Houston. Of course you studied with Clement Barone. So let's go back to the flute, the instrument – your final voice, or your ultimate voice.

Laws: Okay. What happened was, the last year of high school, Sammy Harris, the band director I told you about earlier, decided he was going to do the *William Tell Overture.* The prelude to the *William Tell Overture* has a big flute solo, but nobody in the band played flute. Just about that time, Sonny King, a friend of ours, Wayne and I . . .

Brown: Sonny King!

Laws: Um-hmm. His name was Sonny King. Yeah, but you don't know him.

Brown: I do know Sonny King.

Laws: From Houston?

Brown: Yeah. He played tenor saxophone? No?

Laws: No.

Brown: Okay. A different Sonny King.

Laws: No, that Sonny King, he turned out to be a preacher. A heavy-set guy. I kind of have a vision of him. Wayne told me he passed away. Sonny King, he was along with us in age. He had a flute in his attic at that time. I don't know how I got it. He just brought it and gave it to me. I learned to play that flute to play that solo. I struggled for two days. Couldn't get a sound out of the thing. It's an old Bettoney flute. That was B-e-t-t – I think it was B-e-t-t-o-n-y. Maybe you haven't ever heard of it. I don't even know – I've never – some of these other guys know about that name when I mention that to them. But it was a very off-brand flute. It probably didn't cover well. But nevertheless, that was my first instrument. I learned to play. I practiced like mad. I finally got a sound and murdered that solo.

But later on, what happened was, there was no one to really teach me the flute, even when I went to Texas Southern. You couldn't major on the instrument, because they had no teachers on flute, only clarinet and violin and some of the other – piano – some of the other main instruments. But flute teachers, none.

One night, going to – the school required – music appreciation – required that we go to symphony concerts. On the way to that symphony, one of those symphony concerts, I ran into two flute players who played in the orchestra, David Covig and Clement Barone. I just went – I must have had a lot of gall to walk up to those guys, as I think back. What would make me do that? Walk up and say, "Would you give me flute lessons?" David Covig looked at Clement Barone and said, "You take him." Just like that. That was the beginning of a relationship that really helped me, Clement Barone. I started taking flute lessons on Saturdays with him. He charged me only $3, I think.

You know, now people can charge $100 for a lesson. I look back at people like Dave Valentin and McLean – Jackie McLean's son, whom I taught in New York, and I don't remember charging them hardly anything. It was because of my experience. Somebody helped me. So I – you know, to tell you the truth, I didn't really want to teach too much, because I found myself getting too involved, really, trying to pull something out of them that maybe wasn't there.

But it was all because of Clement Barone. He felt that I had something. I'm going to tell you: he felt I had something that I didn't have. He just said – I studied with him for about – let's see. That was somewhere near '57. No, '56. Yeah, because '56 – because I finished high school in '56. Then I went to Southern. So it was my first year at Texas Southern. So, the end of '56, beginning of '57, I probably studied with him. He sold me his dad's flute. It was a professional flute. That flute had been made in – I found out just recently, because I did research – somewhere in the beginning of the 19th century – I mean, not century, but 1900s. I still got the flute, because he told me – he sold it to me for $150. $150. Now it costs me $150 just to change one pad. But he sold me that flute, he said, "As long as you won't sell it to anybody." I haven't sold it. I've still got it.

Clem passed away back in 2005. My previous teacher, Julius Baker, passed away in 2004, because I told Clem about Julius Baker. He didn't even know he had passed. Because everybody loved Julius Baker. He was the premier – you hear about people – I'm talking about classical people – you hear people like [James] Galway and Jean-Pierre Rampal, but Julius Baker was the guy.

Brown: We're going to get to him when we get to the Juilliard.

Laws: Yeah, he was the guy. So how did I get off on that tangent?

Brown: You were just talking about the lineage, studying with Barone and the flute that he sold you from his father.

Were you – obviously, what you've mentioned earlier is the vernacular black religious music, Tab Smith, and you were listening to jazz. Were you developing a passion for classical music, having now picked up the flute as well?

Laws: That's a good question, too, because I think by virtue of the instrument itself, because it's normally known to be in the classical setting, that's why I began to gravitate towards some of the classical music. So I guess because of my teacher's influence, maybe that's why I aspired to be part of an orchestra.

When I eventually got here in L.A., I was – simultaneously, while I was playing these gigs with the Crusaders – they weren't called the Crusaders then. They were the Swingsters, as you said – I was playing in community orchestras, learning the repertoire, which I enjoyed a lot, because I was introduced to these classical composers that I to this day have so much respect for. I tell you, just such high quality music. So, yes, I was developing a love for classical as well as – and really, I was treating jazz like a stepchild, in a sense, because I know it was a means to – see, I didn't really appreciate jazz improvisation as I have come to in later years, because I felt like, I can just do it. So here I was, aspiring to play with orchestras, which is what I ended up doing, but it was not as satisfying as I thought it would be. It's okay. But once you learn the repertoire, and you're playing it over and over, hey man – it really highlights the advantage of playing improvised music, because of the spontaneity of that music, and not only the spontaneity, but the fact that it's always different. So you don't become bored with it. And it's always challenging. It's humbling, too, because the fact is, you don't ever arrive. I don't feel like I've ever arrived at anything, musically. I feel like I can always do it better.

My sister, when we were in the Philippines, she finished singing *Family,* this tune I wrote called *Family.* She was walking back. I said it jokingly, but at the same time, I say – everybody's giving all the accolades, yeahhhhh – I said, "You could have done better." She told Tierney Sutton, "You hear what he told me?. 'You could have done better'." Well, you can do better. That's what [Leopold] Stokowski always said. "You can always do better." We can always do better, because we're imperfect. That is so true.

Keeps me practicing. I woke up this morning. I was as tired as I could be, after that – one of those long flights I started playing my flute. It's become therapeutic. It really has become therapeutic. It becomes almost like a panacea for some of the problems and the stresses that I deal with on some personal relationships. So it's become more than just music. It's become some other thing.

Brown: When you're learning the classical repertoire, of course you're learning all the articulation and everything, the tone, the vibrato, breathing, everything like that, which definitely has its place in that music, but in crossing over to the genre of jazz, you have to – I want to save that question for later. Let me ask you about, when you're still playing alto saxophone and you heard Charlie Parker, what happened?

Laws: Oh, man. I feel that was impossible. So I just said, okay. I'll just play my gigs. I used the saxophone as a means to an end. It would support me while I was at Juilliard. Like I said, I was not showing the proper respect. I knew that improvising, I can improvise, but it was something – like you say you treat your sister and brother

differently from what you treat somebody you don't know too well. You may use – you smile, and you're very cordial and polite to a stranger when you might treat somebody in your own household with disrespect. That was in a sense the way – I knew jazz, and I was not showing the proper appreciation for it until later, because I was working on sonatas and concerti and all these difficult fingerings in the repertoire of classical music. I was not spending so much time improvising.

Now I spend a lot of time improvising. I was listening to Chick [Corea] the other day, because Chick is different. Chick was practicing – when we practiced way back then, he was improvising. The more you improvise, the better you become at it. I found that out. I had some idea. I played my first record. I feel like I was a sideman when he's playing. I didn't want to play my solo after he played his solo, because he was doing – he valued it, even then. Chick has always been such a genius when it comes to improvisation, his music.

Brown: That relationship is very symbiotic. We want to talk about that, the length. Let's go back to – your studying classical flute, repertoire, technique, and you're coming from a jazz background. When I listened – when I first heard your recordings, I could sense that oh, he's mastered both of these languages. How were you able to adapt or to incorporate or to transform your jazz sensibilities to the flute? Because you're not improvising on this instrument. Or are you – have you – by this time, are you attempting to improvise on the instrument? Are you playing in a jazz context?

Laws: Oh yeah. I never considered them two separate entities. I feel like they were merging. It's like you speak two languages. They all communicate, but – I never felt like I've learned a special articulation, know how to play it in jazz. I learned to play classical music in the way that my teacher was teaching me, but I was using the same sound, the same flute sound, in jazz. At least I thought I was.

One day I remember my teacher said, "Why don't you use that" – because when I was playing classical music, I was playing – he said, "Why don't you use that same sound when you're improvising?" I thought I was. In fact, many other flute players told me that I was, but he didn't think so, at that time. Later on, he did. But I never felt that I was actually using different articulations purposefully or consciously to play jazz, as divorced or differentiated from classical music. Never thought like that.

That brings to mind: I always thought music – different musical idioms – can be thought of as different human cultures, in the sense that there's certain disciplines, there's certain attitudes about behavior and this and that and the other, that function in certain cultures. Unfortunately, just because it is different, people separate themselves accordingly, when really it's the amalgam that brings – enhances – the total experience of both. That's what has happened to me.

I remember when I was playing with the Met orchestra and with the Philharmonic. These guys, their minds is totally like this when it comes to other music. They felt like theirs is the utopia of music. This is it. They don't realize, until I took my teacher to Birdland one night to hear the Jazz Messengers, and I wanted him specifically to listen to Freddie Hubbard, this guy with his great virtuosity, because I knew he could relate to that part of it, because he himself was such a virtuoso. He did. His whole concept of jazz was like Duke Ellington and even before that, Esmeraldas and those guys, that he would try to play a jazz solo he heard before, and it was totally contrived, for him.

Then I learned of an experience later from Kenny Burrell. Kenny Burrell told me this later. He says, "Hubert, I was in Japan. I was on tour, and the Philharmonic" – New York Philharmonic – "was on tour as well." So he and Julius Baker, my teacher, met in a coffee shop or breakfast. They had breakfast together. He started talking to – they started talking about me. I didn't know this until Kenny Burrell gave this account at UCLA. We were having a dinner there. Anyway, he says, "Julius Baker said" – he said something, and I don't know why he said that, but – "he says, 'Yeah, Hubert, can do much more than I can.' He says, 'He can play what I do, and he can play what you do, too'." Kenny came here from this perspective, not to extol what I do, but the point is, he's such a jazz aficionado. He had the respect for jazz already. He wanted to impress on these people that a classical player recognized the value of improvised music. That's why I mentioned the cream of the crop, Julius Baker, in context with my playing.

So I'm just pretty much incidental to that. My experience is incidental, but the point is, he made a point that jazz music is a valuable commodity. It's valuable. It's a valuable art form. That's what he – that's the impression that I got.

Brown: All praise to Julius Baker.

We all learn through imitation. Did you have any models when you were playing jazz on the flute? Who were you listening to?

Laws: Piano players. Those guys who really impressed me, these guys who have command of all three of the elements of music: rhythm, harmony, and melody. Percussion. Then they have the harmony there. They can sound more than one note at the same time. And the melody too. That was my inspiration. I'll tell you, to this day I marvel at the guys who do that. I really didn't listen to anybody in jazz as far as the flute's concerned, for improvisation, because I was more interested in the language of music than the instrument, and the language for me was so deeply provocative from these guys who have got the command of the keyboard.

Brown: Which piano players were you listening to?

Laws: Let's see. One time it was McCoy Tyner. The three guys I listened to mostly at that time were Chick, who I met at Juilliard, and then Herbie [Hancock] and McCoy.

Brown: But were you not playing flute when you were with the Crusaders, or the Swingsters?

Laws: I started playing – yeah. I started playing with them.

Brown: So who was important in your formative years back then? Still the pianists?

Laws: I guess maybe my flute teacher, but he wasn't playing jazz. I was just learning. I learned to operate the instrument in that way, but I was just trying to use the technique I was learning to play the flute from him, but I used that – I didn't feel like – I didn't hear anybody that I wanted to emulate on the instrument. My milieu – what I wanted to emulate, I'd hear it from other instruments, like piano, and even Freddie Hubbard had a strong influence on me, the way he played, his command of improvisation, his great virtuosity.

Brown: I didn't mean to cut you off. You mentioned Chick, McCoy, . . .

Laws: And Herbie.

Brown: . . . and Herbie. That's going to get us into the '60s or maybe the late '50s. Let's go back to when you get your – prior to you receiving your scholarship to Juilliard, and what led up to that. What are you doing here in L.A.? You had these two major gigs. What is it? The Tail Spin, wherever. How long were you in L.A. before you started your path towards Juilliard?

Laws: I was here about two-and-a-half years, close to three years. About two-and-a-half years, because I got the scholarship, I think – I know I got to New York 1960. That's what I do know. I don't remember the exact month. I'd have to go back and research. The competition was right here at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre, right there on Wilshire, right around the corner. Pass by it all the time, and it reminds me. So it was like, I guess, two-and-a-half years I was here with the Crusaders and in various other things. I even enrolled in L.A. State College for a little while. I was there for about a year-and-a-half, just trying – everybody was – most of your influences tell you, go to school, go to school. So I wanted to go to school, and I also was able to play in the orchestra there with that instrument, the flute.

Brown: Returning to these liner notes, maybe we can clear up some – perhaps some misconceptions. It says that subsequently, after picking up the flute, you also picked up clarinet and guitar. Is that . . . ?

Laws: I was playing guitar – I was playing clarinet before I played flute, in the high school band. Then I played the flute in order to play that solo in the *William Tell Overture.* I picked that up last. But also, I'm going to tell you, during that time there was

a group from Australia called the Australian Jazz Quartet. In that group there's no piano. There's bass, drums, bassoon, and flute. That influenced us to try to get that sound. I'm talking about Wilton Felder and myself. Wilton went and bought a bassoon. So for a while we had that sound existing within the confines of the Crusaders, the Jazz Crusaders group. But he didn't continue with the bassoon. He still has it somewhere, but he didn't continue playing it. But I had continued with the flute.

Brown: So, the competition?

Laws: To tell you the truth, I had just come back from an audition. I got on a train. Went all the way to Philadelphia to audition at the Curtis Institute. The reason why I did that is because my teacher told me, "You could make it in a breeze." Okay? So, I got – I was in a breeze, too. Going on that train and coming back, I was in a breeze. But before I even returned from the audition, I got a letter of rejection, my aunt. Oh yeah. What happened was, the teacher was William Kincade, first flute in the Philadelphia Orchestra. Little did I know that there was only one opening, and all of his students were – he was auditioning his own students and other people. So I didn't – it was not liked. So I came back to L.A. and my Aunt Anna gave me the letter. I had already been rejected before I returned. So I was kind of depressed, laying across the bed there, and I just happened upon the *Overture* magazine, which is the Local 47's magazine, still being published. It comes out monthly. In it, it showed auditions for the Juilliard School, one year scholarship. I got in on the very end, the last of that. Not only were flutists being auditioned, but you had other instrumentalists: flutes, clarinets, pianists, violinists, singers, all that. I was shocked to find out. I went – I think I entered maybe a week or so before that thing was – they made a decision who was going to win it, and somehow or another, they chose me, of that scholarship.

Brown: We're going to have to stop and change the tape.

So you get the scholarship, one-year scholarship to Juilliard. They're only going to pay for your tuition and fees, not your room and board.

Laws: A rude awakening.

Brown: You drove – you said you already drove your car there, 1960.

Laws: Yep. 1960. They had the biggest snow storm, like the recent one they had in New York. Biggest snow storm. My car is parked in front of my rooming house. A tractor comes along and tears off part of the fender. I eventually took it out to Ozone Park, Queens, which is near the – now known as the Kennedy Airport. I parked it out there one day, because it had some – actually, one of Joe Sample's relatives I had met in L.A. prior to even going to New York. They let me park my car in front of their house, because there you didn't have to go from one side of the street to the other, like you have to do in New York streets. So I parked it out there. One day Mary Holley called me. That was the

lady. Mary Holley called me. "Hubert, did you have somebody come pick up your car?" I said no. Somebody stole my car. That was the last I heard of that '50 Plymouth.

I'm going to tell you, I got a bunch of cars right now. In that garage right there, I got 1 2 3 4 5, and a truck. You know why? It's not because I want to accumulate cars. They serve for nostalgic purposes. Each car reminds me of a certain period of my life. I got an old Porsche, right now. I just drove it back when I came back. I bought it in '71. That car reminds me of all my dates and all of that stuff that used to happen in New York. I'm not talking about recording dates. I'm talking about . . . . Okay? It reminds me of periods in my life, just like certain music can remind you of certain experiences you have in your life. See?

So that car was stolen there at Ozone Park, Queens. I was reminded of it when I went – we were driving to go to the Grand Canyon last year. We stopped in a place called – I think it was Kingman [Arizona], just before you get to the Grand Canyon. They had a huge automobile show, old cars. You would not believe it. I ran into a guy. He had a vintage – just like my car. It looked – I sat there, and it reminded me of my trip I had taken back East with that car. He told me he had paid little or nothing for it. I was thinking of buying – trying to find one. Go on Amazon or whatever those . . .

Brown: E-bay.

Laws: . . . places where you can get. He told me. I saw two cars like that. One was very low mileage, which was the original owner. She had to have – she lives up in Berkeley [California] somewhere with that car. They all drive down to Kingman to display their vehicles. And they're so clean. This one guy – in fact I've got pictures of it, sitting in it.

All right. So I got off on another tangent. You have to take me back.

Brown: Okay. You're in Juilliard. Your car got stolen.

Laws: Yeah, stolen, but that's okay, because New York at that time, the subways were used a lot. That's what I ended up doing. I lived right down the street from the old Juilliard. It was on 122nd Street and Amsterdam [Avenue], is where I lived. The old Juilliard was 122nd and Claremont [Avenue].

Brown: That's where the Manhattan School of Music is?

Laws: That's where it is now. The new Juilliard's up there in Lincoln Center.

Chick and I were – in fact, that's where I met my first wife, too. She was a dancer there.

But I didn't really have that much use of a car in New York anyway. Nobody – where are you going to park it? Later on, I got a condo – they didn't call them condos then. They

called them cooperatives. In that place, I was able to park my Porsche there, and it was covered, very inexpensive. For a long time I was able to park my cars that I had there.

Before that, when I was in school, I didn't really have that much of a use for a car. When I had my gigs – my first gig – I guess we want to get to that too, because that – my first gig I got after I was down to my last 50 bucks or so. My brother Johnny had come to New York with me from Houston. By the time I got my first gig, he got his first gig at the local grocery store, right down the street. I got a gig at Sugar Ray's Lounge with an organ trio, playing saxophone and flute. That's how I was able to support myself while attending Juilliard.

Brown: Let's talk about your experience at Juilliard, perhaps some of your teachers, some of the classes – courses – you were taking, how you felt, how you felt you were treated, and probably, most importantly, who were some of your classmates.

Laws: You know what? I can't remember all the names of – I remember some of those girls, man. I always remember girls better. I do. Actually, Paula Robison, who's a world-renowned flutist now. She was in that same competition I was in, but I got the scholarship. I think – here again, I think need was probably a factor. She's an excellent player, but I got the scholarship, because I think they took into consideration, aside from whatever talent there is, you have to have a strong need.

Anyway, she was there at Juilliard. There was Virginia Sindelar. These people become musical fatalities, because you don't know about them anymore. But at the time, they – that was the main impetus for me for practicing a lot, because it was competitive – competition. We all were trying to compete for playing in that – that's – unfortunately, that's what happens in classical music. It's almost like being Olympics. You compete. But music shouldn't be like that. And yet, that's what they – people – you got the first flutist, the second flutist, piccolo. So if you played second flute, maybe you're not that good, or whatever. That kind of stuff. Crazy. Crazy stuff, because it doesn't survive school. It doesn't survive school. Often it does not. Because some of those who didn't do very well there, exceeded or went beyond those who did. I don't even know about some – I don't even know where they are, some of those.

The only person I can remember from that school was Chick – Chick Corea – who did something with what he – but he wasn't the – I found out from Chick, after we were on tour recently, and he was telling me, "Hubert, I wasn't there for more than a year." He went in to play – they called it juries – went in to play for these teachers. He said he went in half stoned, and they were – he says he played this, that. I don't know. Whatever. He played something. I can't remember the story that well, because I don't want to misrepresent the truth. But, he ended up leaving as a result of that. I said, "Man, you should have been teaching them something." That's where it should have been, really. If you look at it correctly, because Chick even then – you should hear the way he improvised.

My first record – I told you – *Laws of Jazz,* for Atlantic. The guy came and ate up stuff. He just played so immaculately, clean, and improvised so well. Van Cliburn should have been marveling at that guy's playing during that time, and he won – what? – the Tchaikovsky competition back there.

A lot of these piano players: McCoy and Herbie, Kenny. All these guys play so much more. These guys are playing contrived stuff. It's nice, but how can these guys do all that, spur of the moment. That's what's amazing. You see what people are doing now. They are transcribing their solos, and they're trying to replicate them. They did it on the spot. That's what's so admirable for me, and it's so awesome. Unfortunately, I didn't appreciate it at the time, but now I do much more. It's like I said. It was like a stepchild. But now I value it so much more.

Brown: What were your aspirations when you got to Juilliard?

Laws: Play in an orchestra. I ended up doing it. I played four years. Soloist. I didn't want to be a soloist, because I like to make a living quietly. I didn't want to be in the spotlight. I just wanted to play in an orchestra, because I loved the music. I loved the flute's role in the orchestra. It's like silver lining.

That reminds me. That reminds me of that great record. I don't know if you're going to talk about Tom McIntosh and *Great Day,* but that's what he – that's the purpose. He wanted to put this flute in. I can tell you something about that later, when it becomes time to do so.

But that was my aspiration then, to play in the orchestra. That's what that prepared you for, at Juilliard. The times we were there, Chick used to form these jam sessions in the practice room, after hours or whatever. He had Bill Lee's dad – not Bill Lee, but what's his . . .

Brown: Spike Lee.

Laws: Spike Lee's dad, Bill Lee, as a – I remember him vividly being one of the bass players that came in there. I don't remember too much drum. They didn't have big drum sets. Maybe a snare and a hi hat, something like that, just to keep a little bit of rhythm. But Chick was the one who formulated that. I remember sitting in on that stuff.

Brown: Did you meet in the class? Or was it – how did you guys meet?

Laws: I don't – probably in – I don't know. I just don't recall it. I know that we were in that practice room. I don't know if he recruited me or not. I just know I was there. I don't remember all the details. He may. He may remember.

I had a conversation with Wynton [Marsalis] about that, because during the time – they started showing more respect for jazz later. During the time Wynton was there, there was no jazz curriculum as there is now, when we were there. Nothing.

Brown: What was the curriculum when you were studying?

Laws: I was studying. I was in the orchestra, playing the orchestral repertoire. I had L and M – literature and materials of music. They had one evolution class, which I dropped like a hot potato. I figured, the main thing that I was interested in was the music and how to write music. What's that guy? I think his name was [Vincent] Persichetti was, at that time . . .

Brown: Persichetti. Oh yeah. I played a lot of his . . .

Laws: He was the guy. I was interested in that, although I didn't really do too much of it.

Then I just hung in there for four years. I'd go to my lessons with Julius Baker every weekend at his place up there on 71st Street, off of Broadway. We got to be real good buddies. He wanted to find out – I'd go. He wanted to find out who I took out the previous night. You know what? I was trying to learn those pieces he assigned us, because his lessons, I had – he had three etudes we had to learn from memory, every week. I don't even remember any. Two pages of hard stuff. So I – just repetition, repetition, meaning I had to keep the flute up to my mouth, which was good.

But it was really a letdown when I saw him play a recital. He had all that music in front of him on the stand. So I say, yeah, okay. But I'm still glad he made us do it. In fact, if I couldn't remember everything, he says, "Hubert, everybody else is doing it." That's what he'd tell me. "Everybody else is doing it." Well, not the case, but I think it was good discipline to even try, because it helps to develop your memory with other things, other than just the music. I know a lot of tunes, and I think that that music is responsible for it, developing the memory.

Brown: Do you remember any of the books that you were using?

Laws: [Sigfrid] Karg-Elert was one of them. Andersen studies. There was one other book we had. I can't remember it right now. But there were three. Karg-Elert, Andersen – no, I can't remember the third one.

Brown: Did you ever encounter the Slonimsky?

Laws: No. I know about it. I bought it, but that wasn't part of our – his thing.

[interview interrupted]

Brown: I want to return to Julius Baker, inquiring about who you took out the night before. What was his interest in that?

Laws: He wasn't interested. It was I that wanted to expose him to something that's special. Like I said, I considered him the most – the greatest virtuoso on that instrument, and I knew that he could appreciate that aspect to playing music. I knew Freddie Hubbard would display that. So I invited him one night. "Let's go to Birdland." That was on 52nd Street. We went down there. The Jazz Messengers were playing. He heard Freddie fired up. I was so happy. Then he had a newfound appreciation and respect for that music.

Brown: You mentioned earlier about the classical repertoire that you felt passionate about. Can you talk about some of the composers?

Laws: Yeah. You know what? The composers that I'm really interested in and crazy about, it's not so much that they write music for the flute. It's just the overall musical content. For instance, one of my favorite pieces I heard premiered when I was going to that music appreciation – when I was required by Texas Southern's music appreciation class – was the Shostakovich Symphony number 11. Leopold Stokowski was the conductor of the orchestra back there. He premiered that work, number 11. My teacher was playing in the orchestra then, and he invited me to the recording at the City Auditorium in Houston. They recorded that. The Houston Symphony recorded – I've still got it. I've got the CD. The sound is spectacular. The composition is spectacular. The melodies – I tell you. That piece lasts a little over an hour. Then, when they played it, they did it nonstop. The recording pretty much nonstop, but the way it segues into each movement – each movement segues into each other – is just – I tell you, it's – I guess it has more effect on me than other people, because it's nostalgic portions, because remember, things that happen early in your life can be related to your – the music that you hear during that time.

That's one of the composers. Shostakovich, Tchaikovsky, Richard Strauss. Not Johann. Johann is okay. He did all of the waltzes. But Richard Strauss, that composer, boy. You ever hear the Hero's Life – *Ein Heldenleben*? Also, many other things. *Don Juan.* He did *Death and Transfiguration.* All those pieces, wonderful pieces, not so much of the flute content, but it's just the overall music content. How these guys are able to write like this is just beyond me, and they did it when they were young, most of them.

I did some research on these guys, Shostakovich. I found out – Beethoven – people talk about Bach, that Bach was very prolific, but the depth – well, Mozart. I think Mozart is like the – I hate to say it like that – like the Kenny G of jazz, because to me, Mozart – Chick loves him, but I think the depth of his writing – to me, it doesn't have that much harmonic content. I like his – I think it's the 39th, the *Jupiter Symphony.* I think it's 39 or 41 – 41st symphony. That one's the only one that gets to me. I don't even like the flute concerti. That was my first one I played, but I don't think it's that great music. It's okay.

I don't want to sound negative. It's just that the other composers deserve more recognition during this period, that I feel. Because they did that movie *Amadeus.* Do you remember *Amadeus*? It's just that I look for something richer when I listen to classical music. That doesn't come from Mozart. It's very light stuff. I guess most people can relate to it, because it's kind of light.

But I'm into Rachmaninoff and most of the Russian composers, and Richard Strauss, like I said earlier, and a couple of compositions: Rimsky-Korsakov, when he did *Scheherazade.* That was one of my first classical pieces I ever heard. I love the Beethoven sequence of symphonies. I love Brahms. There's just so much musical content, but it's much – it appeals to my spirit more. So I'm not even putting Mozart down. It's just that the music that appeals to my spirit is more likely to be found in those composers I just mentioned.

Brown: What about Ravel and Debussy and the French?

Laws: Yeah, I liked his *Daphnis and Chloe,* and I like a couple other pieces, but, here again, it's – yeah, it's beautiful. There's some beautiful stuff, but for some reason, these Russians, they have something that's different, for me. Like I said, beauty's in the eye of the beholder, and in terms of music, it's in the ear of the listener. In this case, me, it's these – mainly – mostly – Russians.

It's interesting, because I just met a guy who's from Russia, a pianist, Eugene Maslov. I keep calling him to encourage him, because he's hardly get – he can hardly – he plays salon – I mean, gigs in the hotel lobby, and this guy is such a tremendous composer and player, so much so that all the musicians I recorded with on his last record did it for free. We all did it for free. I'm talking about Bob Sheppard. You know Bob Sheppard? Coliuta?

Brown: Vinnie Coliuta?

Laws: He played on it. And several other – I mean, top-notch musicians play for free. Why? Because this guy is such a high quality player and composer. You should hear it. Eugene Maslov.

Stix heard it. That's how I knew about him. Stix had me play on two of his records. But the guy can't get arrested. It's too bad. I even played on one of his live jazz performances in Pasadena. He played the Playboy a couple – a few years back. I did it because of – in deference to his great musicality.

Brown: How about contemporary composers, or at least from the mid- to late twentieth century, like Messiaen or Ligiti or any of those?

Laws: No. I don't know. I'm not too familiar with them, I should say. I'm not going to put down the compositions. I don't – but Igor Stravinsky. Here again, he's Russian. Stravinsky. I love his *Firebird* and his *Rite of Spring.*

Brown: We know about *Rite of Spring.*

Laws: Oh man. Tremendous music.

Brown: What about Bartok? No?

Laws: I haven't heard anything that really impressed me about Bartok.

Brown: *Miraculous Mandarin,* no? How about his string quartets?

Laws: No.

Brown: Okay.

Laws: Nope. No, it didn't move me. I remember a time sitting – when I played with the Philharmonic, Pierre Boulez was conducting also. He succeeded – I think he came after [Leonard] Bernstein. Played with Bernstein, Boulez, and then came Zubin Mehta. We used to play – Boulez loved modern music. He was crazy about that stuff. I remember we played a concert down in the Village. We were going to try to appeal to the in crowd, I guess you'd call them. I remember Julius Baker. He – we played that music. When the conductor wasn't looking, he'd do this. That's the way he felt about the music. He felt like it stunk.

It has to have some appeal to me, to my spirit, for me to really appreciate it and like it and want to hear it again. That's what I find myself doing when I'm listening to these Russian composers I mentioned.

Brown: Let's talk about your interest in composition, how that first developed or manifested itself, because you continue to compose, or at least write music. So let's – do we need to make a distinction? Or how do you want to address this issue?

Laws: I don't know what – I remember, because of, when I was in Houston, Sammy Harris – remember, my band director at Wheatley – had – he put together a group – big band – that played together on Monday nights at a place called Club Ebony. For some reason, I tried to emulate – at that time, Stan Kenton was really exposed a lot to us, and I think some of the great compositions were written by – at that time, Bill Holman and Bill Russo and that band. They did something called *Opus* – let's see. *Opus in Chartreuse,* I think it was called. I tried to do an arrangement on that. That was my first composition for that big band. I don't even remember how it sounds now, or how it sounded then. But

that was, as I recall, the first time I ever tried to do an arrangement for a band, for a group.

Then I guess I tried to write a little bit when we had the Modern Jazz Sextet. But I really didn't start writing a whole bunch until I played with Mongo Santamaria's group and I started recording. Then I started writing. I don't remember what the inspiration was. But I would just sit down. Some musical motif would come to me, and I would try to expand on it. That's basically it.

Brown: I'm going to ask a lot of questions about Mongo. But let's go back to – do we wrap up – did we wrap up your tenure at Juilliard? You obviously got your degree there. So are you on track now for your goal for your aspiration to perform in a symphony orchestra?

Laws: Let's see. After I finished there, I was actually playing with Mongo after I finished. I had some gigs with Lloyd Price's big band. I remember one – maybe a month or so. I toured with them. Then I started playing local gigs, dances, with a local band called Hugo Dickens. Hugo Dickens's band, where I met Willie Bobo and also the piano player who played those gigs. His name was Rodgers Grant. He was the one that introduced me to Mongo. That's how I got in Mongo's band. Let me see . . .

Brown: When did you graduate from Juilliard?

Laws: '64. I'm trying to think of what's – I'm trying to tell you . . .

Brown: I'm looking at your discography, in Lord's. The first listing is James Moody, *Great Day*, with Tom McIntosh.

Laws: Yeah. That's my first . . .

Brown: Yeah. You want to talk about that one?

Laws: Yeah, okay. My first recording session was with – Tom McIntosh invited me to play on that recording session. Esmond Edwards was the producer on that date. Mac just told me, not too long ago, a conversation he had with Moody about that recording session. He said, "Hubert, I was talking to Moody." He says, "Moody, I got this flute player I want to put on this session." Moody was telling him – Mac told me Moody said, "Yeah, but I play flute." He said, "Yeah, but Moody, this is something different." That's what he told me he told Moody that time. So he put me in that.

I didn't improvise. Everything I had played there was written for me. Mac was trying to color – in fact, I think Mac was really the one who started that trend, even before Quincy [Jones]. Because we recorded later, *Walking in Space*, and he uses flute just the same way

that Mac had used with that record on *Great Day*, to sort of be like an overtone for the trumpets, unison with the trumpets, but it put like a silver lining onto the trumpets.

Let me tell you. Maybe it's nostalgia, the reason why I still marvel at that record, but I think it's also his wonderful composition – his arranging and compositional skills. Tom McIntosh, I'm talking about.

I would love to get that thing on CD. I'm trying to get a version of it on CD.

Brown: I've been looking too.

Laws: You haven't found it?

Brown: I haven't found it.

Laws: I've got the record upstairs now. I was going to try to transfer it into the digital domain, because I've got one of those devices that can do it. But it always skipped or something was wrong. So I haven't been able to successfully do it yet.

Brown: If I can find it, I'll be sure to send it to you. How did you meet Tom McIntosh?

Laws: Wow, where did I meet . . . ? I met him at a religious meeting. That's when I first – because he ended up being the best man in my wedding, he and his wife, Allie. Allie died about 5, 6 years ago. That's how I met him. Somehow or another – I don't know how he knew I played or anything, but maybe we played together somehow or another. That's how he invited me to play on that record.

Brown: You said it was Rodgers Grant – was it Rodgers Grant that introduced you to Mongo? So I'm always wondering – because I've played Latin music, and there's a – we talk about music as a language. That's a different language – I'm just wondering, how did you prepare? What was it that you felt you were going to bring to Mongo? Or how did you get in Mongo's band? Let's start with that.

Laws: A guy named Pat Patrick was playing saxophone.

Brown: Oh, from Sun Ra's band.

Laws: I don't know if he was playing . . .

Brown: Alto – alto player.

Laws: Yeah, but he played – at that band, he was playing baritone sax and alto sax in Mongo's band. He left the band, or he was leaving the band. So Mongo apparently asked

Rodgers, asking around, who can replace him? So I ended up replacing him. But I played tenor.

What happened was, Bobby Capers went to baritone saxophone and alto, and I ended up playing tenor saxophone with the band – tenor and flute. So that's how. It was just that I was being recommended by Rodgers Grant.

Brown: I'm looking at – the first recording with Mongo was live at the Village Gate, spring of 1964. A pretty large ensemble.

Did you feel comfortable coming in? Did you feel prepared to play that music?

Laws: Absolutely. It was nothing different from what I was accustomed to playing before. It was like when I played with the Jazz Crusaders. I wasn't playing with the Jazz Crusaders. I played with the name before that, the Swingsters. But you know what group I'm talking about.

No, the music was no different. He had a big hit at the time. He had *Watermelon Man.* That was his big hit. I came into the band after he had already established that hit.

Brown: Between those two recordings, which are the first and third that show up in your discography, there was a session with Dave Pike.

Laws: Yeah. Wow, you've got stuff I've totally forgot about. I recorded with so many people. As a matter of fact, there is a flute player in New York right now, he went and found everything I've recorded, that he could find. I've got it upstairs now. He gave it to me about two years ago. I haven't been able to listen to it. But if I went into that, then I probably could find *Great Day.* You know what? I probably would find it. But I don't know if I'd find every track.

Brown: What was it like in Mongo's band? Were you working a lot?

Laws: Fun.

Brown: Was it great, great – the personalities? Who was the musical director?

Laws: The musical director for the band, for a while, was Marty Sheller, who lives in Delaware right now. In fact I got an e-mail from him this morning. And a trumpet player. He played for a while until something happened to his embouchure. Could no longer play. Then they had someone to come in on his behalf, but he still directed the band. But Mongo then appointed me to be the musical director for a long time, for the last two years. I was with him for four years. The last couple years I ended up being the musical director.

That's when I started writing music, for his band. I don't know if you can call it music. It was just a lot of stuff that got a lot – it was very superficial stuff. It had a lot of commercial sounding things. Actually, Pancho Sanchez, right now, is using some of those compositions. He's emerged to be one of the most important voices in Latin music nowadays. He's like a protegé of Mongo's, and he always refers to him as such.

Brown: Then the next, which is a landmark or benchmark in your career, the first date under your name, *The Laws of Jazz,* which reunites you with Chick Corea. So, have you guys maintained a relationship after he left Juilliard?

Laws: Absolutely. As a matter of fact, in addition to that, there's a club up in Harlem called – not a club, but a hotel. It was called the Theresa Hotel. I used to have the band. It's called the Skyline Room – skyline, because it was on the top floor. I used to bring bands in there to play the dances. He was one of the persons who played with our band: Chick, along with a bass player, a friend of mine whose name is Bernard Charles, who's passed away, and also the drummer Bobby Thomas, who played in that David Frost band. That was the rhythm section: Chick, bass player, and drums.

Believe it or not, I was playing a little bit of guitar at that time. The reason why I played guitar was because I had heard that Les Spann played guitar and flute. Did you ever hear of Les Spann?

Brown: Yeah.

Laws: Because in my school, they looked down on playing saxophone and flute, doubling. It's a myth, because you can do both, really, I think. Sometimes it does – it's somewhat of a menace to play saxophone, depending on how much you play, and then have to play the flute as well. In order to be able to get away from playing saxophone, having a reed in my mouth and all that, I decided I'd learn to play guitar. Some of those gigs I played on guitar. That's a long time ago. And sang too, believe it or not. I had a – I think they tried to call me a Little Willie John or something like that. Kind of funny. But those were the times I was trying to make money for myself so that I could put myself through the school.

Brown: What about the first date? How did that come about?

Laws: Recording date?

Brown: *The Laws of Jazz.*

Laws: I remember Bobby Thomas contributed two pieces to that, *Miss Thing* and one other tune I can't remember right now. That's when I wrote *Black Eyed Peas and Rice.* And I wrote something else.

Brown: There's another one on there. There's a title – well, there's several titles, but there's *Bimbe Blew, All Soul.*

Laws: Yeah. I didn't write all the songs. That was something that Joel Dorn wanted me to record. Joel Dorn was our first producer. I had met Joel when I was playing at Pep's club in Philadelphia. He was a local deejay. Man, he made me feel like I was the most important person there ever was during those days. Then I learned later that he'd gotten a small budget from Nesuhi Ertegun, who was the head of Atlantic Records, he and his brother, Ahmad. He'd gotten a budget. They told him, find a talent. I was supposed to be one of the first talents that he found.

He was the one that recommended that I do *All Soul.* People – it seems like that got a lot of attention. I don't know if it's due to the fact that he marketed it more. It's a simple tune that most people could gravitate towards.

Brown: There were two different sessions, one on April 2nd and the second one on April 22nd. You had two drummers. Jimmy Cobb, he replaced Bobby Thomas. Now Bobby Thomas, you mentioned that he worked with Billy Taylor. I actually had studied with Bobby Thomas while . . .

Laws: You did?

Brown: Oh yeah. This is at Jazz in July. He talked about his experience with *Chorus Line* and all that. So you had met Bobby Thomas before you were doing your work . . .

Laws: Oh yeah. He was my next-door neighbor.

Brown: Oh, okay.

Laws: He lived right across the hall from me. I used to see him bringing his girlfriends in there. Right across the hall, on 93rd Street and Amsterdam [Avenue]. No, that was Columbus [Avenue]. Yeah, Bobby Thomas. He used to play with the Billy Taylor trio. He played many gigs with Billy Taylor. He now lives in Montreal with his wife, who is a Canadian. I thought that guy would never settle down. Man, you're talking about a womanizer. Boy, whew, I'm telling you.

Brown: Next date is with Sergio Mendes, and Antonio Carlos Jobim is on it.

Laws: *The Swinger from Rio.*

Brown: There you go.

Laws: I remember that. Nesuhi was so impressed. I just did some little flamboyant stuff on the flute that anybody could do, and he's just flipping. But see, here again, the right

place at the right time, influencing the right people. Yeah, I played on that record. It's called *The Swinger from Rio.* Recently they had a party – no, they have a party coming up for him, March 10th. The reason I know that date is because my dad's birthday was March 10th.

It's interesting. You said April, because you've got the dates of those recordings? I didn't even know that. I don't have that in mine.

Brown: Yeah, Lord's discography. It's indispensible.

Laws: Really?

Brown: Oh yeah.

Laws: How the heck did you find . . . ?

Brown: One DVD.

Laws: Oh, it's on there.

Brown: Yeah.

Laws: Oh, wow.

Brown: We can hook you up. When we interviewed Kenny Burrell, I said, "Kenny, you've got over 600 titles." He said, "What?"

Laws: Yeah, I don't know how many I have. I wouldn't know. You mean, that we played with other people, right?

Brown: It's got every date, at least every date they were able to identify, and there are 333 entries. The next ones are with Esther Phillips, with the Ray Ellis orchestra.

Laws: That's right. I did another one, a guy named Austin Cromer. You got it.

Brown: Yeah. That was earlier. I didn't mention – do you want me to go back and list it?

Laws: No, because I don't remember anything about it. See, the thing is, I just remember his name, Austin Cromer, and I remember Esther, because they were – I think they did that for Atlantic Records. See, these guys put me on those sessions, because, I guess, just like what Creed did. He began having his artists to participate on other artists in his corral, the label, their records.

Brown: Yeah, because Chick is on that Austin Cromer.

Laws: He is?

Brown: Yeah, Chick was on it, Richard Davis. So yeah, like I said, this is indispensible. Lyle Atkinson on bass. Bobby Capers.

Laws: Yeah, I know Lyle. Lyle used to be on those Latin bands that we played. Yeah, Lyle Atkinson. I wonder if he's still around?

Brown: I can find out and let you know tomorrow.

Laws: Well, I can too. I probably could go on line.

Brown: Yeah. Then, the Esther Phillips date: how was that? Esther singing. This is your first vocal – led by a vocalist.

Laws: I don't remember, Anthony. I just – I remember I did the date, but I just don't recall. I know I did some solos in there. There were little spots for me to play solos here and there. Esther Phillips also is from my home town. They used to call her Little Esther.

Brown: Right, right. I know, because of Johnny Otis.

They have a lot of Mongo, and then Solomon De ? How do you pronounce that? Do you remember that?

Laws: Who?

Brown: Solomon – it's I-l-o-r-i. It had Elvin Jones on it. That's what caught my eye.

Laws: I played on that?

Brown: Um-hmm.

Laws: I don't recall that one.

Brown: Flute and tenor sax.

Laws: I don't recall.

Brown: It was just a couple. So it was probably a studio – you probably got called to the studio.

Then back to Sergio Mendes. That might have been the same album. They just – there was a different session.

Then your first – how about *Chile con Soul*? Do you want to talk about that? Your first date with the . . .

Laws: Crusaders.

Brown: With your guys.

Laws: Yeah, I was – actually, we had been playing in [Las] Vegas. Not – when I say we, I'm talking about Mongo. Then we were going to play – I think we were doing the Andy Williams t.v. show during the time of that session. We went in there. I think one tune of mine I had written that they included. See, it had a strong Latin influence, because Mongo was getting so much attention. So they felt like it was time for them to do a Latin-type record. So that's why we got in the studio and they did that thing, *Chile con Soul.*

I remember one track on that record that I really liked. It was written by Clare Fischer. I don't remember the name of it – oh, *Ontem a note.* You see that in there?

Brown: Right.

Laws: Yeah, we did that. I enjoyed that tune, because Clare's always been such a great writer.

Brown: *Morning.* There you go, back to Pancho Sanchez. That's his. You know *Morning*?

Laws: Yeah.

Brown: So this is the first time you hooked up with your old compadres, no?

Laws: Recording-wise.

Brown: Recording-wise. Okay, but you didn't stay. What's particularly interesting about this date is you got Al McKibbon on bass. Al was – I know Al from when he played with Diz, playing with – he used – I interviewed him for the same program. He said he was Chano Pozo's roommate when they toured. And then, of course, George Shearing and all that. But, to me, he was going to bring that Latin – definitely a Latin bottom to it.

Laws: I don't know who got him – who engaged him on that, but it probably was Stix or somebody. It could have been Dick Bock. Dick Bock was the head of the Pacific Jazz label.

Brown: Then the next one is *Flute By-Laws.* Again, Chick is back, but the bass player is Cachao.

Laws: Cachao didn't play on every one. Cachao may have played on . . .

Brown: And then Richard Davis on the other session. This was the first session.

Laws: Yeah, Richard Davis played mostly, as I can recall. And then Ron Carter played on some of that stuff. He played on *Laws' Cause.* Yeah, that's who played on the last. I did three records for Atlantic. I did four altogether, but I did the fourth after I had already signed with CTI.

Brown: It's here on *Flute By-Laws* that we see *Mean Lean.* As we talked off-mic, this is the first time I see it show up in your discography, but then it's on *In the Beginning,* and then it reappears on *Storm, then the Calm.* So it seems to keep coming back into your repertoire. Do you want to talk about this particular composition?

Laws: Yeah, because so many people seem to show some interest in it, and it's some nice jazz changes to play on. I remember we first recorded it on *Flute By-Laws.* Then I think we did another one with – let's see. What's the second one you say? I think – did I do it with Mongo? No, I did it – oh my God, I can't remember.

Brown: You may have done it with Mongo, but I'm just looking at the ones under your name. It's *In the Beginning.*

Laws: Yeah.

Brown: It's in there, and then again, like I said, in *Storm.*

Laws: Okay, now, the one I did on *In the Beginning* is – I just heard it for the first time in many years, because somebody gave it – somebody sent it to me. I did it almost like a suite, because you had different rhythms, different attitudes toward the same theme. So that track lasted a long time, too. It must have been about 10 minutes to 15 minutes. Then, the last time, I did it because I was doing an all-Latin record with Joey Heredia on – no, that's not the last time. I did it also on the *Baila Cinderella* record with Joey Heredia, and then I also did it with *Storm, then the Calm,* where I had my piano player, David Budway, do an arrangement on which I like a lot, as I've heard it more. So it was just a different attitude towards that thematic material. It made it fresh. It was suggested by these guys, to do it.

Brown: So you just knocked it out.

Laws: Yeah. You know what? I played that theme when I had learned to play the guitar. It was the first [Laws sings a few notes] – that was written on the guitar.

Brown: I'm looking at a date with Gunther Schuller in New York in 1966. What caught my eye on this one was *Elegy for Dolphy.*

Laws: Hmmm. Don't remember that.

Brown: Jerome Richardson is also playing flute and clarinet on this one with you. It's got you listed with tenor sax as well. It's a 9- or 10-piece band. So I thought, if you had any recollections . . .

Then *Laws' Cause.* This is where you have your quartet with Chick, Ron, and Grady Tate. *Windows,* Chick's piece. Any recollections or particular . . .

Laws: Oh yeah. I remember – to tell you the truth, on drums on *Windows* and *Shades of Light* was Joe Chambers. Ron Carter was on bass. Grady Tate played on some of the other tracks. He played on – is there *I Wish I Knew*? Is that on there?

Brown: Let me see. What they got listed here are *Showers, then Flowers.*

Laws: *Showers.* Oh no. That's on that record?

Brown: It wasn't issued, but it was recorded, but it's showing up as having been recorded.

Laws: That's right. We never did release that.

Brown: And then *When We Meet Again, Windows,* and then another one that was unissued was *World of No Words.*

Laws: That was – you know what? That was Chick's piece. It was not released. Now, I do know, on that record, was *Shades of Light, Windows,* and maybe some other – I can't remember the other titles on there, because I don't even listen to any of those other things. *Windows* and *Shades of Light.* Because I told Chick – I said – I e-mailed to him recently. I said, you ought to revisit those solos you did. They are so classic, and it just proves and shows that you had that talent even way back there. So clean, so mature.

Brown: I'm showing another session. This – they list this by session as well as – so I'm not sure. Maybe the chronology's a little strange here. But there's one that's – it's on Atlantic, February 24, 1966. It's *Bloodshot, Mean Lean, No, You'd Better Not,* and then *Home Folks,* which was unissued as well. On this date, Chick and Rodgers Grant. Chick is only on the first one, *Bloodshot,* and there's Ray Lucas playing drums.

Laws: That's right. He played on *No, You'd Better Not,* and also Martin Banks, the trumpet player, played a trumpet solo on that.

Brown: Right. He's on there. Garnett Brown on trombone, Benny Powell, Jimmy Owens, Chris White on bass, Carmelo Garcia, Victor Pantoya. So still in the Latin – a lot of the Latin influence.

Laws: Right. That was a strong influence, coming from playing with Mongo's band.

Brown: Then a lot of Mongo. *Explodes at the Village Gate.* Of course, that's one of those. *Cold Sweat.*

Laws: I played tenor saxophone on that thing. Big time. I was growling on that saxophone. That was a big-time commercial tenor saxophone solo.

Brown: Who were some of your influences with tenor saxophone? Because you already talked about alto saxophone, Tab Smith. But tenor?

Laws: No. You know what? I wasn't listening to anybody. Coltrane and all those guys were playing, but I wasn't listening to them for that kind of influence. This was down-home Texas funk, Texas tenor.

Brown: Texas tenor.

Laws: Yeah, that's what that was.

Brown: You weren't walking the bar, were you?

Laws: No, but I used to call those – what they call chitlin' circuit gigs in Houston. That definitely was there.

Brown: What was that like?

Laws: You played late hours and I'd tear my em[bouchure]. I tell you, saxophone – that's why I'm glad I played flute, because that saxophone, that embouchure, would almost kill me sometimes, playing those gigs, long hours. By playing those long hours, it took so much out of me. It was like doing manual labor. It wasn't that gratifying, because at the time, when we were playing these gigs to satisfy these people with that superficial music, and at the same time we were aware of the great stuff that was being done by Cannonball and Miles and Coltrane and Bird. So we knew we were just doing it for commercial purposes.

Brown: So it was more rhythm-and-blues rather than jazz? Or was it . . . ?

Laws: In the chitlin' circuit, yeah, that's what it was. That's where Joe Sample – Joe knows about it. In fact, Joe was so heavily in doing zydeco music. I don't know if you're

familiar with that. He played me some music when I was there at his house down in Houston last year. It was mostly zydeco. You know what that's like, right?

Brown: Then we get into '67, Astrid Gilberto.

Laws: Yeah, that's – yeah, I enjoyed those gigs. I remember a gig that I did with her. It was right there on top of that RCA building, across the street from where the Rockettes – she had a gig there. And I think we did – I don't remember everything that I did with her, but I know that was one of the gigs that I did with Astrid. I think I may have recorded with her as well, but I'm not sure.

Brown: Yeah. That's what this is showing, on Verve.

Laws: I recorded with her?

Brown: Um-hmm.

Laws: Yeah, but I also played gigs with her, live.

Brown: Then the next one that shows up in the discography is in July of '67. That's *Glory of Love,* Herbie Mann's date.

Laws: Right. I remember that date. That was at Rudy Van Gelder's. I think Herbie invited me to play. I'm not sure. I can't remember for sure.

Brown: It's his date.

Laws: Yeah, I think he invited me to do that. At that time, I think I had a copy of it, but I don't think I have it now.

Brown: Doing Ray Charles, *Unchain My Heart.*

Laws: Oh really? I don't have much recollection of that date.

Brown: Then Junior Mance.

Laws: I played with him too?

Brown: Um-hmm. *I Believe to My Soul* is the title of the record.

Laws: God, I don't recall that at all. Sorry.

Brown: Like I said, 333 titles. I'd be amazed if you did remember it all.

Then there's another one, Herbie Mann. This is a larger group. I'm not sure if it's released under the same title. It must have been, because you're on – here's an interesting one, again under Herbie Mann: Herbie Mann, yourself, Roy Ayers, Sonny Sharrock on guitar, Earl May on bass, Grady Tate, drums, Ray Barretto, percussion. *The Letter*, again doing some more pop stuff. *Hold On, I'm Comin'.*

Laws: Hmm. I'm on that, too?

Brown: Any recollection of that?

Laws: Uh-uh. I have no recall, no recollection of that.

Brown: Okay. I was just going to ask about Sonny Sharrock, because . . .

Laws: I remember Sonny Sharrock. He played with a lot of distortion on his guitar. That's all I can remember. A lot of – he played with Herbie Mann's, and he played with a lot – is he still alive?

Brown: No. Sonny's gone.

Laws: A lot of those guys are gone. Eric Gale.

Brown: Yeah, Richard Tee is gone.

Laws: Richard Tee, all these guys. Thanks for reminding me of that. Yeah, a lot of those guys are dead. Those CTI records. They're gone.

Brown: Like you said about jazz, it's a demanding profession.

Here was a session – a date that really caught my eye was *Got to Get It,* Bobby Timmons

Laws: I played? I don't remember that at all.

Brown: Jimmy Owens on it, James Moody, Joe Farrell, George Barrow, Bobby Timmons, piano, Eric Gale, Ron Carter, Billy Higgins.

Laws: I don't recall that.

Brown: Tom McIntosh was the arranger and conductor.

Laws: That's probably why I did it, because of him. He probably got me engaged in that.

Brown: Then continuing – so, no recollection about Bobby? Because Bobby's so funky. He was straight out of the church.

Laws: I play his tune all the time. I just played it the other night. *Dat Dere.* We played that, recorded it. We played it the other night.

Brown: So that's what I was just wondering, if . . .

Laws: But I don't recall . . .

Brown: That particular date?

Laws: . . . that date.

Brown: How about the one with Wes Montgomery, *Down Here on the Ground*?

Laws: I played on that? I just heard that on the radio today. I didn't know I played on it, though. Creed probably got me involved in that. What year was that?

Brown: '68 – December '67, January '68.

Laws: It must have been at Rudy's place, too.

Brown: Um-hmm, yeah, it was, because . . .

Laws: I didn't know I played on that. I know that record. I've heard it. But I didn't know I played on it.

Brown: When I told Ken about it, I said, "I remember my dad had this," because I remember the cover. Because my dad – oh yeah. Like I say, you're the soundtrack to my entire . . .

Then, *Don Sebesky and the Jazz-Rock Syndrome,* Don Sebesky big band. I hadn't actually heard this. It's got – kind of interesting. Then Jimmy Smith, *Stay Loose.* It's a pretty big band.

Laws: I'm on that too?

Brown: Um-hmm.

Laws: With saxophone?

Brown: Yeah, on saxophone.

Laws: Son of a gun.

Brown: The next one is under your name, a session, 1968. This is the one that has Sir Roland Hanna playing harpsichord. You're playing flute, piccolo. I guess maybe there are some other dates, but it seems like, at this point, more focus on the flute, less doubling. Carl Porter, bassoon, Chuck Rainey, electric bass, Grady Tate, drums. This is Atlantic. And then probably a corollary session, different personnel, Jimmy Owens, still Carl Porter on bassoon. So I thought maybe we could talk about that. Kenny Burrell on guitar.

Laws: I can't remember.

Brown: The fact that you're bringing in a bassoon – I presume that's your idea, but Carl Porter . . .

Laws: What date was that?

Brown: This is 1968. It's Atlantic. It's got Melba Moore singing on a song, *No More.*

Laws: Yeah, I wrote that. I remember that. I remember bringing her in to sing that lyric. That *No More* has two sets of lyrics. Jon Hendricks wrote a set for it. He's in the habit of doing stuff like that. I saw him at the NEA, too. He's in the habit of doing that, but he wrote a set of lyrics which ended up being done by Lou Rawls, *No More.* But no, I don't recall that session, other than the fact, I think I wrote something called *I Wish You Knew* or something like that.

Brown: *If You Knew.*

Laws: Yeah, and I remember bringing the bassoon in on that.

Brown: Yeah. It says sitar, too. Sam Brolsh played sitar?

Laws: Sam who?

Brown: Sam Brolsh – B-r-o-l-s-h.

Laws: No. Sam's last name's something else. I don't know where they got that Brolsh from. He died, too. I remember Sam. He used to do a lot of sessions. But Sam had another last name, like Wagner or something.

Brown: What caught my eye was Sir Roland Hanna – whom I had the pleasure of playing with – harpsichord. I never heard him play harpsichord. That's what got me on this one.

Laws: I do remember somewhat that session. But I don't like that music. You hear it. It's weird.

Brown: Let me quote you on the liner notes. This is what Dan Morgenstern said – penned these. He says, "And he began to make records of his own, the first few" – and then he's quoting you, "Not really representative of the direction in which I wanted to go. They were made for commercial reasons."

Laws: That's about right.

Brown: So I think you corroborated that quote. So there's no doubt there.

Laws: Yeah. That's right.

Brown: I can go through. Like I said, there are 300 other dates. Peggy Lee, working with the Lou Levy orchestra. Then Milt Jackson and the Hip String Quartet. I thought that might be interesting, since you all appropriate that name, Modern Jazz, from quartet to sextet. This one's got – again, this is McIntosh arrangment, with Kermit Moore on cello. This is Milt Jackson's date. But doing nothing – no particular memories? For me, Milt Jackson's a hero. So I'm just wondering if you felt good about being on this date?

Laws: Yes I did. I kind of remember. Was that the *Sunflower* one that we did with him, the Milt Jackson?

Brown: No, that would have been the CTI one, *Sunflower*. This was Verve, it looks like. *The Morning After* was recorded, wasn't issued. *New Rhumba.* That's a tune that was issued. Again, these are listed by sessions. So they haven't always been – some of them could have been pulled in. Then Roy Ayers.

Laws: I recorded with him too, huh?

Brown: Oh yeah. Did you say – there is – it's in chronological order. There was another session for Milt Jackson, *A Walking Thing, Bags and Strings, The Morning After,* was on here. Then Roy Ayers, *Stone Soul Picnic.* This was with Miroslav Vitous, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, Grady Tate on drums, Charles Tolliver on trumpet. This is Roy Ayers, Atlantic. So maybe that was, again, part of the stable, as you say. Then Helen Merrill.

Laws: I kind of remember that too.

Brown: *A Shade of Difference.* Gary Bartz, Dick Katz, Jim Hall, Richard Davis, Elvin Jones.

Laws: I didn't know I played with him. I don't remember playing the record with him.

Brown: Oh, really.

Laws: No, I don't.

Brown: Because he was also on – he's coming up on a Gil Evans date that you were on too.

Laws: I know Gil Evans. I played – I recorded - I think Miles was on that, wasn't it? I did one. Teo Macero was pointing out the music. I remember him pointing the music to Miles as he played. That's why I know I was on that session. That was kind of funny, because he kept trying to help Miles stay in the right place by pointing to the music.

Brown: What was the issue there?

Laws: I don't know. Maybe he made – Miles might have needed some direction or something. But Teo was pointing. I remember him being in the background and pointing to where he was supposed to be on the music. That was a Gil Evans written session.

Brown: I might have jumped ahead in my chronology, but I remember it was on that date that Elvin was playing too.

Laws: Really? On the Gil Evans date?

Brown: Um-hmm. Yeah, because we were out looking for that. I said, I got to hear that one.

Then Gary McFarland, and then Luis Gasca.

Laws: Yeah, I never got paid for that Gary McFarland date. But guess who did?

Brown: Bernard Purdie.

Laws: No, Curtis Fuller. Is he on that date? He's got to be there, because I remember he's the only one that got paid. Gary McFarland committed suicide shortly after that. I know. It was a beautiful record. He did some Beatles tunes. Really nice. In fact, I'm inspired to go back and listen to that record, if I can find it. Gary McFarland, a great writer. But I think he was into drugs. It was during that period where people were doing the hallucinating stuff.

Brown: LSD.

Laws: LSD, yeah. It was during that time. It thought it was such a pity. He was so young, Gary McFarland. Do you see where Curtis Fuller was a part of that date?

Brown: No, but it might be a different session, because of the chronology. Then you did some Luis Gasca session, and then a Nat Adderley, *Calling Out Loud*, and then Walter Wanderley.

Laws: Walter Wanderley. Yeah, I remember that. That was Creed Taylor. I remember doing it.

Brown: Then there's an A&M recording with Milton Nascimento. It's got everybody in there.

Laws: Milton Nascimento, *Vera Cruz.*

Brown: What about the Moondog date? Do you remember that?

Laws: I don't know.

Brown: You were probably just . . .

Laws: Moondog used to play on the streets, in the subways and stuff. But I don't remember doing a session with him.

Brown: Yeah, you're listed in the reed section, piccolo and flute.

Laws: Okay. That's possible. Like I said, I did a lot of sessions that I can't even remember.

Brown: All right. We're going to take a break.

Okay, we're back. I want to wrap up the discography in '69, because Herbie Hancock, *The Prisoner,* figured – loomed large for my generation. Anything Herbie, during the time he was with Miles, was something that all young, aspiring jazz musicians – we're keeping our ear to the ground. Herbie, Wayne, all them. For us, *The Prisoner* was an important recording. I was just wondering if you have any recollections of this date. Johnny Coles and Jerome Richardson, Joe Henderson, Tootie, Buster Williams.

Laws: Yes I do. I kind of remember that. I do remember that he had me playing alto flute on it, for sure. Alto flute, C flute, and . . .

Brown: Is that *Speak Like a Child*?

Laws: Huh?

Brown: No. That wouldn't be . . .

Laws: I think it's *The Prisoner*, isn't it?

Brown: Yeah, it's *The Prisoner.* That's right. It just lists you as flute, but that's true.

Laws: Yeah. I played alto flute too. I think Joe Henderson was on that date.

Brown: Yes, he was. They've got him listed as alto flute. So they must have messed up.

Laws: He may have played flute as well. But I know I played alto flute and flute on that date. That was at Rudy Van Gelder's. That's the only thing I can recall about that date. Not only that, but I loved that music, where he voiced those textures for the – Herbie's music's always very distinct, the way he writes. He's got *Maiden Voyage.* He's got *Dolphin Dance* and all that. There's some other things, too.

People know him – when I say people, I'm talking about the populace – know him for – what's that big hit he had? *Chameleon,* was it?

Brown: *Chameleon,* yeah. That's '73.

Laws: They know him for that. But for me, it was the stuff that he did with Miles, and those two pieces that he had that, for me, are like landmarks, *Maiden Voyage* and *Dolphin Dance.* Those are the things for me, those two. And the thing he did on *The Prisoner.*

Brown: *I Have a Dream.* This was a time of – the '60s – it's the tail end of the '60s. King has already been assassinated. We getting – it's getting – things have got to change. We're still striving to make things change. Herbie was capturing the Zeitgeist of the time. So I just wanted to bring that one up. But also '69 is a significant date for you, because that's when you had auditioned and were accepted into the – let's talk about . . .

Laws: Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. Yes, that was the – I had auditioned, and I got the news during a rehearsal that I had with Harold Mabern, and I think it's Bob Cranshaw's son who was playing bass. I remember because my second bedroom was being used as a rehearsal studio. I got a call. We got two calls that day. One was about the fact that Wes Montgomery had passed. And the other one – so one was bad news, one was good news for me, because that was when I got accepted to play in that orchestra, the Met, which I ended up doing for four years.

Brown: What was that experience like?

Laws: Here again, I was able to appreciate this wonderful writing. I didn't mention Richard Wagner – Richard Wagner is the real pronunciation – but the operas that he did – and also Richard Strauss . . .

Brown: *Salome*?

Laws: Yeah, that's Strauss.

Brown: You've got the Ring cycle.

Laws: I'm saying that – the Ring – I got a chance to work with these conductors. Berg was supposed to be the guy. He's from Germany. He's dead now. As a matter of fact, when I went to Germany, I told you we flew into Munich, talked to a guy who drove us in. He knew about Berg. Orchestra members were terrified of this guy, because he's supposed to be so mean and so ruthless.

My good friend played in this orchestra, a piccolo player. His name was Freddie Marone. He was a good friend of Clement Barone, my teacher. They both played piccolo in the band. My teacher was playing piccolo with the Detroit Symphony after he left Houston.

But everybody was so terrified of Berg, but, for me, I wasn't terrified, because you know what? I think playing – having an alternative – was good. My alternative was playing these gigs. I was playing gigs while I was playing with the Philharmonic and those other bands. I was playing my gigs anyway, recording. I was just very, very busy. So if you fouled up in those orchestras, I guess maybe that's it for you. But I didn't feel that kind of pressure, because I'm playing all the time.

As a matter of fact, I had an experience one night – and my teacher always reminded me. He laughed at it, because he thought I was trying to – what's the expression? Thumb your nose at someone? Because what happened was, I was recording all day in New York that day. I had a performance with the Philharmonic that night. But some girlfriends came to town from L.A. I'm sitting up there entertaining them at 10 o'clock at night. That evening, I got a call from the personnel director. He said, "Mr. Laws, what happened?" I said, "What do you mean, what happened?" He said, "We had a performance tonight." I totally blew it.

Julius Baker, my teacher, was in the orchestra. He thinks that I was doing the thumb my nose. I said, "It was just a genuine error, and I apologize profusely." But he thought it was funny, because he just thought it was funny for me to do something like that. But it was mainly – because I was so busy. I was probably – it's just like I'm tired now after traveling, having those long hours on the plane, get up this morning, start working, have a lot to do. In fact, when Ken called me, I said, "Oh my God, I'm glad you called me, because I would have forgotten." That's probably what happened there with that Philharmonic thing. But hey, Julius Baker thought it was something that was intentional. Not the case. I was just busy.

Talk about going back to the Met, there were a lot of experiences I had with different orchestral conductors who were very famous. Herbert von Karajan, which is a very, very

strong name in conducting, and Zubin Mehta. James Levine is still there. Leonard Bernstein. I'm just trying to think of some of the orchestra conductors that came through that I was able to work with. Good experience, because those names – I don't hear too much about other names nowadays that are very, very strong. There's this guy Dudamel that just came in. There's a big hype on him. But other than that, it was Bernstein and Pierre Boulez and Zubin Mehta, those guys, back then.

Brown: Do you want to talk about what made you prefer one over the other? Or what was distinctive about any one, insofar as a player?

Laws: I just think that – I like the way Bernstein conducted the Romantic stuff, because he was so dramatic. I remember he came in and conducted *Cavalleria rusticana.* I never – I played it with other conductors, but he did it so painstakingly slow. I didn't know the piece could be like that. It was just really – I remember that. Even when he conducted the New York Philharmonic, it was the same kind of thing. It was slow and dramatic.

I met him also when I was in the orchestra up there in the Berkshires, the Tanglewood Orchestra, when I was a student. I think that was the second year that I – when I was at Juilliard. I had auditioned, and I was accepted to – in the Tanglewood Orchestra, where they had Doriot Dwyer, who was the first flute in the Boston Symphony at that time. I met him and Aaron Copland during that time. They were buddies. They hung out together there.

So it depends on the music. But just remember that *Cavalleria rusticana,* when he conducted that. That was special for me. And I do remember the Wagnerian operas.

Brown: Were those conducted by Karajan?

Laws: Yeah. He did the Ring too.

Brown: Right. I know you have an affinity for the Wagner.

Laws: I love *Tristan and Isolde.* I love that.

Brown: Prelude to act 3.

Laws: Yeah, I love that. It's such beautiful music. I'm still trying to get it on my i-Pod. There's so much I want to put on there. I haven't put this recently released CTI compendium. I want to put that on there, because some of that stuff I don't have.

Brown: Conductors are known for there particular styles and talking to people who were under their particular baton. Karajan, coming from Germany and playing the German repertoire, like when they do the Beethoven, they feel that that's the definitive – or any of the German repertoire or canon, Karajan. So what was it like, working with Karajan?

Laws: I felt that he had a very aloof personality. He didn't seem like he was somebody down to earth. I actually talked to Leonard Bernstein, because he was trying to get – he played a little jazz, and he was trying – there was a gig that he was doing, Carnegie Hall. He wanted me to play with him, or something like that. That was during that period where there was some controversy about blacks being hired in orchestras. Kermit Moore was one of the guys. I don't know. There was some other guy who petitioned. They even had him – they had hearings about it, where black musicians felt – they felt like they were being overlooked when it came – that – it was during that period of time that they actually got hired. Actually, before that. They even offered Richard Davis a gig without even having him to audition. You know, the bass player, Richard?

Brown: Oh sure.

Laws: But he was so busy. He didn't have time even to accept. It was during – it was a controversial period, controversial issues about race then, putting a lot of pressure on them to try to give some attention to the so-called minorities.

Brown: Were there any other black performers when you were in the Met?

Laws: Not in the Met. As a matter of fact, I was so naive. I used to walk around there wondering why everybody knew my name. That's how stupid I was. No, I said, I got to learn these guys' names. They all know my name. Hey man, you're the only black one walking around here. That's what occurred to me later. Isn't that something?

Even now, it hasn't changed that much in these orchestras, just a few. What's – Watt, he just retired from the L.A. Phil. He played french horn. I went to his retirement party. There aren't too many blacks. There are maybe two or three in the L. A. Phil. It's pretty much the same thing all over. But what can you do? I tell anybody who plays an instrument, learn to improvise too. Learn to improvise. Why should you limit yourself? Do all that stuff, and you increase your bargaining power.

Brown: When we get out of the '60s, that's when your world opens up, as far as a contract with CTI and Creed Taylor. So, you want to go there now?

Laws: Yeah, let's see.

Brown: Unless you want to continue to talk about your . . .

Laws: '69 was also – I think it was the year – I think it was '69 that I met Creed, because I think the first record came out somewhere in '69. I think it was *Crying Song*, because I think when I recorded *Morning Star* – no, not *Morning Star*, but *Afro Classics*, that was 1970 or 1971.

Brown: Let's go back, because you had mentioned Quincy earlier, and of course *Walking in Space,* which again . . .

Laws: 1969.

Brown: '69, June '69. That for me is a seminal recording. You're on it. It introduces my generation to Quincy in a new form. He's doing music from *Hair.* So, for me, that's another landmark recording. So you talk about that session, *Killer Joe, Walking in Space,* Bernard Purdie killing it, Rahsaan Roland Kirk killing on it. So if you could talk about that session.

Laws: That was at Rudy Van Gelder's. I remember that. I do remember that most of the guys were there. It was not like we went and sweetened the session. Most of those guys were there. Ray Brown on bass. Goodness, I don't remember who – was that Grady Tate playing drums on *Killer*?

Brown: Grady Tate on some, and then Bernard Purdie, definitely Bernard Purdie on . . .

Laws: He didn't – Purdie didn't play on *Walking in Space.* That was – when I say *Walking in Space,* wasn't that a tune on the record?

Brown: Oh yeah.

Laws: Okay. *Walking in Space* and also *Killer Joe,* I think that was either Grady or somebody else played drums on that record – on that track. Then I know Freddie Hubbard did a solo, I did a solo, and they had the voices on *Killer Joe. Walking in Space* went through a lot of stuff, different rhythms. I think Purdie played on this thing – I played tenor saxophone, believe it or not, on one of those. *Love and Peace*?

Brown: *Love and Peace,* uh-huh.

Laws: I played a tenor saxophone solo on that. I think Pretty may have played on that track.

Brown: *Oh Happy Day, I Never Told You.*

Laws: Is that on the *Walking in Space* record?

Brown: That's all on those. And then *Dead End.*

Laws: How come I don't get a copy of that thing? I have it on lacquer, but I don't have it on CD. I'd love to get that on CD. *Walking in Space.*

Brown: I have the LP.

Laws: Yeah, that's what I've got.

Brown: My second or third copy.

Laws: Has it been released on CD?

Brown: I'm sure it has. All Quincy's stuff is out there now. And Valerie Simpson, oh.

Laws: You know what? I think *Oh Happy Day,* Purdie may have played on.

Brown: Okay, but I think he might have been on *Walking in Space.* That's my recollection, but I was young then. I know he's on *Oh Happy Day,* because I can remember all the transitions. It goes from swing . . .

Laws: I can talk to him, because I got his number.

Brown: He's over in Phoenix.

Laws: Huh?

Brown: You're talking about Purdie?

Laws: Yeah.

Brown: He's over in Phoenix, right?

Laws: Last time I saw Purdie, it was in Detroit. We were doing the jazz festival in Detroit. He was with his little niece or somebody, some girl with him. That was the last time I saw him.

Every time you got to a session with Bernard Purdie, he goes to set up his little placards in the window, talking about "Hitmaker." Did you know that?

Brown: Yeah.

Laws: "Pretty Purdie, Hitmaker."

Brown: You corroborate all this. That's legendary. Well, he's right. All the stuff he did with Aretha. Ooo.

Laws: Yeah, he's quite a character. Nice guy.

Brown: What was it like in the session with Quincy? What was the dynamic with it?

Laws: Quincy was in the control room with Creed, because Creed produced that. Creed has always been a guy who – very subtle. He never talks directly to the musicians. He always had a liason, always, because he – I don't know. Even during – he had a little red phone on the desk. He had a little black phone on the desk. He used the red phone for one thing and the black phone was another. I think the red phone you talk directly to the guy on the podium – I mean, I guess you call it the podium. Whoever the conductor was. In this case – many cases – it was either Quincy – in that case – but then, often, Don Sebesky. So rather than go directly to whatever the problem may be, he would always use a go-between. I remember that happening on that session.

You had a bunch of musicians there. Freddie was there. Like you say, Johnny Coles . . .

Brown: Snooky, Marvin Stamm.

Laws: Snooky Young, probably Ernie Royal, and a bunch of other people on there.

Brown: J. J. [Johnson], Jimmy Cleveland, Kai [Winding] on trombones. You mentioned Jerome Richardson, Rahsaan, yourself, Joel Kaye I'm not familiar with, then Toots [Thielemans] on harmonica, Bob James electric piano, Eric Gale, Ray Brown, and then Chuck Rainey on some. Then Bernard and Grady Tate splitting the drumming. Then I just noticed, Hilda Harris, Valerie Simpson. So, a female chorus. But again, that record, that's the soundtrack for – that's the one that . . .

Laws: Oh yeah, it's still going.

Brown: Then, of course, A&M. This was . . .

Laws: That was on A&M.

Brown: Yeah, A&M. Then, *From the Hot Afternoon*, with Paul Desmond, another major – I don't know if this was memorable, but another – a major project, because of the amount of personnel, full orchestra, or chamber orchestra, I should say. I should just say, a string section.

Laws: I'd have to hear it again.

Brown: Then we get to *Crying Song. Crying Song* is September 1969.

Laws: See, I knew it.

Brown: Memphis. That's what you referenced earlier in this interview, about being called for that one. So that brings us up to date on that and at least gets us to there. Here we go. What's showing up now is Gary McFarland, September '69, Curtis Fuller on

trombone, you, Gary McFarland on vibes and vocal, George Ricci, cello, Sam Brown, guitar, Ron Carter and Chet Amsterdam, and then Grady Tate and Sol Gubin, and then Airto.

Laws: Did you remember you mentioned Sam Brown earlier? You said his name was Bluch or something on that other record.

Brown: Right. They blew it, huh?

Laws: Guitar. They blew it. That's Sam Brown. That's the same guy, played the guitar on my record.

Brown: I don't know if he was under contract, but one of the things we found out from Kenny was he had to use an alias because of contractual restrictions.

Laws: Oh, I see.

Brown: So he had changed his name on a couple. Then he didn't realize that he was actually on that session, because he didn't recognize his name.

Laws: You know what? I don't think Sam Brown had that problem, because he wasn't signed to any label. But he was a fine guitarist. He played both electric and acoustic guitars. He used to be on all the sessions. Every time you'd go, you'd see Sam playing on those sessions.

Brown: I remember seeing his name a lot.

Then Ron Carter, *Uptown Conversation.* It's on Embryo. So that was small. Then George Benson, *Body Talk,* which of course that got a lot of play, because of being on A&M, a lot of distribution. Then back to Mongo, *Stone Soul.* This is in late '69.

Laws: I remember that title, but I don't remember doing the record too much. Is that *Stone Soul Picnic* or something?

Brown: I'm sure that that's what . . .

Laws: That's a track, though, isn't it? Or was it the name . . .

Brown: Yeah, it's on there, but it's listed as the title. *Stone Soul Picnic* is on there, *Love Child, Son of a Preacher Man.* So this is a straight up – *Little Green Apples.*

Laws: That's Mongo doing that?

Brown: No, this was – yeah, that was Mongo. Yeah, this is on Mongo's album. Hadley Caliman is on this one, and Sonny Fortune. You know Hadley just passed.

Laws: I know. I heard about that.

Brown: He spent a lot of time in the Bay Area. So I . . .

Laws: Yeah, he was mostly a West Coast guy.

Brown: Right, from the Northwest. He ended up in the Northwest. But I remember him being a real presence in there. Mongo with Purdie, Bernard, on this one. Steve Berrios on timbales. Luis Gasca. So Luis and Hadley, they were real – they were in the Bay Area. So, being from the Bay Area, they were a strong presence. So they must have been able to go back and forth on the coast.

Then, jumping down a little bit, in New York, early '70s, is Ernie Wilkins, *Hard Mother Blues*, Ernie Wilkins orchestra. He's got a lot of veterans on here, Ray Copeland.

Laws: Yeah, I remember that session.

Brown: Joe Newman, Snooky.

Laws: Wow. You bringing me back. Was that '69 or '70?

Brown: It says early '70s. They don't have the exact date. Mainstream Records. I remember that label. But just the folks that are on here. It's frightening. Benny Powell, David Spinoza on guitar, Chuck Rainey bass, Grady Tate. But yeah, they got you listed in the saxes.

Laws: Yeah, I played sax and flute. It was kind of hard stuff going on in there.

Brown: So let's – I'm going to skip over some of these to get to your projects, because now you're on CTI. This is what put you up. I've got *Afro Classic* right here. Let's double-check that, because this seemed to have been what brought you critical acclaim. Let's talk about the concept for this album, doing the Bach Passacaglia.

Laws: Somebody showed me a CD of that.

Brown: Oh yeah. It's on CD. I'm just – these are from my collection. I brought these, because this is – when I bought them. See, I didn't even open – I didn't want to break the cellophane, because the CTI, remember you used to see just the covers.

Laws: The artwork.

Brown: The artwork of the covers.

Laws: Pete Turner.

Brown: Right. I was looking for the date on this one. December 1970. So let's talk about this, because this was, for me, *Amazing Grace.*

Laws: That's what I got a CD of last night for the first time. That's what they sent to me

Brown: We just picked it up too. But even though this is the one for me, this is the one the critics like, this is the one that I like. Let me tell a little bit about – just about this one, because my father, he was a blues man, but he also listened to a lot of soundtracks, like *Exodus* and *Dr. Zhivago,* but when he heard this, he says, "Son, put that back on."

Laws: Really? What? The *Amazing Grace*?

Brown: He liked the whole thing. He liked *Let Her Go, No More.* But *Amazing Grace* is what caught his ear.

Laws: I'm sure.

Brown: But he said – he didn't really like the music I played at home. When I brought this home from college and played it on his – I said, "Pop, why don't you check this out?" He says, "Son, I want a copy of that." So this to me told me that you could branch – we weren't talking about just classical, being able to do classical and jazz, but to me, this record represented your ability to play anything and everything. Of course, there are no classical pieces on there. But it touched my father. My father was a bluesman. Like I said, he liked – but this is the one that got him. So just wanted to make sure you . . .

Laws: Wow, that's interesting. My dad too, but he only related to *Amazing Grace.* He cried when he heard that. Tears came to his eyes. That was significant for me.

Brown: Let's go back in the chronology. We're going to get – for me, this is – critics, they loved this one. For me – but I want you to talk about this, because this is . . .

Laws: Well, I remember being up there in the office with Don Sebesky and Creed. We were deciding on material to record. So we decided on the Bach Passacaglia, and I think the theme from *Love Story* is on there.

Brown: Oh yeah.

Laws: That was Creed's input, because Creed always liked to bridge the gap between the average theatergoer and the music. He always looked for something – I think *Crying Song* was also the same thing. So that was one of the things he and I talked about when

we were on tour last year in Europe. He always – he's always producing. Even during the show, he's trying to bring quality to our performances, live performances.

So he was the one that chose *Love Story*, because that film was out with what's-her-name?

Brown: Ryan O'Neal.

Laws: Ryan O'Neal, and what's that other girl's name? But anyway, it was strong. It was a strong movie. So he thought that would be a good idea. So he used that as a bridge. And I think we did a Mozart piece.

Brown: Um-hmm. The flute sonata in F.

Laws: At the time, it was very intriguing. I thought it also displayed the flute well. *Fire and Rain* is also – I think it was one of Creed's suggestions. Don Sebesky was the one, I think, who did the arrangement on that.

Brown: I'm going to go ahead and bust it open. I'm in your house.

Laws: You haven't opened it up?

Brown: I never took the cellophane off, but I always got the LP out. I always tried to keep the cover. So I'm going to go ahead and bust it out.

Laws: You hadn't even opened it up.

Brown: That shows you how I felt about this. I'm trying to preserve it. It's been 41 years.

Laws: It doesn't seem like it. My first group was called the Afro-Classic Ensemble. Ron Carter was in it. I think Freddie Waits. Is Freddie Waits on that?

Brown: Um-hmm. Freddie's on this one.

Laws: He died too.

Brown: His son is now a big, big drummer, Rasheed [Nasheed] Waits.

Who chose the personnel? Did you have that? Or was that something that was also negotiated?

Laws: You know what? I'm sure – Waits played on my band on it, and I think Bob James is on there – I'm sure Creed – we all came together on that, because Creed was very instrumental – he's very particular about anybody going into Rudy Van Gelder's

studio. They didn't want anybody that's anybody. People had to have a certain personality, certain sound.

Brown: A certain personality? What was your criteria?

Laws: I mean musical personality, a certain musical personality for them, something unique about them. I remember when Freddie brought his own conga player to play on one track. Rudy – he had Rudy turn off the machine until the guy left. That's how particular they were about players. Yeah, he was very particular. But it's okay, because his choices were agreeable to me. I know that Freddie Waits was the drummer I chose, because he was playing on my band. Bob James played in the band too, Bob James along with Ron Carter. We did some gigs together.

Brown: Was there a quartet then?

Laws: I had a vibraphone player too. David . . .

Brown: Friedman.

Laws: Dave Friedman.

Brown: He's on there. So you basically brought your band.

Laws: That's right. David Friedman, I saw him in Berlin. We did a session. As a matter of fact, I'm going to New York on the 1st to the 3rd. I don't know if he's going to be there, but the same producer who flew me over to do a record in Berlin is the guy I met Dave Friedman over there. I have not seen him since we did that. I saw him there in Berlin. He speaks German. He said, "That's my first language." I didn't even know that, because he speaks English with no accent. We played on a session together over there. He looks pretty much the same, too. He really does. Looks just like he did then.

Brown: I didn't read the reviews. I didn't go back and research what was said about this. But I think what makes this particularly distinctive is the fact that you're playing electric – back to Passacaglia, which is the centerpiece – you're playing electric flute. You've got Dave Friedman playing vibes with fuzz pedal, but that's on *Fire and Rain.* Then you got Ron Carter playing electric cello on Passacaglia. So who made the decisions about . . . ?

Laws: It's not so much electric. It's that I was using effects. I was using a device that allowed the flute to sound like a bassoon and flute together. That's why. I was always – as a matter of fact, when I was talking to Chick – we were in Japan, and Chick – we're talking about sounds. I said, "I need to come up with a sound that's unique," other than my own personal sound, but like an ensemble sound. I thought about the bassoon and flute again, because that's what that represented. That sound was representative of – I've still got the device, but I have not hooked it up to play it any more.

Brown: Is it like an octave divider?

Laws: Yeah, it's like an octave divider, but it's more – it was analog. Now we're in the digital domain, and I've got one of those little deals there, but it doesn't sound anything like that, the one I had on – the analog one. So I just used that. It was not called electric flute so much. All it is, is, it's just something I hooked up to the mouthpiece that allowed the sound to travel through that device, and then it divided it up. So you had a combination of the natural sound and the manufactured one.

Brown: You also had Fred Alston on bassoon.

Laws: Yeah, that's right. He's also on a piece – he's also on a record I did with Atlantic Records that Chick wrote, a trio for bassoon, piano, and flute.

Brown: Talk about that piece.

Laws: Yeah. It was totally classical. Chick – I was listening to it last night. It's so interesting you should mention that, because – then I said, man, we could have played so much better. Oh my God. Because there's some, for me, questions of intonation with the bassoon, as well as the way – the quality of the recording from the engineering point of view. The sound of flute was not – Rudy got the best sound. We didn't record in his studio. We recorded that at Atlantic Records, that trio that Chick wrote. It's on the record we did called *Law's Cause*, the third record I did for Atlantic.

Brown: I know there was some tradeoff. *Windows* – you did *Windows.* Chick recorded *Windows* on his sessions. Things like that. I think it was from *Bachianas Brasileiras,* one of the Villa-Lobos you guys did. It was the flute, bassoon – no, I can't remember. Anyway, we'll get to that later.

So, anything else about this one? Because, again, I think that that – the fact that you changed the timbre and the sonority of your flute through electronical means, you got the fuzz box. So, we're in the '70s. Hendrix has just died. He already completely changed the sound of the electric guitar. So it seems like we were – musicians were striving, as you say, find a new sound, find another sound.

Laws: I think that Creed also was sort of responsible for that, because I really appreciated the pure sound of the flute. That's what I'd worked on so many years, getting the sound of the flute like they use it in the symphony orchestra. Then, many people thought that by doing that, having that kind of sound from the flute, it was like contaminating it. But I was willing to try different things, and I still am. As long as I can maintain the control of the in- – of the sound, my personal sound, I'm amenable to try some different things.

Brown: You're talking about – again, I think anybody who followed your career knows that the concert music tradition has figured very prominently into your sound, your conception, your musicality, across the board. It was – what was surprising when we went to the NEA Jazz Masters, they kind of downplayed that. They talked about your gospel background and your familiarity with vernacular black music and jazz. But they downplayed that. Maybe did they feel that was too obvious? Or was that even something that you took note of?

Laws: I didn't. You said they downplayed the fact that . . .

Brown: . . . that you had this classical training, this classical background. I don't recall . . .

Laws: You're right. They did not mention that too much.

Brown: Right.

Laws: Maybe because it's the Jazz Masters.

Brown: But this is a Jazz Masters interview. We're going to have to talk about – this is about you. I mean, this is you. You can't deny it.

Laws: Yeah, but isn't it in the brochure that was . . . ?

Brown: Oh, it's in the book, but it just caught me by surprise that here you, among the pioneers of being able to bridge those two worlds, and I would have valorized that, that you were able to have that facility and the success in both fields. To me, that's something you would want to extol, rather than to downplay.

Laws: Hmm. Interesting. I didn't think about it too much.

Brown: Okay.

Laws: Maybe it should have been. Because, here again, the music's more important than me. That's the way I think about it. I'm just a participant, but the music's more important. Maybe it would have been to the advantage to show that the classical and jazz and Latin and all that stuff can contribute to the whole of the jazz performance. In that way it could have helped. That way any aspiring musicians can also involve themselves in different idioms.

Brown: For me, like you say, I believe music is a healing force. I saw a picture in your photo gallery over there of you and Wynton very close. Wynton got all the accolades for being able to bridge both worlds, but you – for me, you pioneered that. Like I said, this was the soundtrack to my college years. I was studying music formally. Here I heard, oh,

a jazz musician playing classical and being able to straddle both and do both at such an exceptional, phenomenal level. So that was . . .

Laws: I see. I see what you mean. It could have been. But I didn't think about it much.

Brown: Okay, well, again, not just so much that, but to me, this is really inextricable from who you are. This is who you are. You're the – for me, you're the one who showed that you can excel in both.

Laws: Guess what? As I come to think of it, when we played our intro to *Stella*, it had a classical sound.

Brown: It was all classical.

Laws: It was just totally ethereal.

Brown: Right. And that's what I love, because you showed that we could be in a jazz context, but we can speak any language.

Laws: There you go. So there it was.

Brown: What does that award mean to you, the NEZ Jazz Masters? You talked about earlier, that it brought some . . .

Laws: Now I've come to appreciate it more, because I see – I learn more about the history of it and those who were involved already, those wonderful musicians who've already been selected as honorees. It makes me feel very, very humble and makes me feel good about I can be included among those guys. So that's how I feel.

Also, I feel that national recognition for the art of improvisation is probably emphasized more, and that's a good thing, where it's recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts. That is a good thing, because it puts it along with other endowments that have come for classical performance. That's supposed to be, according to society, the utopia of the music, but then it gives it the kind of recognition beyond what it normally has received, I think.

The testimonial is the fact that – the ones who've been selected already. So to be among them is a great honor.

Brown: And here we are, not more than two months later, and we're finding out that the funding for the NEA Jazz Masters Award is in jeopardy, if not already cut.

Laws: Yeah, it's reduced, I heard. Well, if you take into consideration the so-called economic budgets, then maybe – my understanding is it's just reduced. It's not

eliminated. It's just reduced. But it's unfortunate, because that shows us that the needed attention to the arts, for healing the nation, is not given. It's not recognized. When you start cutting things which you feel is fat – when it really is not the fat. It's really the lean, the essential – then you're going to hurt yourself. You hurt yourself. What do you have?

Brown: That's what historians say. Civilizations are judged by their contributions to culture, not so much by their empire or political hegemony.

Laws: Yeah. Look what happens in the political scene. You look at all the scandals and all of the corruption and all that stuff. Corruption ain't in music. Corruption's not in music. It's in politics, in the governing.

I was talking to my bass player. We were in the Philippines. I said, "When you think about it, nationalism is one of the culprits of division and conflict." How do you suppose – for instance, we were walking through these custom lines. You don't like to stand in these long lines. Why? Because you've got national boundaries. If you didn't have national boundaries, if you had one government, you wouldn't have to worry about all that. You wouldn't have to worry about conflict, because suppose we have pride of one government, one culture. That's the elimination of nationalism. Conflict – when you put yourself in one group, somebody's in the other group, then you're going to have competition, because you're going to say, mine's better. See? That is why I said, "John, you can't" – he says, "If everybody started to listen to the same music" – something like that. I said, "No, music is not a government." It's not a government. It's an art form. But when you think about government, something that rules and controls behavior, that's a government. So I think he saw – he got the picture. He agreed with me in the long run. He said, "Yeah, you're right. One government would be the answer."

Brown: I think if we recognized everyone, if each person recognized the humanity of another person, that's one step towards achieving that. For me, music is a healing force, and it helps bring people together. It's not a dividing force. It's a unifying force.

Laws: That's right. It certainly does. But people who – I was reading an article recently about the reason for bad behavior. Why do people do bad things? There are a number of reasons, but one of them is often because of selfish reasons. In other words, if a guy needs to feed his family and he has no job and he sees the opportunity to take something, he'll take it to feed his family. That's a reason for doing bad things. That's just one, but it mentioned several other motivating factors. So bad behavior comes from several reasons, one of which I just mentioned, and until those reasons are eliminated, people will continue to act bad. But it's basically founded on selfish reasons, thinking about himself.

I was reading an article this morning about a shepherd from Kurdistan. Kurdistan is a place right outside of Russia. Used to be controlled by the Soviet Union. This shepherd, he was talking about – and I thought about this in conjunction with the family. It says that he was a shepherd. The shepherds keep their eyes on their sheep. The sheep look to them,

and they recognize their voice. He says, each – there's a certain period of time where the sheep have to be taken to an elevated point where they can graze a certain time of the year. In order to get to that place, there are certain routes you can take. One route can take you there faster, but it's more dangerous, because you got cliffs. You stand a danger. – there's a danger of losing one of the sheep. They become sick or whatever. The other one is safer, but it takes much longer.

Now, the shepherd who thinks more about himself, is going to take the shorter route, but at the danger of his flock, whereas the one who cares more about the flock than he does himself, is going to take the longer route that benefits the flock.

Now you think about that in a family situation. The father, who's supposed to provide for the family, if he's selfish, he may not spend the time with the flock or he may look for the shortest way to make the money. He may steal. Why? Because there's a selfish factor. Selfishness is a bad motivator for behavior. You've got to think of other people first in order for everybody to benefit. See? You feel better. The shepherd – he said he felt better.

That's just one aspect. There were several aspects in this article I read. But that's one motivating factor, to think about a shepherd. This guy, a young guy, says that since he was – I think he was like five or six years old – he had learned to be a shepherd. He noticed, as he was growing up, different – one other thing that's so interesting. It's kind of – I chuckled at it when I read it – he says, sheep have the characteristic of following, usually, but then you find some stubborn sheep and you try to isolate that sheep in order to train it to be compliant. He says, but if they don't do that – because if they don't do that, they have to isolate them, because they influence the behavior of the other sheep. So they have to isolate it. Guess what happens if they don't comply? He said they end up being on the dinner table.

You know what? It's the same thing in behavior in families. If you've got someone who's rebellious and stubborn and disrupting the peace of the family, what are you going to do with that person? You have to isolate him. In fact, society does that. They put him in jail. You can't – they're incorrigible. You can't get them to comply. Hey, you have to separate them from the rest of society. In fact, sometimes you have to kill them. That's what they do, capital punishment.

Brown: They can't be rehabilitated.

Laws: I thought it was so analogous to society in general, when you find a shepherd. Because this particular article I was reading, he's talking about two kinds of shepherds. He's talking about the physical shepherd for the sheep, and he's talking about the spiritual shepherd for other people, being in those two positions. I thought it was so analogous. You can see the benefit of not thinking about yourself first.

When you think about our leaders in government, who do you think they think about first? They think about their position. You look at the scandal in Bell right now. You know about Bell and those guys, those fat cats, thinking about themselves, not about who they govern and who they're supposed to be. They call themselves servants? Man, that is the biggest misnomer, biggest lie. No, they're serving themselves, and it's to the detriment of those they govern, rather than to the benefit. Right?

Brown: Absolutely. We look at the way the world is now. We're looking at CEOs running around, offered the biggest bonuses. Meanwhile, what are they going to do? The first thing they're going to do is cut the social safety nets for people who can't provide for themselves.

Laws: Absolutely.

Brown: And then they pit the working class against each other, the public and private sector, divide and conquer. We've seen how they got a hold of this country in the first place, divide and conquer. Or any country. They know that's how you do it. So when we see the political so-called back to the term caretakers, they were elected to take care of their constituents, to look out, to represent their concerns, the interests of their constituencies. What's happening is that the Supreme Court, they passed laws, citizens united, so that corporations could determine who's going to be elected, because of campaign contributions. They're not looking out for people.

So, how do we change this? You bring up this analogy. You can talk about it in the context of the shepherd, of the herd or the family or society or a nation. It's just like the atom. The structure's the same.

Laws: That's right. All throughout. That's true. So it really comes down to government, proper government. Who is qualified to lead? It comes . . .

Brown: Obviously the government that we have, many factions therein are proving they're incapable of doing it, because they're not taking care of their constituents. So how do we as people change that or address that issue? Because we see it happening, and it's getting worse. We see Wisconsin. Those folks are showing that – my daughter's up at University of California, Berkeley. They were in the streets on Wednesday, because they're raising the tuition rates, but meanwhile they're giving these extra bonuses to the – the chancellors are all getting increases and bonuses. There's something drastically wrong if the picture that would help the greater number is that those who are in positions of power and influence were not selfish, but unfortunately human nature is showing that that's not the case. How do we as people deal with that?

Laws: The thing is, Anthony – all right. I'll tell you. We can't. We can't. The reason why I say that – you're coming tomorrow. I'll show you what's being done already. It has to do with government, and it's being done already. It's happening, right under our own

noses, but people are not aware of it. Most people are not aware of it. Some are. Because there's a solution, but it's not – you can't go to human beings, who are imperfect, to create something that's going to be perfect, just like you can't get an apple from an orange tree. You've got only imperfect rulers. That's why those people right now, the uprising over in Libya right now, with Gaddafi – and even when they got Mubarek out of Egypt, what do they have left? Another human ruler who can do just as bad, could be just as bad. It's going to be – because what's happening, they're depending on human rulership. We're fallible and not qualified. Nobody's qualified, not to rule. So tomorrow, you come back, I'm going to show you. I'll show you what the solution is.

Brown: I don't know if I can sleep. I got to be back here. What time we coming back tomorrow? I want to know.

Laws: Okay. I got it for you. I'll let you just read it for yourself. It's a simple solution. Man, it's so simple. But remember, the central issue in every situation is government. Who has a right to rule? Who's qualified to rule, whether it's in the home, whether it's in the community, whether it's in the city, the state, the federal government, or the universal? Who has the right? Not the ones we've seen. We've seen nothing but failure. That's all we've seen. You can testify. The facts prove it. Nobody's qualified. Because people are always complaining. Even the time they had Obama, talking about Obama doing something about that, I knew from then, right from the go, the guy inherited a system already in place. He just cannot do it. Not one person can do it. Impossible. The system is at fault. It's flawed. So, next time we talk, I'll bring you something. I'm going to look through the literature, just let you read it for yourself.

Brown: All right.

Today is Saturday, March 5th, 2011, day two of the NEA Jazz Masters Award oral history interview with flutist, humanitarian, composer, arranger, good brother, Hubert Laws in his house in Los Angeles, California. Hubert, before we begin with the interview, I just wanted to make a couple of corrections from yesterday, or at least correct myself. When we were talking about Freddie Waits's son, I said Rasheed. His name is Nasheed Waits. So I just wanted to get that. And earlier on in your interview, you mentioned you wanted to talk about your siblings, and we didn't get a chance to talk about that yesterday. So let's start with that today.

When I was looking, researching your biography, I found that the next entry in the *Grove Dictionary of Jazz* was your brother Ronnie, and I just noticed there's such a disparity in the age. You were born in 1939, Ronnie born in 1950. You mentioned earlier your sister Blanche. So maybe we could go through your entire siblings.

Laws: Okay. Blanche is the oldest. She's the first born in the family, and I'm the first-born son. Behind me came Johnny, who's turned out to be a singer. He's also appeared on a couple of our records. Then Eloise. She has her own musical career. Then came

Ronnie. There was like a ten-year interval before he was born. It was like their first four and then the last four. It was Eloise. Then came Charlotte, then Debra, then Donna. Charlotte, we lost her to a drunk driver back in 2000 – 1999. Actually it was New Year's Day. She also – she was a performer as well. She had played – or she had sung with the Ike and Tina Turner Revue, singing and dancing.

Brown: The Ikettes.

Laws: Yeah, that's right. She was one of the Ikettes.

Going back, just to give you a little history of each one. Eloise – I'm sorry, Blanche also sang gospel. In fact she's recorded a couple gospel LPs. In fact that's how she got her job over at Angelus. She's the top person over at Angelus Funeral Home right now. She got that gig as a singer and pianist, but she emerged as a – evolved into an executive position. She's the top of the line right now. She's the number one in charge right now at Angelus.

Then behind me came Johnny, who was – he didn't really pursue a professional career in singing, but I knew he had the ability. So I included him on a couple of our projects. One was called *Land of Passion,* and the other one was called *Say It with Silence,* those two LPs. Then he was also – I don't know if he was included when we did our family concert. I'm not sure about that. But I know on those two LPs for sure he sang.

Then after him came Eloise. Of course Eloise has done – you know about her career. She's a singer. And Charlotte after – no, Ronnie. Of course everybody knows about Ronnie. Ronnie's more – he's been more or less known as a fusion-type music producer and player. After him comes Charlotte. I spoke about her. She's no longer with us. Then there's Debra, who – we produced her first record in 1980 – somewhere in the '80s. The first record was a very, very big hit, which Jeffrey – William Jeffrey – wrote, called *Very Special.*

Brown: Let me just add as a footnote that we have William Jeffrey present in this room.

Laws: Yeah. That piece is very famous because, in addition to Debra's hit when it was initially released, L L Cool J and J Lo recorded it recently, and it became another hit then. Jeffrey can attest to that, because I think he moved and bought another house as a result of it.

Okay. So that was Debra. Then the last is Donna, who turned out to be a dancer. She's not involved with music so much. She's here. She lives here in Los Angeles right now. She moved from Houston after – about three or four years ago she moved here. That's all the siblings.

Brown: You mentioned family. I remember up in Berkeley, at the Berkeley Jazz Festival in the early '80s, I remember the whole family. Then you had a group with the family,

and you brought them up to the Berkeley Jazz Festival. Ndugu was on drums. Probably Nathan East was on bass. How long was that ensemble together?

Laws: I did not have the family included in every situation, but whenever I could include them, I did. For instance, we played Carnegie Hall a couple times. We also did the Pavilion here. That's when the *Family* LP came out, because Debra is pretty much – I always get her involved when there's space for it. She just went to Manila with us, Philippines, because I wrote a couple of pieces that – message songs, I call them – that she projects pretty well, very well in fact. She – I estimate her to be the most talented in the family, really. She just never learned the materials of music, the literature and materials of music. She didn't learn the theory, although I really tried to incite her to go and become educated in the theory of music. She never gravitated towards that. But she still has this wonderful, wonderful perception and idea about how to perform music, and she has a good ear for hearing things in tune. I told my mother many times, I think she's probably the most talented one in the family.

Brown: What about Ronnie nowadays? He's still . . .

Laws: He's still playing. He plays a lot. Ronnie, I think he plays too much. I think he could be more discreet about choosing, selecting the gigs that he plays, but he plays whenever he can, because he has – he's had a concept of lifestyle that keeps him having to play, which I feel in some cases he needs to make some adjustments. See, Ronnie is still living in the world when he was back there doing his *Friends and Strangers,* when he was at the peak of his career. But he still had – he maintained that same concept, which no longer exists. So sometimes that can get him in trouble, economically. He accepts all kinds of gigs, which I don't think he should. I don't know if that should be part of the record, but that's just something I try to influence him to change. But it's difficult to make a leopard change its spots.

Brown: As long as we're talking about family, do you want to talk about your children? Any of them into music?

Laws: My daughter, who I just finished texting back, she composes and sings.

Brown: Her name?

Laws: Ashley. They call her Kristen. Some people call her Kristen. But I named her Ashley. She uses Kristen Cole – Kristen Ashley Cole. She's very – she's all over the place, like I told you, moving the hoop, the basketball hoop, earlier, an analogy. That's the way she is in some ways. But she's reliable too in some ways. She's very intelligent, and she's got this great voice. She's written lyrics with Sinbad's daughter. I forgot her name. They were good friends for a while. Oh God. Her name escapes me right now. They wrote some very nice lyrics, about seven years ago. My daughter's 25 right now. So they were in their teens when they wrote these nice sets of lyrics.

She would like to do a project with me which I still have in mind to do, some kind of a lullaby album for little toddlers.

Brown: We met your son the other day.

Laws: That was Sky. That's my son.

Brown: So he must be the youngest? No.

Laws: Yeah, he's the younger of the two. He doesn't have any music talent. I started him playing flute. When he was in high school, he played flute. But he didn't have the aptitude so much to pursue it, even though his grandfather is Roy Gaines. I don't know if you know Roy Gaines, the guitar player, singer, blues. He does rhythm-and-blues. I thought Sky would surely have this musical aptitude, have music on both sides of the family, because his mother's father is in music and been a – in fact, we were – when I mentioned those clubs in Houston, Texas – we were on the floor shows together. I told you about the 13-year-old sensation. He and I were on the same floor. His brother, Grady Gaines, played with Little Richard's band. They called themselves the Upsetters.

So I thought that Sky would eventually do something with music, but he didn't. He's interested in investments. That's his main thing right now, investing. And he plays tennis.

Brown: He has two beautiful kids.

Laws: Absolutely, wonderful. I just put his daughter Sofia's picture on my desktop display as background, when she was real little. I just put it on my laptop upstairs this morning. Yeah, that's a wonderful thing.

Brown: I see you're wearing a tee shirt from the Philippines, because you just . . .

Laws: I met this wonderful woman there, who gave me – who gifted me. The day I left, she bought a gift and gave it to me. This is one of them.

Brown: That brings us to the present. I want to return back to the discography, because 1971 – as we said – as we mentioned earlier, yesterday – was quite a watershed period for you. I'm just going to scroll down and look at a few of – how wide-ranging were some of the dates you were on. I'm looking at Count Basie. We already talked about the Jobim dates. Then here's Stanley Turrentine. I'm going to jump down to Charles Mingus, *Let My Children Hear Music.*

Laws: I don't remember ever recording with Charlie Mingus.

Brown: Okay. So this was – he had a very large orchestra on this one.

Laws: Really? I do remember recording with Count Basie, though. I remember that, because Oliver Nelson wrote the charts on it. In fact, he was the one that invited me to play with that – in that recording in New York. I remember that.

Brown: Can you talk about your relationship with Oliver Nelson?

Laws: Yeah. Oliver did a lot of scoring here in Los Angeles for films and movies. As I can recall, I was called to play on maybe about four or five of them, along with – J. J. Johnson used to also do some writing here. As a result of meeting him here and playing on those recordings – in the films – he invited me to play on this project with Count Basie.

But he also did another record. It's something that Mayor Stokes from Cleveland – Mayor Stokes in Cleveland, Ohio, did a record. It was one of those oratories. Really, really interesting. I got it somewhere in my archives. I played on that record too, which is very impressive.

Oliver Nelson was outstanding. He's a peer of Quincy. He – let's see. Oliver, J. J. Johnson, Tom McIntosh, they're all peers. Some of them just got more notoriety. Some are better businessmen than others, the least of whom was Tom McIntosh. High quality, as you know. You talk about *Great Day*, that album I'd like to get – I mean, I'd like to get a CD version. You too. Anyway, he's been a friend over the years, like I told you yesterday, but he just never seemed to get into the pulse of the other guys, in getting hired.

I remember one time, when he first came to Los Angeles, he got in touch with somebody. First name was Ken. I don't know if it was Ken Burns. Somebody who was really prolific and doing all these t.v. episodes and shows like Andy Griffith and some other – those '50s shows. This guy was very, very productive. Tom McIntosh told me he's going to pretty much take over his spot. But that never materialized. I was very unhappy because of that, because I knew Mac was highly qualified, in fact better than his predecessor at that particular position.

How did we get to talking about Mac and Quincy? Oliver Nelson.

Brown: I asked you about Oliver Nelson.

Laws: Oliver, the last time I remember working with him was that project with Count Basie. That happened in New York. But everything else that I remember doing with him was in Los Angeles. Then he died suddenly. He would have – I was very privileged to be called by him. A lot of these guys, they were really very busy. I was first call for them at that time, by Quincy and Oliver. Then he passed away. Then it was Quincy and Tom McIntosh. Tom was not so active.

Brown: That date with Count Basie was called *Afrique.* It was recorded in New York in December 1970, Flying Dutchman.

I'm going to stay on this subject before I return to the discography. Interviewed Benny Golson for the same program a little while ago. He talked about what it was like being in Los Angeles and writing. We looked at the lineage: Benny Carter. Looking at of course with Oliver Nelson. He talked a lot about Oliver Nelson and how much of a grind it was and how demanding that job was, to work in the industry here. And of course, Quincy. So let's jump down to *Smackwater Jack,* because there was – in reviewing your biography, there was always – like you said, Quincy – what the biography said was Quincy, whenever he had a project, he would call you, and he would fly you in specifically. A lot of the early dates were in New York. So I presume you were already on the scene anyway. So '71, were you still based in New York? Or were you back out here?

Laws: Yes, I was in New York. '71? Yeah, mostly. I was in New York. I didn't buy a place here until '77, '78, something like that.

Brown: So *Smackwater Jack.* We were already talking about *Walking in Space.* Then Quincy follows up with *Smackwater Jack.* Got two major t.v. theme songs with *Ironside* and *Hicky Burr.* Then, of course, Quincy with film scoring, *Anderson Tapes.* This is another one of those all-star sessions, including yourself, but I'm looking at Monty Alexander on tack piano, Paul Humphrey on drums, somebody I really love. You talked about Quincy, his style within the studio, but this also included Bill Cosby on vocal. Do you recall any of that?

Laws: I don't remember seeing him in the studio.

Brown: Okay. It may have been an overdub.

Laws: But don't forget. Let's see. I was going to mention, he also had the Academy Awards a couple of years. He flew me out here from New York. I remember playing that three times. I think Whoopee Goldberg was the – the last time I played, Whoopee Goldberg was the hostess. But he wasn't there. He had Tom Scott conducting the band, or contracting the band. That was the last time I played the Academy Awards. But he was responsible. His name was in the mix. So they made sure that I got the call. I don't remember the year. I think I was still living in New York. No, I had two places. I think I was flying back and forth.

Brown: Then, in the discography, Hermeto Pascoal. I'm not sure we mentioned him yesterday. When we talk about Brazilian music, he's one of those . . .

Laws: Hermeto Pascoal.

Brown: Yeah.

Laws: That guy. You mention that name, you know what I think about? A bobcat? You know why? Because he's an albino, right?

Brown: Right, and he's blind too.

Laws: That's right. I remember one time in New York I went to his place. I've got this – not antipathy. I've got this phobia for cats, just normal cats, small cats. But he had this big bobcat. I ring his doorbell, and this – I didn't go in. I say, you've got to move that cat. That sticks in my mind. This guy – it looks like something from the wild. That thing – I still remember that.

I guess it was during that time that we were probably meeting, because we were probably going to do a record or something. I guess I was going to record with him. I don't recall what I played on it or anything. But I remember that experience about that bobcat, wildcat. It was big. That thing was big. It almost looked like a leopard or something. That was a harrowing experience.

Where is he? Is he still around?

Brown: I believe he's still alive, but he's back in Brazil.

Laws: I need to talk to Airto about that guy. They probably know. They were like a clique together, he and Jobim and that Flora Purim and Milton Nascimento, those guys. They hung out together.

Brown: Next on the list is a recording date with Melvin Sparks. You said, like Les Spann, you're a guitarist, flutist. I figured guitar – was that a memorable thing?

Laws: I don't remember who that is.

Brown: That would have been at Rudy Van Gelder's studio.

Laws: What's his name?

Brown: Melvin Sparks, guitarist.

Laws: Do you know him? I don't know him. Melvin Sparks.

Brown: Melvin Sparks.

Laws: Sorry. It doesn't ring a bell. It must have been just one experience.

Brown: Yeah, I think it was the only entry under his name in your discography.

The next one, I'm going to have to really preface this one, because this one, as I mentioned, your other CTI projects, this one was something that had a real indelible influence, not only me, but my generation of young African-Americans coming of age. That was *Pieces of a Man*, Gil Scott-Heron.

Laws: Oh yeah. I often hear people talk about that. That was – as I remember, I went in to do one track, but somebody told me I did more than one track on that record. Because I did an interview while I was in New York recently at the NEA. I was doing a series of interviews. This guy told me, "No, you played saxophone on a couple of tracks." I do remember playing a flute solo on . . .

Brown: *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised.*

Laws: Yeah, that was it. I remember doing that. I kind of remember where it was. I think it was RCA studios up there off of Fifth Avenue, Sixth Avenue, somewhere in there. Because I used to walk around, use my bicycle to get to the studios. I put my flute on the handlebars and I'd go all different places, from one to the other, because many times I'd have more than one session during the day during those days, because there was a lot of t.v. commercials that I was doing. That's something that's not documented. I used to – my mainstay was doing a lot of television commercials, because flute was used in there a lot back there.

As a matter of fact, it's very good now, because those dates provided a good measure of pension money that comes out. You pay into the pension fund. So when you get to your age of retirement, they start paying out that money. So there's money for musicians who did have that kind of an experience. It's very valuable. Bob Cranshaw can tell you that, because he gets a good amount of pension, based on the work he did. He did so much work back then. I did a lot too.

I didn't realize it. It was a welcome surprise, when those checks start coming. It really is. And they continue to come. Supposed to come the rest of your life, after you began to get it. It's a good thing. Social security plus that pension, and whatever else that you are able to do. That's why I feel so sorry for some of those musicians who never were matriculated into those programs, because they get at retirement age, and they're struggling.

I remember playing a fundraiser for Billy Higgins – he was sick – right over here at the union, right down the street. A lot of musicians. I think there was an article recently in the musicians' magazine in New York – *Allegro,* I think it's called. They – Jimmy Owens is a part of that, trying to look for some support for these aging musicians who never had the benefit of pension.

Brown: That's what – I think Melvin Sparks is involved in that too. We'll come back to that. But let's return to this issue of – this is a jazz discography. Yet your recording career spans, as you say, commercial and other genres. What about recording with symphony or orchestras? Did – do you have . . . ?

Laws: Yeah. I remember recording. When I was with the New York Philharmonic, I recorded *La Mer*. I remember that, because Len Bernstein was the conductor of the orchestra.

Brown: I think I have a copy of that.

Laws: That was one of the first experiences I had, because we had come up as kids with a concept that these guys don't make mistakes, errors, but they did more cutting and editing on that session than I had ever seen. I say, wow, these guys make mistakes like we do. That's true.

That's the only recording I remember. I did some other things too. I did a thing with some guy who recorded me as well as Chick. He played – Chick did *Für Elise* and I did Gluck's *Orpheus.* I did the solo part. That was with an orchestra. It was released on Columbia Masterworks. And then the other thing I told you about, with Leonard Bernstein. Those were the only two I can recall. I'm sure I did some more.

Brown: Then let's return to the Gil Scott- Heron, because I almost have the entire composition memorized. It was very much call and response. You would react. He'd say, "The revolution will not be televised. It will not be brought to you by" – and then you would interject a flute. Do you remember that being done live?

Laws: It was live. There was no overdub. No, it was live, as I can recall. I was in a booth, and he was in a booth, as I can recall.

Brown: Did you have any sense of how important that would become?

Laws: No.

Brown: He was very, very radical. The lyrics were very . . .

Laws: I didn't even know him. I got the call to come in and play. Then after the fact, later, I found – I hear it later, years later, because I don't even have the recording. I don't even have it. But there's some people, often, when they interview, they ask me. That often comes up, Gil Scott-Heron.

Brown: Like I said, it was an indelible dimension of our soundtrack, those of us coming of age in the '60s and '70s.

Laws: That's interesting.

Brown: Some of the other tunes on there – other titles – are *Lady Day and John Coltrane, Home is Where the Hatred is, Pieces of a Man.* These were prophetic for us. This was capturing the ethos of our generation. So I always – this was one of those touchstones, again.

Laws: I remember recently, when I did this record with Stevie Wonder, I tell you, I was so – that's the kind of thing I won't forget, because I got into the depth of Stevie's – his musicality, more than I had known before, although I'd always loved his compositions, singing. But this thing, the last thing he did. I think it's called *Love's on Fire* or something like that. *Love* something [*My Love is on Fire*]. But the track I did is called *Love's on Fire.* This guy, I tell you, is so – more than most people know. I think jazz musicians know about his musical prowess and his depth – the depth of his understanding of music.

We were doing a gig at the Kodak Theater. He and Herbie, they had two keyboards on stage during rehearsal. They just broke out, started playing *Giant Steps,* and he played *Giant Steps* with him. Stevie Wonder was playing *Giant Steps* and improvising. That's a difficult piece. It's a hallmark for most jazz musicians, to play John Coltrane's *Giant Steps,* and he was doing it.

But aside from that, just doing that one track with him on that record. Let me tell you. He – I was so impressed with him. We talked several times. We saw the Super Bowl together during that time, because he was a good friend of my sister Debra's. Somehow or another, she – he contacted me through her, to do that track. Then we started talking during that period of time. It was a couple of years ago. I'm going to tell you, I won't forget that.

Of course, he had a name before. I knew about Stevie before that. But Gil Scott, I'm just – I'm doing all my sessions here and there. So he's one of those guys, but he emerged as someone important later. Or maybe he already was, but I didn't know it.

Brown: It was this album specifically that really put him on the map, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised.* You had the Last Poets doing – for me it was the voice of the struggle.

Laws: I told you earlier how – it seems like I just fall into certain spots – places – that become important. Like the CTI compendium we were talking about, all of that stuff. I just seem to just gravitate to those situations, and all of a sudden it's a part of history, and it becomes an important part of history, seemingly. I just have been very, very blessed in those areas.

Brown: I was going to make an analogy, but I'm going to leave it alone. I was thinking, Forest Gump shows up everywhere, but Hubert Laws, the other side of the spectrum, at the right place the right time in all those historical moments.

Laws: Absolutely. I'm telling you, this happened. I can name a number of incidents that fit that description.

Brown: Here's one. Kenny Burrell, *God Bless the Child.* Do you remember that date? Because that was yet another one of those.

Laws: When was that?

Brown: That was in April and May of '71, Freddie Hubbard, Kenny, Ron Carter, Billy Cobham. Charles McCraken – it looks like a string section, Don Sebesky arranging.

Laws: That's why I did it.

Brown: Don?

Laws: Probably, yeah.

Brown: Let's talk a little bit more about that relationship with Don. Did it start with CTI?

Laws: Yeah, my relationship with Don Sebesky did. Don is – he's so highly respected among so many arrangers. This guy, and Gil Evans and all those guys, but Don Sebesky is just so special, and his arrangements were so sweeping and so – I think he was responsible for Freddie Hubbard's *First Light* success, because of just his arranging ability and knowing how to orchestrate in such a way, gets the best colors, the colors of the instrument, to come in at just the right spot.

I called him. I was on a plane trip. I think that was when I was doing that CTI tour. I had my iPod on the plane, and I heard – when you isolate yourself under headphones, you hear more of the sonorities, rather than being distracted by ambient noises. I was able to really hone in on stuff that I wasn't aware of before. Then I called him after I got – after I landed. I think I skyped him. I said, "Let me tell you." While people are alive, it's good to tell them about their – getting their praise, while they can understand and hear it and appreciate it. He says, "Yeah, I wish I had done that with Bill Evans." He said – because Bill Evans – Don lives in New Jersey. He said Bill Evans lived close to him. He wished he had done more of that, communicated like that. Because I wanted to let him know. I said, "I tell you. You are – I'm so happy to be in your company, the company of people like you, with that high achievement level." That's exactly what it's been. He is one of the best arrangers I've ever had the privilege of playing with or for.

Brown: He seems to have – like you – been able to master both languages, the concert tradition and the jazz tradition, which leads me to the album that really floored me. This – because here I am. I'm an undergraduate music major, and then *Le Sacre* comes out. Hubert Laws. You've got one of my favorite drummers on there, Jack Dejohnette, and James Newton.

Laws: Is James Newton on that?

Brown: No, no. He's the one that said, "Brown." Well, he called me Tony back then. "Tony, you got to get Hubert's latest."

Laws: Really?

Brown: Yeah. So immediately I went down to the record store. I'm at the University of Oregon, and I see this. It's got your big cat on it. So I was just . . .l

Laws: You know what? My brother – I really didn't understand all the hullabaloo over that record. I really didn't, because, to me, we just – in fact Don Sebesky was the one who . . .

Brown: Did an arrangement.

Laws: Yeah, he arranged that. We had a meeting. He, Creed, and I had a meeting, I remember, at Rockefeller Center, where they had their offices, and we sat up and talked about things we ought to record for the next record. We came up with that. I'm going to tell you: Don wrote the arrangements for this, as well as the *Passacaglia.* He sat out there in the car at Rudy Van Gelder's studio and jotted down these parts. I'm telling you. I've still got the originals. It's hardly legible. This guy sat there with a pencil. I showed it to my band members. They couldn't believe it. The way that whole thing came out, as you can hear – it depends a lot on improvisation too, but the structure is what he put together. He did that. Don Sebesky. That's a genius mind.

Slide Hampton used to do the same thing, I must mention, because I had him – Slide had a strong influence on me learning how to circular breathe, too. I'm telling you. That guy's the first person I ever heard circular breathe. It was on the trombone. We were playing a gig up in Montreal back in – it must have been in '66 somewhere. Probably before that, because I was doing that when I played with Mongo. I played with Mongo from '64 to '67. So maybe in '62, '63, when I played with Slide Hampton and learned about circular breathing.

But anyway, he can do the same thing, just jot down arrangements, hear the parts. He didn't ever have a score, just write down individual parts and hand them to these guys. That's just amazing to me. Don did the same thing. He did that for *The Rite of Spring,* as I can recall, and he also did it for the *Passacaglia* that we ended up recording. Right

outside the studio, at Rudy Van Gelder, while we were in warming up and doing all – I'm sure he took a little bit longer. Maybe he was finishing it up there. But he certainly had it in pencil. There was no ink.

Brown: I'm sure what caught Newton's ear was your doing Fauré's *Pavane.* You got *Syrinx.* So you're doing – you're covering a lot of the flute repertoire. Again, for me, here I am, trying to analyze *Le Sacre,* and then I had to do a complete analysis of the *Brandenburg Concerto,* and then you've got your version. It's like, dang. So again, what we talked about yesterday, this bridging both worlds.

Laws: You know something? To tell you the truth, we played that piece, *The Rite of Spring,* recently. We just did it in Manila. We do it differently. But I think we could have captured that piece better if we'd do it the way we – we probably need to re-record that, because that was done, but it was not as dramatic as it could be. We do it now. It's very dramatic.

But I couldn't understand all of the attention being given to it. Maybe it was foreign to the jazz listener.

Brown: It was pioneering. It was pioneering that you're emerging . . .

Laws: Because my brother told me – Ronnie even told me, "That's a baddie." I'm trying to – what is he saying, a baddie? I didn't see it. I was always involved with classical music with the flute. So, to me, it was just a representation – a little bit of using the themes from Stravinsky, but I know the original piece. Man, that's tremendous. But Don just took snippets from the thematic material, and we treated it with improvisation. But still, it could have been much more dramatic, the way we do it. But I mean – I'm surprised to get that response, when people tell me, "This is something different." To me, it wasn't so spectacular.

Brown: Maybe that's – for you it was second nature. For everybody else it was something new.

Laws: I know the original. I guess that's why.

Brown: Then I remember picking up a later release of Don Sebesky where he's – he really goes back and he completely fleshes out his version of *Rite of Spring.*

Laws: Oh, he did?

Brown: Oh yeah.

Laws: I didn't know that.

Brown: Yeah. I didn't bring it with me, but yeah, I remember going back and picking that up.

Yesterday you referenced that you didn't feel like your flute – that the recording technology had captured the sound that you wanted until you got to CTI. You were talking about comparing it back to the days when you were on Atlantic. What did Creed Taylor or Rudy Van Gelder do to capture the sound of your instrument in a way that suited you?

Laws: When I was with Atlantic Records, the engineers, they looked at the dials a lot, and they'd look at the display rather than really try to capture the sound of the instrument. Rudy, on the other hand – I think it's like anything else. You have the best when it comes to doctors, lawyers, cooks, whatever. You have the best. In this case, he's just one of the best that I know of. He captured my – the flute sound, for me, better than anyone that I ever knew. I get up there sometimes.

I try to emulate that sound. I use that as a pattern, because I do a little engineering now. I do different things. I use two microphones and put them in different places. But I always use his as a barometer of what I'm trying to achieve in terms of flute sound.

Many times, because of the size of the instruments, even with live performances, these guys behind the consol feel like, it's a small instrument, so I got to concentrate on the treble part. I give him a microphone that's treble.

It's not so. I always tell them. I say, you think in terms of vocalists there, and the same kind of quality you want to get for the vocalist, that's what you want for this instrument. Many times. When I do that, we become more successful in our live performances.

But in terms of Rudy, Rudy had had so much experience already, before we even started recording with him. He did things on Blue Note and, I think, Prestige and Verve and all those records, even before I got there. For some reason – it's so interesting. He recorded the flute right up there. Sometimes, some guys put the flute – I mean, put the microphone at the bottom of the flute, at the bell, as if the sound comes out of there. The sound doesn't come out of there. They would ask me. Sometimes they didn't know. They would mic it away from me in different ways.

And then, they don't know how to use a reverb. They didn't know how to use a reverb to enhance the sound. So all those things, you have to go in there and try to make sure that they do your – even Phil Ramone, who was regarded as a great engineer, recording engineer, there was one sound he put on me. I think I did *Day Dreaming and Thinking of You* with Aretha Franklin. It didn't even sound like a flute. That was one time – I'm not putting him down. It's just that, for some reason – because I didn't have control over that. Quincy produced that. But the sound came out. Didn't even – when I heard it, I said,

wow, maybe he wanted that effect. That one time, it was the flute, didn't even sound like a flute.

But Rudy captured that. I think that's one of the reasons why he was awarded a Jazz Masters. He was – I think I saw his picture in there, in that book.

Brown: Yeah, he is.

Laws: NEA Jazz Masters, because he certainly deserved it. He's a very, very eccentric person. The guy walks around with white gloves on, and he didn't want anybody to touch – I was the only one he let touch his microphones. I just recalled that. He let me touch the mics and move – but he wouldn't let anybody else touch anything. In fact, he would conceal what equipment he was using. If it had a label on it, he had tape over it, so you couldn't see what he was using.

Brown: So you can't tell me what kind of mics he used to capture your sound.

Laws: I can tell by the shape of them, because I know what they look like.

Brown: Do you remember specifically any brand name?

Laws: Very simple. The one he used for me was a Shure – S-h-u-r-e.

Brown: Right, I mean, okay, but do you know the model number? or describe it?

Laws: It was a Shure mic, just a boom Shure, and it put one of those – a wind screen over it. But it's not so much that as what he did with the dials on the consol.

Brown: But you said he had it right close, close mic on the mouthpiece.

Laws: Right up there. He always wanted to mic me closely, right there on the mouthpiece.

Brown: A single mic. Not one on either end.

Laws: Single mic, and I was in a booth, always in a booth, isolated.

Brown: That gives us a little more insight, but I know Rudy safeguards his secrets.

Laws: Yeah, he was very secretive. I remember one time, when we signed with CBS Records, we still wanted – I say we. I'm talking about Bob James, Ron – we always wanted to record over there, regardless of being with another label. They had this one guy who was an engineer. Used to be at Media Sound, right there in New York. He came out, trying to see what Rudy was doing. When Rudy found out that guy was an engineer, he

turned all the machines off. He said, “I’m not going to record anything until that guy leaves.” Sure did. I remember that. I was right there. “I’m not recording a thing until he leaves.”

He was very blunt and blatant with people. Creed on the one hand was very, very soft, and he was very, very diplomatic. He didn’t talk directly. If he had an issue with you, he wouldn’t tell you directly. He’d have somebody go in between. It would be like a Henry Kissinger type.

Brown: A mediator.

Laws: And then he’d go – but Rudy, Rudy was a guy that – he would tell you straight up. “Don’t touch my piano.” He said something that was funny. My guitar player – I can’t remember exactly what it was. The guy was sitting at the piano. He says – what’d he say? “That piano is for piano players.” But it was funnier than that. I remember the way he – he’s very, very clever in his choice of words, too.

I’ve been around Rudy multiple times. I remember his wife Elvira – I think her name was Elvie [Elva], who passed away. She had cancer. I was around there trying to call. I called him and consoled him, stuff like that. He – two wives died on him. I think he’s single now.

I know the girl who’s working with him. Her name is Maureen – let’s see. Maureen. I had it just a moment – Sickler.

Brown: Not related to Don Sickler?

Laws: Don Sickler’s wife, Maureen. She works with him regularly. In fact they did a project, the live recording we did in Montreux. He was doing the editing and all that. She called me and told me about it. She was working with him on that project.

Yeah, I’ve been around when he’s gone through some very vulnerable times. I call and try to console him. He was very appreciative of that. I guess maybe that’s why he let me touch his microphones.

Brown: It could be the humanitarian spirit. But he also could see that you commanded your instrument in a way that I’m sure he respected.

Laws: There’s a lot of people that controlled the instruments that went through there: Coltrane and Freddie Hubbard, pshaw. Are you kidding? And they still didn’t – I don’t know about Coltrane, but I know Freddie never touched his microphones.

Brown: Let's talk about Freddie, because *First Light* comes up next. Let's talk about your relationship with Freddie. We know you two had great respect for each – because you took Julius Baker down to see Freddie play with Art Blakey.

Laws: Strangely enough, I didn't know Freddie personally at that time. I was a student at school. I just heard him. I was so impressed with his playing, and I knew that if Julius Baker would hear the virtuosity, he would appreciate that part of it. So that's why I took him to Birdland to hear the Jazz Messengers, and he heard Freddie.

But the first time I think I – I don't remember the first time I met Freddie, but I know it was because of CTI Records. I think the first time I met him was when we did *Walking in Space.* That was 1969.

Brown: So, *First Light,* how about this session? Freddie, like you said – Don Sebesky, again, instrumental.

Laws: I was in on only – you know what? I wasn't in on the rhythm. Freddie recorded with a rhythm section, and then when I came in to do my solos, it was overdubbed. So he wasn't there. Later on we did some other projects together, but on *First Light,* all that stuff was sweetened. Don Sebesky brought me in. Creed had me play here and play there. That's how that thing happened.

Brown: We going to have to – I'm going to let Tom Lord know. He's got you listed in the orchestra for *Let My Children Hear Music* for Mingus, New York, September 23rd, 1971, but your recollection is that you didn't play with Mingus. But . . .

Laws: No, no, I just don't remember him . . .

Brown: . . . being there.

Laws: It may have been a Don Sebesky-type thing where he wrote the chart, and I came in and played it without knowing it was a Mingus record.

Brown: Okay.

Laws: It may have been that.

Brown: Then that would be accurate.

Then *Wildflower,* October 22nd, 1971, your date, Ron Carter. But it doesn't even show – there are different sessions. There's one in October and then a second one in November – no, no, excuse me. There's *Wildflower,* and then *White Rabbit* with George Benson was just a couple weeks later, a few weeks later. How about George Benson? Again, I'm just riffing on the fact that you played guitar. You talked about how the news about Wes was

very touching, the passing of Wes. So maybe talk about any affinities you have for guitarists.

Laws: I always had respect for the instrument – great playing guitarists. But particularly George Benson. He was one who I felt did not get as much recognition as a guitar player as he should have, because he was – he still is. I saw him in Moscow not long ago, I think a year ago when we played Moscow, at the airport. I said, "Man, let me tell you. People don't know, but you are a great guitar – you're my favorite guitar player." One of my favorites, anyway.

George never read music too much, either. That's what's so amazing. This guy had such great ears. I wondered how he can go in these sessions and play, because he's got such good memory and such good facility.

He played on my first record, I think. Yeah, my very first record, *Crying Song*, for CTI. Creed put all these people together. Have this special sound. That's how I met George. Then I ended up playing on live concerts with him at Carnegie Hall, and we did that record. You say *White Rabbit.* I have to remember that record by listening to it again. It's been a while.

He's just – as you well know, he had this great singing voice that Creed never really tapped into. I remember the time when we were on tour, the first tour in Japan. We arrived at the airport. They had people out. We were like rock stars. These people had these huge banners out, "Welcome CTI All-Stars," young girls jumping up and down. They treated us like rock stars. George Benson – on that tour, George Benson, Bob James, Ron Carter, Jack Dejohnette – I think in some cases it was Billy Cobham – Hank Crawford, Johnny Hammond. Esther Phillips was there too, the first tour. I remember it, because – Hank Crawford and Fred would get into it on the bus. They had this nice bus, all equipped with everything we needed. Like I told you, we felt like rock stars. Freddie and Hank would get into these disputes about music. They both got high, because Hank liked that cognac. He was just drinking cognac like mad. So he started – he'd get on Freddie's case, and they'd start talking about each other's musicality. Freddie would call him a little – he'd call Hank a tweety bird. Tweety bird sound. "Man, what kind of sound is that you've got on that thing?" I don't know what Hank's rebuttal was, but it wasn't strong, but Freddie was just too tremendous in terms of his playing.

The reason why I brought this up is because that's one of the times that George Benson displayed his wonderful singing quality. He was able to imitate. He imitated Esther Phillips better than anybody, right there on the bus. He went ih-ih-ih-ih-ih-ih, that nanny-goat vibrato and all that. He had it covered. But nobody ever used his singing until he signed with Warner Bros. and did *Masquerade.* Then nobody looked – he didn't look back after that. I wonder how Creed felt about that, because Creed – I don't think he ever produced – I don't know if he ever produced any singers. But I don't know why he didn't

tap into that guy's wonderful singing ability, because he can sing. He can imitate. He's got a funny personality. He's got all this great talent. And great guitar playing.

Brown: Again, from my generation, *White Rabbit* was the one. We knew George Benson from that as a guitarist. It wasn't until, as you say, *Masquerade*, much later, that he became the superstar. But as a guitarist, if you were studying guitar and jazz at that period, *White Rabbit, Rite of Spring*, those ones, we were – everybody . . .

Laws: Was that here in California?

Brown: No, I was at the University of Oregon.

Laws: Oregon. We did some tours up that way on the West Coast. We'd start out in San Diego and went on up the coast, all the way up to Vancouver.

Brown: Let's return to Creed Taylor. Is he a musician? What gave him the ability to have that kind of vision to be able to . . . ?

Laws: I found out later that Creed played the trombone early in his professional career. Then I found out he's from Virginia. I found out a lot about Creed, because we talked when we were on this last tour. I never knew about it before. He's become more open, later, than he was. He was telling me about things that happened. We sat down to dinner together. He told me about how – he was from a hick environment, but he could never get with that music. He said he was always an oddball when it came to the music. The sound of jazz was really attractive to him. Of course, playing trombone – that was the instrument he played for a while. So that may have been the connection for his understanding quality.

Brown: I know John Snyder ended up being with him. Did he have any other – not so much advisers, but any colleagues or confidantes that may have been influential in that? Or was that basically all his vision?

Laws: You mean John Snyder?

Brown: I mean John Snyder later, but I'm just talking about anybody that you saw or experienced in working with him that was either a confidante or adviser in that. Or was that just a singular vision of his?

Laws: That's his. That was Creed. I never saw anybody. He had – he's got his own personal concept about the way things should be, and that's it. I never knew anybody that he had to lean on. He's strong in his own concept. In fact, he didn't want – he would not relinquish his position on issues. I remember he had a confrontation with Bill Evans on tour, the saxophone player. He didn't – he said, "No. This is the way it should be. The

sound is like this. You guys are not balanced" and all. I respect him for that, because he had a good perspective. When he gives me a critique, I really value it.

Brown: Did most musicians understand and appreciate his vision? Or did you see any kind of conflict? Well, you already described him as a person who had a mediator come in. So I guess that's the way he dealt with it. Because, you know, musicians can be very opinionated.

Laws: Except for that time when he dealt with Bill Evans on this tour. They actually had a little bit of an abrasive conversation in there, and that was mainly because of Bill. He's kind of an energetic and in-your-face type guy. At least he was then. That's the first time I actually met Bill. I didn't even know about Bill Evans, the saxophone player. I knew about the piano player. That was it. But I never had heard of him. He had a career that eluded me. When he confronted Creed, that was the first time I ever saw Creed directly – but it wasn't fiery. It was just that he said he was sticking to his guns about what he thought should be – the music should be like. He was trying to protect his image too, because this was coming out on CTI Records. They were going to record this stuff. They were recording that stuff.

Brown: He had a superlative record, known for a sound, that CTI sound.

Laws: Which I feel that Bill should have respected.

Brown: Right. Well, he was young. Maybe it was the ignorance of youth.

Laws: Bill must be in his 40s, though.

Brown: Oh, so this is recent.

Laws: It was about two years ago.

Brown: Okay, I thought this might have been . . .

Laws: No, two years ago, when we were on tour.

Brown: . . . coming out of the Miles [Davis] band or something, having a big hit.

Laws: No, this is about two years ago. We were on tour, CTI tour, the only tour we did in Europe.

Brown: I'm going to jump back, because here comes another one of those landmark recordings, but probably – this is *I Sing the Body Electric, Unknown Soldier.*

Laws: Who's that?

Brown: Weather Report, with Andrew White playing English horn, Wilmer Wise is playing trumpet – piccolo trumpet – yourself on flute. It's one track. It's a Joe Zawinul piece. I remember this is another one of those that James Newton and I just said, oh, this is a composition. This is music that is singular. There's another time where you're right there.

Laws: I kind of remember that. As you speak of it, I kind of remember that session. I even – it seems like I almost remember the studio too. CBS. I think it was a CBS studio.

Brown: Um-hmm. It was a Columbia date.

Laws: That speaks of Joe Zawinul, who I felt was another [?] type innovator. That guy, he along with Wayne Shorter and that band, they did some very special things, composition and sound.

Brown: Anything in particular? Or just in general?

Laws: In general. But there's some particular pieces that I really like. There was something that showed like Jamaican on the cover of the record. I can never remember the name of that record. But on the cover they had this scene of somewhere like the Caribbean. Wayne Shorter wrote this piece. I can't think of the name of it. He has always been an innovator for me as far as composition, and Joe Zawinul.

Brown: Do you know Wayne?

Laws: Yeah, I know him.

Brown: A personal relationship?

Laws: We've run into each – in fact, we were in Panama. That's about two, three years ago. I went down to Panama for the first time. He did a show. I played with a singer, Luba Mason, who's the wife of this famous politician down there. He's an actor too. I just got an e-mail from her the other day. They're living in New York now. She told me that he's going – I didn't know that he's an actor. People, when I mentioned his name, they saw me take a picture with him, they say, "Don't you know who that guy is?" I said no. They mentioned. He's a very famous Spanish actor. If I can come up with his name, I'll mention it later.

But I went down with his wife, who's an excellent singer. She invited me to come down, because I did an overdub on her record. That was the first time I had gone to Panama. There – Wayne Shorter was there with his group.

Brown: We've only got a few minutes left on this tape. When you talk about George Benson, it reminds me of – and you talk about how he was a tremendous guitarist – it reminds me of Nat King Cole, an incredible pianist, but once he opened that mouth, that became the golden goose. Same thing with George. Both of them, virtuosos on their original instrument, but you go to a different level when you get . . .

Laws: . . . when you can include vocals.

Brown: So are you doing vocals?

Laws: Hey man, I tried, but there's no hope.

Brown: Because you've got all these siblings who are vocalists.

Laws: Yeah, I tried, because I know it's important to have vocals. Very important for your records, if you want to – because what it does, it bridges a gap. Most people can speak and sing, because it's a portable instrument, take it all the time, and they can identify with that. And the spoken word has also a strong influence. I noticed most hit records have always been vocal records.

Brown: We'll take a break now.

Returning to your discography, I'm looking at a recording of *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child.* What's interesting is that this recording is on Atlantic, and you had already switched. So they probably released this after you made that switch from CTI to Atlantic [Atlantic to CTI]. Were you under contract with Atlantic when you made that switch? Did they have to negotiate your release or anything like that?

Laws: Yeah. That was part of the negotiation. What happened was, when I signed with Creed, they made out an arrangement whereas I would do one more record for Atlantic while I was signed with CTI. That was fulfilling that obligation. I found John Murtaugh, who was an arranger who did a lot of jingles, excellent arranger. He and his partner, Hal Grant, they did these jingles all the time. They were the ones who – we always talked about doing a record together. I said, this is a perfect opportunity. So John Murtaugh, who's the arranger – who was the arranger then for the jingles and all that – but he ended up doing this record. We had a concept of doing a record similar to what Stan Getz had done, with the strings, these pizzicato strings and all that, with just strings, no rhythm section. So he wrote *Pensativa* and *Wildflower* and some others – and *Motherless Child* and all that. I think they even got Mongo Santamaria involved on that date. He did one track. I think it was called *Ashanti.* So that was – that's why – although I was recording with CTI, that's why that record came out subsequent to the initial releases with CTI.

Brown: Got it. Again we're going to get to the other spiritual that came out on *In the Beginning, Amazing Grace.* When I look at the spiritual tradition, of course *Amazing*

Grace has a different chronology, but *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child* – are you tapping back – sounds like you are tapping back to your roots.

Laws: You know what? Tell you the truth, I hadn't – I didn't even mention that. I think John Murtaugh was the one who wanted to do that, an arrangement of that. I had nothing to do with it. In fact, I said okay. I just kind of nodded with their suggestions about things. I think *Pensativa*'s one of my favorite tunes anyway, and that's why he did the arrangement on that.

Brown: The next one that seems to loom large because of a lot of the personnel that were involved with it, some of the folks that you've always been – this is Jackie Cain, again on CTI, *Time & Love.* I don't know if that's a memorable . . .

Laws: No, I'm not – I don't remember Jackie Cain. I vaguely remember that name. What did she do?

Brown: *Day by Day, Time & Love, Summer Song, Summertime, Bachianas Brasileiras #5.*

Laws: Jackie Cain?

Brown: Um-hmm. Those are the tunes that were . . .

Laws: That was her record though, right?

Brown: Yes, it was under her date. Let's jump ahead, because if that one – the next one is another Quincy, *You've Got it Bad Girl.* Quincy is just putting – each one that Quincy is putting out is – he's now at the top of his game, and people are really, really starting to – in the aftermath of all his success in writing for *Heat of the Night* and *The Pawnbroker,* and now he's coming out with these incredible projects that are bridging both the popular – bringing popular repertoire and fleshing it out with a jazz sensibility and a more confident sensibility. So here we have *Summer in the City, Eyes of Love, Day Dreaming* – so here's *Day Dreaming – First Time Every I Saw Your Face.*

Laws: That's Roberta Flack, right?

Brown: Um-hmm. *You Got it Bad Girl, Superstition* – talk about Stevie. Stevie's on this date, playing harmonica, of course probably on his tune, *Superstition, Manteca,* and then *Sanford and Son,* which is of course the *Hicky Burr.* Then *Chump Change.* So you got some of your compadres on here, Bob James. Then here's where Toots Thielemans gets in on this set. Do you have a relationship with Toots at all?

Laws: Yeah, we played a lot of things together. I even saw him when I was in Rotterdam, when we were on that CTI tour. He was living over there somewhere. He's from Belgium

originally. We were just – we ran into each other. We've done recordings with Quincy, of course, and some other things we've done together, but I don't have an ongoing relationship with him. Musically, we play some things together.

Brown: Charles Earland? I'm just going to read through them, because, like I said, 333 sessions. So unless that's something that's memorable, I'm just going to – I'm going to throw the name out.

Laws: Charles Earland? You know what? When I hear that name, it reminds me of Lee Morgan got shot. We did that session that afternoon, and that night he got shot.

Brown: That's right, because Lee is on this date.

Laws: That's right.

Brown: Lee is on this date. It's February 16th, 1972.

Laws: That's about right, because I remember, I was . . .

Brown: Oh, no no, 17, because then there was – there were three sessions, two on that first day, and then the last session was on February 17th, 1972. That's it.

Laws: Lee was on that, right?

Brown: Um-hmm.

Laws: Because I remember we did that session together, and that night I got a call from Harold Mabern, the pianist, who told me that he was at Slugs, the club down in the Village. This girl walks in, his girlfriend, and she shoots him because he was with another woman, and he's telling her to go. Boy, these women. God dang it. You got to learn to be discreet about dealing with them too. Some of them don't let you leave, though.

I'm going to tell you this quickly. These judges, you hear them say, "Just walk out and leave." They don't – I'd like to see those judges be in a situation like that. They just want to leave. Women have power, because, you want to leave? What happens if they stand in the door, and you want to open up the door? How are you going to get out? If you open up the door, they say, "You hit me." You're pulling the door open. "You hit me." That's power. I'd like these policemen and the judges who tell guys just to leave – no, you can't do it. I remember many times I've been present in my own house, big time. It's really a sad situation. Boy, if this part gets out to the general public, this would be great.

Brown: It probably will.

Laws: Because I'd like the judges to know that it's not as easy as they say it is. I'd like to see them victimized by being imprisoned by a short, weakly, 90-pound female. Say, "Don't put your hands on them." Don't put your hands on them, but you open the door, they say, "You hit me," while they're standing at the door. That room, right there, my son experienced the same thing. I mean, I'm in my own house, and I allowed them to stay here for a while. I go downstairs, because I hear this arguing or whatever, and I try to open the door and can't open the door. I said, "What's going on?" Sky is in there, my son. "The usual." That's what he says. I said, "Wait a minute. You mean I can't come in my own house?" I said, "Do I have to call the police to get in my own room?" That's when the door slowly opens, because, you see, there's power.

These judges have this oblivious concept that you, because you're stronger, you're bigger, you can just leave. Not true.

Brown: Let's modulate. Let's switch from the tragic to the sublime. Randy Weston, who fortunately is still with us at 85, and a very strong spirit, very influential for a lot of – for at least my generation of musicians coming up and looking at him as somebody who's bringing in other cultures, going out to Africa, embracing African culture, and actually living in Africa. The next project is March and April of 1972, CTI, *Blue Moses.*

Laws: I played on that too, right?

Brown: Yeah, you played everything. You've got flute, alto flute, bass flute, electric flute, and piccolo.

Laws: Wow. First time I went to Africa was because of Randy Weston.

Brown: Oh. Talk about that.

Laws: We all – when I say we, I'm talking about some of the CTI artists – went to Tangier. It was in this huge coliseum-looking place where they had what looked like to me bull fights or whatever. That was the venue for where we appeared.

I remember these flute players. When I say flute players, not like the flute I play, but it was mostly air. These guys, they didn't even have the diatonic scale, but it was like in-between the scales where they were playing. It was mostly emotion and energy that they projected – not so much tonality, but energy. I was impressed by that.

I went – that was what I heard there, when I was in Tangier. Randy Weston, I think he – I don't know if he lived there.

Brown: Yes, he did.

Laws: He did? Okay.

Brown: Yeah. He had his own place there.

Laws: That's why, okay. That's why we got there. I remember I was sick. I got the worst cold. So I wasn't able to tour around there. I just played the concert with us there, and that was basically it. Shortly after that – I think it must be close to Spain, because we went to Barcelona and also to – what was that other city? the main city?

Brown: Tunisia.

Laws: No, no, no, in Spain. What's the main city?

Brown: Madrid, Sevilla.

Laws: Madrid. Madrid and Barcelona.

Brown: Next one up, there's another session with Gil Scott-Heron, called *Free Will.* Again, Bernard Purdie on that one, David Spinoza, Jerry Jemmott, bass player from Motown days. Then, right after that – this is March – then, after that – actually it's the same day, because this is March 2nd, 1972. Then the next session is with Bobby Hutcherson, *Natural Allusions,* March 2nd and 3rd. So there you talk about going on your bike. But these were from – I'm not sure if you went on your bike back down to Englewood Cliffs, back to Rudy Van Gelder. You probably jumped on the PATH train or one of those trains.

Laws: No no. I would drive my car. I had a car. I always drove my car out to Englewood Cliffs, because I had – I told you, I had a nice garage where my building was, right there, covered garage. I'd just open it up. But I may have gone – I may have to use a car to go to that other session. It depends how much time I had between the two sessions.

Brown: Bobby. Any thoughts about . . .

Laws: Bobby Hutcherson?

Brown: . . Bobby Hutcherson, yeah. We just interviewed him back in December. He talked about L.A. back in the late '50s, early '60s, and the scene. He really gave us a sense of what L.A. was like for him coming up.

Laws: Yeah. I kind of remember the first time I saw Bobby Hutcherson was in Pasadena. He was playing a coffee house with Charles Lloyd. That was the very first time I saw him. I didn't play with him. I didn't even know him that well. I was getting ready to go to New York to study. That was the year I was leaving, actually.

I don't remember the session in New York, but I do remember a session we did with him up in San Francisco, he and the bass player – what was that bass player's name? I just saw him.

Brown: Either Herbie Lewis or James Leary?

Laws: James Leary. That's who was on that. He was the bass player. That was the last time I remember recording with him. I don't remember anything in New York. You got something we did in New York?

Brown: Yeah. That's this one, and then we'll come back to the one in San Francisco. This one is *Natural Illusions.* This one looks like – it's got a full violin section and really fleshed out woodwinds. Could you for the record – it's got Phil Bodner on it – could you pronounce Romeo – is it Pen-que [two syllables] or Penque [one]?

Laws: pen-kway.

Brown: pen-kway.

Laws: Romeo Penque. He played all the reeds, played flute, played saxophone, he played clarinet, and he played oboe as well. Romeo Penque. I remember him. He was on a lot of those – probably Don Sebesky was – when those guys write, they get those woodwind players, like Jerry Dodgion and Romeo Penque and Phil Bodner. Those guys I remember. Chuck Rainey, who was on some of those dates. I don't know if Chuck – you mentioned Dave Spinoza. I remember him. I don't know if these guys are still alive. We used to do a lot of sessions together back there, David Spinoza and all those woodwind guys you mentioned.

George Marsh. George Marsh, he died just before we did that movie, [*The*] *Color Purple,* with Quincy, because I remember specifically when we were taking a break and Jerome told me, "Hey, hear about that guy?" He says, "Remember that guy" – then he came with George Marsh. I was shocked, because George and I used to do so many sessions together. In fact I went and had dinner with him and his wife and kids in New Jersey. He's another guy who volunteered that his wife was wonderful. I remember that. See, it's few and far between with me, but I remember when they say that they have a positive experience, I say, wow, how do they do it? But he was one. Either he's henpecked, or what, or he's just genuinely honest about how his relationship is good for him.

Brown: The next session, *Free,* Airto.

Laws: I don't remember that. I don't remember the session.

Brown: Okay. Again, that's one of the ones that we in the music department, trying to be aspiring jazz musicians, because Airto, coming out of Miles and just wild, so we were going to check out what he's doing.

Laws: Yeah, that guy, he makes sounds out of anything. Really. He used to walk up, look at the sky when he was walking down the street in New York, figure out what other instrument he can get to make a sound. He was always aware, even now. We're on tour. He's always looking for something unusual for sound.

Brown: Then next one up is CTI, *Summer Jazz at the Hollywood Bowl, Live One.* I guess the label by this time had such clout and such a presence in the jazz market that he could produce his own concert with his own artists – his own roster. He could tour with his own roster. And then you start to land the Carnegie Hall concerts. How did that develop?

Laws: I think WRVR. I think that was the name of the jazz station in New York. With all of the CTI attention and notoriety, this production company called New Audiences, they're the ones who engaged us to do Carnegie Hall. We did it several years, maybe about 5, 6, 7 years in a row. That's where that placard comes from, New Audiences.

Now you asked me how did it come about. They just called us up. Every year they would – although Creed was not always connected with them, they just called up to find out about the artists. I remember George Benson. I think Ron Carter and some of the other people who played Carnegie Hall as well. They would just – New Audiences would always engage our band. It was almost yearly. Every year they'd have us play, for consecutive years. That's how I remember that. It's like maybe the early '70s, maybe.

Brown: Going back to the Airto album, and I'm looking ahead, looking at Eumir Deodato, one of the things that I think was, to Creed Taylor, probably another side of his genius, is that he put all the sidemen on his records. So that when you're young and you're a fan of, say, Chick Corea and Keith Jarrett, and they appear on the same album, you had to get that album. It didn't matter whose date it was. You would go for whoever was on the album. I know, as a drummer, I would get anything Tony Williams put out on Blue Note. It didn't matter who was the leader. If Tony was on it, I was going to buy it. I didn't even know. So when you look down and you see, coming up, like I said, Eumir Deodato, and then here we have *Morning Star.* When I saw the listing of all the musicians on there, that – so – but *Morning Star* again is yet another watershed recording because of *Amazing Grace.* I think you talked a little bit about that. Do you have the feeling that we have, your audience, your fans, about that? Because it was more of a lush one. Don was doing all the – but it still swung, it still had – we call the grits and the soul coming, because you put on *Amazing Grace.* So, again, there's another one of those projects that seemed to cross over, but this one didn't have a distinctive classical or concert tradition repertoire in it, but yet it still had that sensibility. So here you do not even have to use concert – you don't have to quote, you don't have to use Stravinsky or Mozart or Bach, but you still have that sensibility, but now you're infusing more with –

you've got – like I say, you're going back to the African-American vernacular tradition. *Amazing Grace* looms large on this.

Laws: Yeah. I think by then – I think that may have been the – let's see. The first was *Crying Song.* Second was *Afro Classics.* Third was *Rite of Spring.* By that time, we'd already done a couple of things that included the classical repertoire. So I got this tune from my friend, a piano player with Mongo. It was called *Morning Star.* Then we talked about *Amazing Grace.* That's the gospel area. I think my influence about repertoire was penetrating more then, because, like I told you, when I was in Houston earlier, my dad was cleaning his boat, and he was humming *Amazing Grace.* I told him I was going to record *Amazing Grace* for him. So that was my input there, and we did it.

Interesting, because I remember Don coming in. We already did the first part, which is somber, a very spiritual somber. Then he says, okay, now we're going to take it up. I say, "Don, no. That's not the spirit of this piece." He didn't understand that, but once he did, okay. No, it's just a somber piece, very simplistic. Sure enough, his lush arrangements made it very successful, when he – once he understood that.

The other pieces, like *Where is the Love* I think we did on that record, and I think we did a piece I wrote called *Let Her Go.*

Brown: Yes, that's on here.

Laws: And some other things.

Brown: *No More.*

Laws: *No More*, right?

Brown: And then *What do you think of this world?*, which is the closing piece.

Laws: *What do you think of this world now?* That piece I'm going to do again, because I wanted Debra. Debra recorded that piece. You should hear it. It sends chills through me, the way she sang it. When she did this on this record, she was only 16 years old. So she really didn't have the projection or the understanding of the power of the lyric, because it's a message song that I had in my – I recently played Debra's version of that, *What do you think of this world now?*, to Larry Dunn, the keyboard player with Earth, Wind & Fire. Just recently, just before the Obama campaign, he said, "This is just ripe for release right now." But it's always going to be just right to release, because it hinges on what we talked about government before. Incidentally, don't let me forget to give you that.

Brown: Which we will come back to before long.

Laws: Yeah, it hinges. So it's a message song having to do with that. It shows all the problems, but then, more importantly, it shows you what the solution is, through the lyric, and the way Debra sings it now, with her maturity and her voice, man, it is touching. So I'm planning to do another project. In fact we've been planning – I've been wanting to do it for a long time. In fact he and I – Jeff and I are supposed to be doing a project together too. But that's part of my next one, is to include that along with a couple of other things that I have in mind to record. But I think that mostly that particular record had more of my – for CTI had more of my compositional . . .

Brown: Maybe that's what made it more distinct. I hear it, coming from, like you said, that trajectory starting with *Crying Song,* up – but I also have to add that I misspoke earlier. I credited *Amazing Grace* as being on *In the Beginning* as opposed to *Morning Star.* So I want to make sure people don't think I don't know what I'm talking about.

The next project is *Sky Dive,* because you're recording September, October, with *Morning Star.* Again, this is a very prolific period for you. Then, in October, *Sky Dive* with Freddie. This was another one of those that was classic, put Freddie – made Freddie big, just like *Red Clay.* Everybody's playing it. If you're coming up playing jazz, you're playing all these. This is all repertoire, *Sky Dive, Povo.* Everybody played *Povo.* Everybody played *Red Clay.* Again, you were there.

Now Gabor Szabo – we're back to the guitarists – *Mizrab.* Any recollections about that one?

Laws: Nope. I remember the name. I remember him. But I don't remember too much recording with him.

Brown: What I'm picking up from looking at the discography – of course this might not relate directly to live performances – is it seems like now there's not any more doubling with the sax. So can you talk about when you make that decision to focus directly on . . . ?

Laws: I didn't make a direct decision. It was just something sort of just happened. I do remember though that – I think '85 was the last time that – '85, '86, somewhere in there – was the last time I played a saxophone on any recording date, and that was because I got this call from the service that Quincy uses, when we were doing *Color Purple.* We were doing the soundtrack to *Color Purple.* She says, "Quincy says, 'Bring your tenor saxophone'." I say, "It must be a mistake. I haven't played saxophone in years." She says, "No, that's what he said." Sure enough, when I get to the session, we did all the other – I did all of my other flute work, but at the very end of the session, they had this little band, like with Jerome Richardson and I think Joe Farrell and some of the other saxophone players and trum[peters], Ernie Royal and Snooky Young. It's like a big band, but small band compared to all the other instruments that had been on the session. Sure

enough, he had written a little thing for a saxophone, and he had me playing tenor saxophone. That was the last time I played.

Because Quincy has a mind like an elephant, and a memory like – his memory is just like an elephant. The reason why I say that is because I – what sticks out in my mind, I remember we played a gig at the Greek Theater. I don't remember the exact year, but we played there. He did that in conjunction with Roberta Flack. She was the other act on the bill. Quincy – there must have been about 35, 40 people on stage – and Quincy introduced everybody, without script, and gave a little bit of history to everybody on stage, including my brother Ronnie, because Ronnie substituted, I think, for one of the things – substituted for maybe Jerome. Ronnie will tell you, because he remembers playing. I got him on that gig somehow. But he introduced – including singers and everybody. I never will forget Quincy doing that. That guy's memory is just phenomenal. He remembered everybody's name, plus a little bit of history and introduced them in that gig.

Brown: That probably comes from his heart as well as his head.

Laws: Yeah, but the memory factor, for me, it was so astounding.

Brown: When we get into '73, starting off the year in January with Ron Carter, *Blues Farm,* yet another one of those that looms large, because he's got Richard Tee on organ. He's all over the map. Ron Carter, another one of those who's bridged both worlds. When did you meet Ron? It seems like you have a sympatico as well.

Laws: Yeah. I call Ron every now and then, because Ron is so subtle, but he's so supportive. He's subtle but supportive of every group. He's not the greatest soloist, improvising soloist, but he's such as support[ive] – he plays the right notes at the right spot, and his sound is – I like the way he connects his notes. The notes are connected. They overlap, in a sense.

I met Ron first – I remember telling Ron, "I love all your work with Miles Davis." That's when I really knew about him. He was playing with Miles, with Herbie. George Coleman was playing there, and then Wayne started playing with him. But those – during that period of time, I think that was the most satisfying group of Miles that I liked. They had Tony Williams on drums, Ron Carter . . .

Brown: Herbie.

Laws: . . . Herbie.

Brown: George Coleman.

Laws: George Coleman, and later, Wayne Shorter. That was a group for me.

Brown: Me too. All of us. I think that's unanimous.

Laws: That's how – I remember we were at the Village Vanguard one night, and I saw Ron. I say, "Man, let me tell you. You guys might have my favorite group." Subsequent to that, somehow or another we started working. First time I worked with him I think was with CTI. I think it was with CTI. Or it could have been some of the records – oh no, because when I recorded my third record for Atlantic, he was on that, because he played on *Windows* and on *Shades of Light.* I do remember this, because you do remember things like that, when people – when big-time – in my eyes – quality artists come in on things that you do that you think you may feel uncertain about.

But I remember when we – I brought him a chart to *Shades of Light.* He said – he asked Chick, "Who wrote this?" That meant a lot to me. In other words, it was in a positive way. "Who wrote this?" Joe Chambers was on drums.

Brown: Another composer, drummer-composer, Joe Chambers.

Laws: Yeah, Joe Chambers, Ron, and Chick were the rhythm section for *Shades of Light* and *Windows.* That's why I know that. So I know he was on that date. I don't remember how he got on it. Maybe I made the request for it, because of my impression of him playing with Miles.

[recording interrupted]

Brown: You talked about Eric Gale yesterday, bemoaning the fact that so many of the CTI artists are not with us. Another one of those killer albums, Eric Gale's *Forecast.* I remember it well. You're listed flute and piccolo on this one. *Killing Me Softly, Dindi* – which, that was big. I know when Wayne first put that on, I think, *Super Nova.* I think that might have been it. It might have been *Super Nova* or one of those ones. But anytime – again, Creed Taylor putting the rhythm section out there. He was going to make sure that everybody go their due.

Carnegie Hall Concert, January 12th, 1973. You got – this is pretty interesting, because of the – I remember this cover. It's got the multiple pictures of you all across.

Laws: Oh yeah. That was '73?

Brown: '73.

Laws: Yeah, Ron was on that. Ron Carter, and I think Bob James was probably there.

Brown: Ron Carter, and Bob James, and Gene Bertoncini.

Laws: Gene Bertoncini.

Brown: And you had Dave Miller on bassoon. So that bassoon – we talked about it yesterday. You brought it in very early, talked about why that timbre was important. I think that's another one of those things, the hallmark of your sound, the very expansive sonorities that you were incorporating. So, again, keeping a foot in both ones, playing *Fire and Rain*, but having the bassoon in there.

Grover Washington, *Soul Box.* Can you talk about Grover? Because I don't think he ever got his due.

Laws: Grover, to tell you the truth, I don't remember ever recording with him, but I do remember playing a lot of concerts with him being involved. His first big hit was *Mr. Magic*, as I can remember. No, it's something else. What was – what's the name of that record? It was written – I think that record was written by Bill Salter and – what was the name of that – the drummer we were talking about earlier, the conga player, percussionist? Ralph.

Brown: Ralph McDonald.

Laws: Ralph McDonald. He had a hit, pretty much a big hit, not as big as *Mr. Magic*, but he had a hit before that. I can't remember the title of it. I didn't play on that record, but I did play a lot on *Mr. Magic* when we were on tour.

Grover, I remember – you know the story behind Grover, how he got to play – record with CTI?

Brown: No.

Laws: You don't know about that?

Brown: Please tell us. Tell the world.

Laws: Man. *Mr. Magic* – not only *Mr. Magic*, but the one before that that was a hit, it was not – he was not designed to be the leader on the date. What happened was, they had the rhythm section all poised to record at Rudy's, and as it turned out, it was either Hank Crawford or Stanley Turrentine who didn't show up. So they were waiting around the studio, waiting, waiting. Nobody showed up. So Creed just – I don't even think he had a tenor saxophone. He had just alto. So they had to go get a saxophone for him to play, to play the part. So he ended up playing that part, and it turned out to be the hit record. Subsequent to that, he did *Mr. Magic* too. So that's how he got – he was just a sideman in the pickup band there. He was just a sideman, but they needed someone to play the solo part, and they chose him.

What's the name of that tune that – God. That first – Grover had a hit before *Mr. Magic.* It was something else. I can't recall what it was. But, like I said, the rhythm section was – he was just pulled out of the guys who were supposed to be the background players, the sidemen. That's how he ended up having his successful career.

Brown: Got that Hubert Laws charm, right place, right time.

Laws: Right place, right – yeah, just happened to be at the right place at the right time.

Brown: The next one up is *Giant Box,* Don Sebesky's big band. You are one on a laundry list of folks on this one.

Laws: Oh yeah. I remember that record.

Brown: You do. Okay, because this is the one where he did the *Firebird.* Then he pairs it up with *Birds of Fire, Song of the Seagull, Psalm 150.*

Laws: Yeah, it was a very energetic project on the part of Don. I never listened to that record a lot, but I know I was quite involved in it, I think probably on every track. I remember him, because he's very aggressive in that. In fact it's more aggressive than I ever heard him on anybody else's record, with his arranging and all that. I actually feel like he accompanied other people better than he did that particular project. He was very aggressive about his arrangements, but it was more relaxed when you listened to, like, *First Light.*

There's another record we did with Stanley Turrentine, just – in fact, it was released after he died. This is a record I did with Stanley in New York at some – I can't even remember the studio. It was in New York City. It was so sad, because what happened was, we were supposed to play a concert in Bermuda. Stanley had just finished doing a gig at the Hollywood Bowl. He called me up here and told me, "We're going to meet each other in New York. We're going to fly on over to Bermuda." So Freddie Hubbard and I got on a late-night flight. What do they call those? Red eye? Yeah, he and Bridget and I got on this flight to New York. When we got to New York, J.F.K., Grady Tate, Bob Cranshaw, and a couple other people – I can't remember. Oh yeah, Lonnie Liston Smith. Lonnie Liston Smith plays organ, doesn't he?

Brown: Um-hmm.

Laws: Yeah, he was there. Everybody looked so somber. I said, "What's going on?" That's when we found out that Stanley had had that stroke. I just – we didn't think – like, okay, stoke, but okay, he's going to come anyway. That's what we thought. Just, he'll get over it, come on. So we get on the plane. We're going on to Bermuda. The next day, they're playing this record, *I Should,* the record that he had recorded. That's what we're

talking about. *I Should Care,* and then another couple other tracks that Don Sebesky did the arrangements for.

Like I tell you, certain music can remind you of certain music and periods. I do remember. Every time I hear that record, I think about Stanley and his demise. *I Should Care* and some of those other things that we had just – in fact, I did that record for free. I remember Jeffrey Nissim, at MusicMasters Records, flew me out there. I said, "Yeah, I'll do it for nothing." I've done – I did another couple of records like that recently. Somebody else's record I did for nothing.

Anyway, it's memorable in the fact that that's – he – that record was released, and he never heard it, not in its final form.

Brown: Stanley, I know he was a superstar on CTI, with *Sugar*. That was, whew.

Laws: Yeah, absolutely.

Brown: One of the signature tunes.

In April – April 6th, 1973, you recorded with McCoy Tyner, *Song of the New World,* his big-band arrangements, his arrangements. For me, another one of those benchmark recordings, because it paired up McCoy with Alphonse Mouzon. That was – Alphonse, coming out of Weather Report, we're all trying – all of the drummers trying to figure, okay, where's Alphonse going after this? He goes to McCoy. *Song of the New World. Afro-Blue,* I remember that specifically, because that's the opening cut, and it's you.

Laws: I'm playing on that?

Brown: Oh yeah.

Laws: Did that come before *Fly with the Wind*? Or was it after that?

Brown: After. *Fly with the Wind* I think – well, it didn't show up. I didn't pass that on this chronology. So I think *Fly with the Wind* might be later.

Laws: Okay, because I do remember that. He felt – he always felt like that was his best record.

Brown: *Fly with the Wind*?

Laws: *Fly with the Wind.* He told me that. Felt like it was his most successful – satisfying for him – record. But I knew I did more than one with him.

Brown: Oh yeah. So *Song of the New World, Fly with the Wind.* Yeah, because I know you had a long association with that, with the Milestone, with Orrin Keepnews.

Laws: That's right.

Brown: What was it like, working with Orrin Keepnews, having worked with C . . . ?

Laws: Easy.

Brown: Easy. What makes you . . . ?

Laws: He might – he'd go with any suggestion I make. Everything I say, he'd say, "Yeah." Because I remember he recorded my tune, *Shades of Light,* with him – with McCoy. I think on that tune was also Stanley Clarke, the bass player. And I think Billy Cobham was on that, either him or Jack DeJohnette, one of those.

Brown: *Fly with the Wind* is Billy.

Laws: Billy Cobham?

Brown: Yeah, Billy Cobham's on that one.

Laws: Ron Carter was on one of those too, maybe the first one.

Brown: I think he was on this one.

Laws: No, Stanley Clarke was on the first one.

Brown: No, Junie Booth. Anyway, we'll clear that up.

Then here's an interesting one. Somebody – Norman Connors, who, when he hit, he had all these all-star bands, Ernie, yourself, everybody on them. *Love from the Sun* was the first one. Eddie Henderson, Gary Bartz, Onaji, Buster [Williams], everybody. Then he kind of went left and went to the pot thing with *You Are My Starship.* But I ain't going to fault him. But these albums that he did on – this one's recorded in San Francisco. I don't know if you recollect this particular session.

Laws: The one with . . .

Brown: It's called *Love from the Sun.* Eddie Henderson, Gary Bartz, Carlos Garnett, Herbie, Onaji, Buster, Kenneth Nash. Dee Dee Bridgewater singing. Any recollection?

Laws: Was I on that?

Brown: Oh yeah. Everything's not going to be on the screen unless you were on it, unless you clarify that maybe you didn't do that.

Laws: I just don't recall.

Brown: Again, 333 sessions. That's completely understandable. But from our perspective, the fans, when we – budding students, we're keeping our ear to the ground, if you're playing flute. I have to put a footnote to that one.

The next one is Milt Jackson, *Goodbye,* for CTI, small group, quintet, with Cedar, yourself, Ron Carter, Steve Gadd. Milt Jackson. We talked about Bobby. How about back to Bags?

Laws: You know what? As I recall, I don't remember him being there when I did my part. I think – is Don Sebesky arrangement on that?

Brown: It doesn't give an arranging credit. It's a quintet.

Laws: I just don't recall that.

Brown: I know later on when he did *Sunflower,* I think that's – I'm sure Don came and did those arrangements.

Laws: I just don't recall that session.

Brown: Then Freddie, another one – Freddie Hubbard, *Polar AC.*

Laws: I like that one. Oh, man.

Brown: Okay, let's talk about that one, because that one kind of slipped under the radar for me.

Laws: You know what? I just – I ordered *First Light* somehow. I think I downloaded it, and they included a track from *Polar AC.* They even named – gave a different name. They included – so, in other words, *First Light* has six tracks on the original LP. But when I downloaded, they added this extra tune on there. It doesn't have the names of the tunes on that *Polar AC.*

Brown: On *Polar AC*? *Polar AC, People Make the World Go Round, Betcha By Golly Wow, Naturally, Son of Sky Dive.* Those are the ones that are listed here.

Laws: That's it? Okay. So *Polar AC* is the one they changed the name on and put it – and added it on to *First Light.*

Brown: But you remember that one, huh?

Laws: Definitely.

Brown: Why? What made it so memorable?

Laws: So musical. Freddie played his butt off, as usual. Oh yeah.

Brown: It looks like Bob James did the arrangements. Don – well, they split. *Polar AC* was arranged by Don Sebesky. It's only – actually, there's three different sessions. So Bob James just arranged two songs, the Stylistics hits, *People Make the World Go Round, Betcha By Golly Wow,* and then Don Sebesky came back and arranged *Naturally* and probably *Son of Sky Dive,* although they don't give credit for that arrangement.

Let's go back to Q, because, like I read earlier in your bio, whenever he did a project, he was going to fly you wherever you were, out to do his projects. Next one – and this one, for me, is my favorite from that period, and that's *Body Heat.*

Laws: Oh. Is that the name of the record?

Brown: Yes.

Laws: I kind of remember that.

Brown: I can see the cover. It's got the red light, a train coming.

Laws: Yeah. I remember that. I don't remember the tunes so much, but I certainly remember that.

Brown: It's got the *Body Heat, Soul Saga (Song of the Buffalo Soldier), Everything Must Change, Boogie Joe the Grinder, One Track Mind, Just a Man, Along Came Betty* – that's the one that Bernard is killing – and then, for me, *If I Ever Lose this Heaven.* Oh man.

Laws: Yeah, Bernard Ighner.

Brown: Yeah, for *Everything Must Change,* right. But, *If I Ever Lose this Heaven,* oh man. Al Jarreau doing all his vocal percussion. This one for, again, my generation, was another one of those that just looms large in our formation.

Then back to Esther Phillips, *Performance,* CTI, small – oh, it's got strings. Richard Tee, Pepper Adams, yourself.

Then the next one, Bill Evans, *Symbiosis,* with Claus Ogerman orchestra. Again, you're a section player.

Laws: *Symbiosis.*

Brown: *Symbiosis* is the title.

Laws: That's Bill Evans, you say?

Brown: Bill Evans and Claus Ogerman orchestra.

Laws: Wow.

Brown: It says January '74.

Laws: I remember recording with Claus Ogerman, but I don't recall that. I do remember him writing these wonderful arrangements, but I just don't recall.

Brown: Bill's trio then was with Eddie Gomez and Marty Morrell.

Laws: That's good to know. I didn't know I played with Bill Evans.

Brown: Maybe you did. Maybe you played on – like you said, "I don't remember recording with Mingus," but you have – maybe not, but it was his date.

Laws: That's good to know. I would have listed them in my . . .

Brown: *Symbiosis* is the title.

Laws: Okay.

Brown: Then, Hubert, here we come to, again, another one of those benchmark recordings, *In the Beginning.* I'm just going to put a little footnote on this with Ken here. One of the things, when I was giving him lessons, was I made a recording of *Airegin,* Steve Gadd, the duet. So this is another one of those ones. So if you would like to talk about – *Come Ye Disconsolate* is on there.

Laws: Yeah, I can talk about that. I remember in New York Clare Fischer had flown out from L.A. He did these arrangements. As a matter of fact, I just heard it for the first time in years just last week, the first time, because someone sent me a download. I got it downloaded into my iPod.

That arrangement on *In the Beginning* is very special, to the point I would like to include it in my band, my band's repertoire, because I haven't played it since we did the recording. Never played it live.

Brown: It starts off – what's it got? It's got that free.

Laws: Yeah.

Brown: So, what was – can you talk about that? Because I think this is the first time that is a documentation of you playing in a free context or unstructured context.

Laws: Yeah, it's sort of free, but it was also contrived in the sense that he wrote that form, Clare Fischer. Clare was – had some kind of problems with diabetes. I remember him being very, very nervous about eating at a certain time. He had to eat little snacks here and snacks there when we went to – before we went to the studio, at Rudy's. But he was very meticulous about his arrangements. He wanted to make sure that it was all – and it came out. As I listen to it, after all this distance, all this time, it's very refreshing sounding, *In the Beginning.* Of course you know, he's the one also wrote *Pensativa,* that tune I played.

Brown: And *Morning,* which is big Pancho Sanchez. He took that to the bank.

Laws: So, that session. Let's see. What else did we do on *In the Beginning.* We did . . .

Brown: *Restoration.*

Laws: *Restoration* was written by a friend of mine who also wrote the *New Earth Sonata* for us.

Brown: *Reconciliation.*

Laws: *Reconciliation* was written by the piano player who wrote *Morning Star*.

Brown: Then *Mean Lean,* which was written by the flutist and the leader.

Laws: Yeah, right.

Brown: Here's the second time we see this, at least on a date that you're the leader on.

Gymnopedie, no. 2, Satie.

Laws: That's on that record too?

Brown: Um-hmm. *Come Ye Disconsolate.*

Laws: *Come Ye Disconsolate* is something I did as a followup to – after having dedicated to my father, then this one's for my mother. That's one of her favorites. So that's why I recorded *Come Ye Disconsolate.*

Brown: Then one that made a lot of us – us being, again, aspiring jazz musicians – when you did *Moment's Notice.*

Laws: Oh yeah, on that record.

Brown: And then one of the things that James Newton – when I was talking to him in anticipation of this interview – says: ask him how he got the Trane, how he got that Trane sensibility on the flute? And where he got that harmonic? – so if that's something you could – you want to share with us.

Laws: You know what? I listened to it afterwards, and I wondered myself. Really, because I get a lot of residual effects from that. People want – they want the transcribed solo. But heck, man, I don't know. I just practiced a lot back then at that time, and I say what happened just kind of happened sporadically and came out to what it was.

I always tried to conform to whatever the chord changes were. Try to figure out how I can work myself – work my solos in conformity with what the changes were. That's a tune that has a lot of changes in it. I'll tell you one of the other tunes that John Coltrane wrote, that we talked about earlier, was . . .

Brown: *Giant Steps.*

Laws: . . . *Giant Steps,* a change on almost every beat, every bar. So that was all – it was like in training for *Moment's Notice,* which turned out to be something that people – in fact, they put it out on the so-call *Best of Hubert Laws.* I found that out later. I didn't choose that. They chose it, the ones who compiled that – put that record together.

So a lot of – in fact, several flutists have asked me the same thing. "What did you do? How did you do that?" I don't really know. I just – as I practice, I keep trying to adhere to what the chord changes are.

Brown: How many takes? How many takes on that? Do you remember?

Laws: Oh, I think that was just one take.

Brown: One take, straight down.

Laws: Um-hmm, that one, if I can recall correctly.

Brown: How about *Airegin,* the duet with you and Steve Gadd?

Laws: The same thing. That's just the same thing.

Brown: How did that come about? Was that something that you knew you wanted to do as a duet? Or was that something that was . . . ?

Laws: I don't recall, but it just turned out that way. I don't recall. That's a good concept, just the drums and the flute.

Brown: Piccolo, and you're switching. You switch between piccolo, flute, and then at one point – maybe it was electronically modulated – because it sounds like you go down to either alto or – but maybe . . .

Laws: That's right. C flute, but it had that octave divider on it.

Brown: Okay. We got that question answered.

Laws: I hear that, but I wish I had another shot at that, because there's so much better I could do that. Another shot at that, because subsequent to that, I played with the composer, Sonny Rollins. I played that in Japan with him. I never played the melody like he did. It's a little bit different the way we did it. But I was able to play it with him, and I – once you practice improvisation, the more you do it, the better you get, and I've been practicing improvisation more in my later days, last days, here. So I feel like I could do better if I got a chance to play it again.

I played the other night in Manila. We played *Airegin.* I didn't play it like we did it on the record, just drums and flute or piccolo, but we still played it. I wish I had done it that way. But no, I just try to conform to what I know the changes to be.

Brown: Have you – without going through the entire 333 sessions – have you recorded *Giant Steps*? Or would you want to record?

Laws: I never recorded it, but I've thought of it. But I would do it as a – I'd do it as a [?]. I would do it some other form, but still adhere to the chord changes. I even thought of doing it almost like a mambo. I've always – I thought about doing something unique about it, but still maintain the integrity of the melody as well as the chord changes.

Brown: The next listing in this discography, following *In the Beginning* – unless you want to say anything else about *In the Beginning* . . .

Laws: No.

Brown: . . . there's Arif Marden's date under his name, or at least a session that recorded a tune entitled *Flight.*

Laws: I don't remember that either.

Brown: There was one – there was only one tune.

Laws: I don't remember that. Arif Marden?

Brown: Um-hmm.

Laws: And I played on that track called *Flight.*

Brown: *Flight.* You, Gary Burton, Jerry Friedman, Tony Levin on bass, rather interesting.

Laws: Wow. Son of a gun. I don't remember that.

Brown: Then it said overdub, Phil Bodner, Joe Farrell, Bill Slapin, and then Romeo again. But you're listed separately from them. You were listed out as on the original track, and then these folks overdubbed.

Any words about Phil or Joe Farrell, some other folks who always seem to be in the section with you, who are also playing flute?

Laws: Joe was a very accomplished, excellent player. I remember he was also on the sessions of *The Color Purple.* In fact, that was shortly before he died, those sessions. He was a very accomplished reed player. He played oboe, clarinet, saxophone, flute, and did all of them very well. As a matter of fact, he was on an Epic release – Quality release – with Chick. Actually, I was supposed to play on that record, when they recorded *Spain,* but I think there was some complications. I couldn't get released from one of my record companies. I don't know if it was Atlantic or CBS. But I was – in fact, I had played all those tunes down at the Village Vanguard with Chick. This is when Stanley had just come from Philadelphia, and also Airto and Flora had come from Brazil. He was doing all those new tunes, *Captain Marvel* and *Spain* and . . .

Brown: *500 Miles High.*

Laws: . . . *You're Everything, 500 Miles High,* all those tunes. He'd just . . .

Brown: So you were supposed to be the original member of that gig.

Laws: I was.

Brown: You were the original member.

Laws: Yeah, I played down in the Village Gate with him. But when it came time to recording, I couldn't do it because of some kind of executive hang-up in the record companies.

Brown: Just as an aside or a footnote, I saw you come through when Chick came to Yoshi's, San Francisco – when they first opened up Yoshi's – as a quartet.

Laws: You're talking about the new one?

Brown: Yeah, the new San Francisco . . .

Laws: Yeah, that was about two or three years ago.

Brown: Yeah. It was a quartet: you, Chick, Eddie Gomez, and Airto.

Laws: And Airto, that's right.

Brown: I said, oh, Hubert. Hubert stole the show. Between you and Eddie, you all stole the show.

Laws: Really? Not on Chick, man.

Brown: I know, but we all know Chick's going to do that, but we didn't know, in a quartet – we knew Chick was going to show, but you definitely held your own, and Eddie took some solos that were just amazing.

Laws: Yeah, Eddie's just – I told you, his mic was turned way up. I wish I could get them to turn my mic up that strong.

Brown: I remember that gig specifically because you were getting slapback, because they hadn't really tuned the sound system, because it was so new. The hall just opened up. Chick was really trying to get them to get the sound right.

Laws: Yeah, that's a nice hall. I like that. Really well designed.

Brown: I've got a recording that you recorded there. But we'll get back to that.

Next, *Slewfoot* with Norman Connors. So he had already done his other major all-star session. Here's the second one – another – probably the third one. Some of the same folks. I'm not sure if this was – this was recorded in July '74, New York, Eddie Henderson, yourself, Gary Bartz, Lonnie Liston Smith, Dom Um Romao on percussion

Laws: I don't recall that.

Brown: Then Chet Baker, a session with Chet Baker at Rudy Van Gelder's. Then here comes Ron Carter, *Spanish Blue*.

Laws: I don't remember that. I remember the title, but I don't – I just don't remember the recording.

Brown: Then George Benson when he was at Carnegie Hall, under his name.

Laws: I heard those recordings, but I just – I was surprised to hear them, because I forgot I had done them.

Brown: How about Ron Carter's *Anything Goes*?

Laws: I forgot that too.

Brown: Okay. Lennie White. It was just one session. *Venusian Summer*.

Laws: I kind of remember that.

Brown: Then Patrice Rushen, *Before the Dawn.* We talked about Patrice, looked at her in the photo gallery.

Laws: Yeah, that was done up there at Fantasy Records. That was one of the times I was kind of dating her. We went to sushi. I remember that. Interesting.

Brown: Then a date with Alice Coltrane here in Los Angeles, 1975 on Warner Bros., a large group. It looks like you're in the section with Jerome Richardson, Fred Jackson. I hadn't heard of Fred Jackson. Anyway, also another large project.

Then Jaco, Jaco Pastorius, *Used to Be a Cha Cha,* one cut, just one cut off of that, because he had multiple sessions on that, on his first title.

Laws: I know. As a matter of fact, the producer on that record . . .

Brown: That was Columby, Bobby Columby.

Laws: . . . Bobby Columby, he – I was doing an overdub for Jeff Lorber not long ago, and when I got to the session, he said, "Hubert, have you heard some of the out takes?" I said, "No, I haven't heard them." So he sent them to me, and I heard. I think I played piccolo on one of those, and then he sent me one where I played flute on the same track. So there was – I think the flute was the out take they never released, which I was very

surprised to hear and then get a lot of feedback from that as well. What is it called? *Like to Be a Cha Cha* or something like that?

Brown: *Used to be a Cha Cha.* You remember anything about Jaco that was . . . ?

Laws: Yeah, Jaco. We went to Havana, Jaco. We went to Havana, Cuba. Jaco's a character. That guy could bend his fingers all – this thumb all the way back to his wrist. That's what I remember about him. He had these flexible fingers, and he would show them all the time. He was a very comical character, but very talented, super talented.

Brown: Tragic ending, too.

Next one up was the *The San Francisco Concert,* at the Paramount Theater in Oakland, October 4, 1975, under you. You've got *Modadji, Feel Like Making Love . . .*

Laws: *Scheherazade.*

Brown: *Scheherazade.* You mentioned this earlier. Would you like to share with us any . . . .

Laws: I just remember Bob James pretty much did the arrangements. Gary King was a bass player who I just learned recently passed away. We had strings there, Creed again. His productive juices were in there. And we had a live performance. I think Betty Carter was also in that date. Yeah, she was – Betty Carter was there. Actually, she opened the show for us.

Brown: You saying you believe she sang also?

Laws: Oh, I know she did. She didn't sing on my record.

Brown: Oh, okay.

Laws: But she was at . . .

Brown: At the show.

Laws: I remember she opened the show.

Brown: You want to talk about your relationship with Betty Carter?

Laws: Love her.

Brown: Oh yeah, bebop lady.

Laws: Love her. She's a real jazz singer. No doubt about that. The record that she did, *The Genius* – they call it *The Genius,* Ray Charles. I remember. I think it's called *Never Say Goodbye* or something like that? Anyway, I remember many wintry nights in New York City I would listen to that record, the duet record she and Ray Charles did together.

Brown: I always remember *Baby, It's Cold Outside.*

Laws: That one. That's it.

Brown: While we're on the vocalists, Blossom Dearie?

Laws: I remember her.

Brown: That was the next one, with you, Toots, and of course R.C. – Ron Carter – Jay Berliner, Grady Tate.

Laws: Right.

Brown: There are a lot of tunes on that session. Of course there might have been several different sessions.

Then Freddie Hubbard, *Windjammer.*

Laws: That's another one. It's real nice. I was in the Valley about 4 or 5 years ago when this guy gave me a copy of that record. He told me that his favorite track was the one that I was playing on. What was it?

Brown: I'll read down: *Dream Weaver, Feelings, Rock Me Arms.*

Laws: *Rock Me Arms,* that one. That's the one that he – it was his favorite track, and he gave me the whole – in fact he gave me his LP. I can't even try to digitize it. I did digitize it, but it was not the greatest. Then I gave it back to him. But he said that was his favorite track, *Rock Me Arms.* Freddie always – no matter what genre he played in, he played his butt off. He was playing his butt off on that thing. Bob James did the arrangements on that as well, excellent arrangements.

Brown: Next one was another one of those that I truly treasure, *Romeo and Juliet,* which probably was – was it commercially successful for you?

Laws: Not as commercially successful as the one I actually – my compositions, which came after that, which is *Say It with Silence* and then *Land of Passion. Say It with Silence* sold more – here again, a vocal, *False Faces,* was on there. That was a big hit. When it sold, then *Romeo and Juliet* sold more. When it was initially released, it was like about 95,000, 85-90,000 copies sold. But once *Say It with Silence* came out, it sold another 150

or so, 150,000. Let me tell you. Those are big numbers back then for so-called jazz records, big numbers, for us.

Brown: Is this your first date on Columbia, on *Romeo and Juliet*?

Laws: *Romeo and Juliet* was first recording we did for CBS.

Brown: Was there any difference as far as the marketing and distribution and push that you . . . ?

Laws: Yeah. In fact that's why we went with CBS, because I felt that they had the strongest marketing internationally. They sold a lot of our records. That's for sure.

Brown: Let's go ahead and end there. We'll pick it back up.

[recording interrupted; it resumes in mid-tonic]

He did some funky stuff, because he did the session with Sly, playing in time. It was like, nobody playing . . .

Laws: Bob got these guys. I know Gary King was on there. That's for sure. He died too.

Brown: Right. You mentioned that earlier. It's unfortunate.

The next big date is with Bob James, *Bob James Three.* I remember all these, *Bob James Three, Bob James Four.* Large band. It's got strings on there. *One Mint Julep.* Any recollection about this one?

Laws: Not really. People are always calling me and tell me they hear it and stuff like that. They hear me. To tell you the truth, most of those records, I don't even hear. I haven't heard them.

Brown: Because that was your call for a session.

Laws: Yeah, and then, after that, if they don't send me a copy of it or something like – pass me up. I was in Japan, playing concerts. People come up there and ask me to sign somebody I didn't even know I had done. My name is on there.

Brown: 333.

Laws: Huh?

Brown: I said 333 and counting.

Laws: Yeah, but that doesn't seem like a lot to me, because it seemed like I did so many more recordings than that. Well, I know I did jingles. Maybe that's what I'm thinking. I did a lot of jingles and did some other playing. But it seems like I did much more recording than three hundred and some odd.

Brown: This is not completely definitive. As soon as they publish something, they're going to find something else. But I'll get the latest. As a matter of fact, before I leave, I'll make sure you have reference, so you can get a copy of it.

The next project is one we referenced earlier, *Fly with the Wind,* McCoy Tyner. So yes, as we mentioned, Ron Carter, Billy Cobham on this one, and then a full section. Let's see. Who do they credit with the arrangements on here?

Laws: Bill – I remember Bill. We just talked about Bill not long ago. He's got Alzheimer's now too. Oh, shoot. He lives on the East Coast. Do they have his name on there?

Brown: No, I'm not seeing it on there. The only Bill on here is Billy Cobham. I know he didn't do it.

Laws: No, he did. God, it almost came to me. I see him just as plain as day. He did the string arrangements.

Brown: What does he play?

Laws: He didn't play anything, piano maybe.

Brown: Not ringing a bell.

You mentioned earlier how this one was more memorable than the previous one, *Song of the New World.*

Laws: It was challenging, because McCoy plays in such a way – his whole concept and approach to chord changes is different. What I was trying to do is capture – even though I had the changes in front of me, I feel like I had to play something different. I really did. I feel like I had to do something different to capture the mood that he was doing, because McCoy is so fiery. Everything he does is fiery. Even when he plays ballads, he plays – so it was a challenge to play that stuff. I'm going to tell you. And yet, people come back to tell me that's a memorable record for them. Many people have commented on that record, *Fly with the Wind,* that title track as well as some of the other things he did on there.

I remember it was there at Fantasy Records, up there in Berkeley. That's where we recorded it. I remember Orrin Keepnews did his best by just staying out of the way. Yeah, I remember. That was a good thing. That's what they mentioned at the NEA when

he got his award. He just let them do their thing. That's what he said. There were times when, in terms of timing, he'd say, maybe – but he still would allow so much freedom, free will, which I think is a good thing.

Because I remember my first record with Atlantic. Joel Dorn was all – he was so young and inexperienced, and he was all into – we had – our greatest challenge was to keep him out of the way. That was our greatest challenge. I can say – he passed away about two or three years ago. Bless his soul. He was – he meant well, but he was just a young, energetic guy. He wasn't really too much of a jazz aficionado. He was just – he got in that position, unique position. That's what I learned later, after I read – when I read his obituary, that's when I learned how he got that whole thing together. He got a budget, a small budget. He's supposed to go out and find someone. I was supposed to – it was his first artist. Then he did Austin Kromer. He did a couple other people. Then he eventually did Roberta Flack. But I know that when I heard he did Roberta Flack, I knew he didn't really do it. He just was in that position. He got in that strategic position. Because you know the qualities of people. You know their abilities when you work with them.

Brown: *Black Widow* by Lalo Schiffrin. Does that one ring a bell for you?

Laws: Not really, but we did some work together not long ago. When I say work, we played at UCLA, this event that Kenny Burrell spearheaded. We spoke in Spanish. That's why it was unique to me. We're back there in the green room, just speaking in Spanish. He didn't know. "I didn't know you speak Spanish." "Yeah, I'm learning." I say, "I've been dealing with it for a while."

I don't know exactly where Lalo is from, but he's – that's his native tongue.

Brown: I think he's . . .

Laws: Argentina?

Brown: I think he's Argentine.

Laws: Argentina, yeah.

Brown: Because I'm thinking of Gato [Barbieri]. He had that thing.

John Lewis and Helen Merrill? Any recollection about that one?

Laws: I remember Helen Merrill. I remember we recorded up in Riverside – what used to be Riverside recording studios. That's where Orrin used to be also. I recorded up there with Mongo. Mongo did one of his last records up there at Riverside, along with Nat Adderley playing trumpet on a tune that I wrote called *Bembe Blue.*

Brown: John Lewis? Any recollection about John Lewis?

Laws: I remember John Lewis. I used to play with – when I first got to New York, they had some kind of a classical thing going on, and he was involved in that. I played with him then. Then someone sent me a YouTube link which I had totally forgotten about. I played the Monterey Jazz Festival. He was there, and Mundell Lowe, and somebody else. We were playing together. I couldn't believe it. I had on this green suit, light green suit. I couldn't believe it. That was really – boy, that was revealing to me. I had no idea that I had done that. That shows you can do so many things that escape your memory. That's something I should have remembered, because it was really pretty loose. We did a very fast tune we did, and I remember I was struggling trying to play its changes. But yeah, I still got the suit. I looked at that suit, and it's very – I still got it up there somewhere.

But I did do that, the Monterey Jazz Festival. Now I kind of recall. It must have been somewhere in the '70s, because that's when my old lady was trying to reconcile with me, my first wife. We had already married twice. She was going to go the third time, and I said no.

Brown: We had talked off mic about signing with Columbia from CTI and how that came about. I'm looking at the *Montreux Summit, volume one,* and this supergroup, obviously spearheaded by – well, I presume spearheaded by Columbia Records. I remember having *Montreux Summit.* Do you want to talk about how you came to – did we talk about it on tape?

Laws: No, we didn't.

Brown: From CTI. I'm sure that must have broke Creed Taylor's heart, making that switch.

Laws: Well, yeah. I kind of remember, there was this period where Creed was losing hold of his artists, mainly because of some economic difficulty, because he tried to establish his own distribution, rather than depend on the independents. So that's when he began – I heard that he was getting in trouble financially. I didn't – I wasn't privy to all that. But I heard that he was getting in some difficulty and he was not able to pay his artists. So that's when these big record companies began to peck at his artists, luring them away with a lot of big signing fees. I remember I had a lot of trepidation, just trying to select. Because, I tell you, the first offer I got – let's go back up a little bit, because I never knew, for instance, the kind of money an artist can get just by signing, because I never got that much money, or any money, for that matter, from CTI, as a signing fee? No, never got any big money. It was a whole musical decision to go with CTI, the quality and all that. That was a total musical decision. It had nothing to do with economics, because I was depending on my record dates, jingles, and all that stuff. I was very, very busy doing that and playing with the orchestras and all that in New York.

But, when I was approached, the first company to approach me was ABC Records, out here. This guy who – his name was Otis Smith. Otis Smith was an A & R [artists and repertory] man, executive. Took me to dinner right there at that Beverly Hills restaurant – lunch or dinner or something, right there in Beverly Hills, right there in Benedict Canyon at Sunset [Boulevard].

I didn't realize all of the attraction. I'm just totally oblivious to a lot of politics going on. I look back at it, and I can understand why. Because, you see, CTI had created this whole mystique and this respect for the quality of their releases, both audio and visual, artistic, this whole aura that they had created. Therefore, these big record companies – yeah, I didn't know they had made all these big record companies turn their heads.

So ABC was the first one that made this big offer for me to sign. It was initiated by that dinner, by Otis Smith. We're good friends, by the way, by now. He's no longer with – of course, ABC's not even in existence. But that was the first offer I got.

Then I got – other offers began to – Atlantic started offering me again. I had already signed with Atlantic. Then there was Fantasy. There was Warner Bros. Then, CBS. By that time CBS had already got Bob James over there, see? Bruce Lundvall was head of CBS when I signed. Bruce Lundvall subsequently went to some other places. Then they started courting me. And even CTI came and offered a big – tried to match those offers, but I knew they couldn't deliver. I knew that, because I hadn't gotten paid any money from them in the first place. There was a loyalty in terms of musicality, but Creed understood. We're still friends today. But he understood there was an economic reasons why I went on with CBS, knowing that CBS had all this great bargaining power – worldwide, international bargaining power.

I was in trepidation. Many nights, I could hardly sleep in New York City, trying to figure out where to go. Then I ran into these guys. Benny Golson – not Benny Golson. Yeah, Benny Golson. Benny Golson was part of a group called Tentmakers. It was a management group. I just happened to be in the car with him. We were going to some sister out there in Carson. I told Benny, because it was really on my mind. I said, "Benny, I'm trying to figure out where to go, and these companies are offering me this, offering me that." When I told him the kind of numbers they were offering me, boy, his eyebrows rose. But little did I know that he was with this management group, headed by Ron Nadel. I mention that name because he became somewhat notorious amongst – of being an exploitive person. But he was really the person that guided and was like the ringleader of that – now Benny, I felt he was pretty much kind of like a sheep, following. But Ron Nadel was a very clever, maneuvering, manipulative guy, and a smooth talker, because I found out he victimized some other persons later.

But anyway, at that strategic time, I told Benny about it. So we had some meetings right there at his place, right around the corner, on Lorraine [Boulevard]. They began to

convince me that maybe CBS was the best way to go. I thought about it, because I know CBS, know the name and the stability. So eventually I went.

But see, here's the thing about Ron Nadel. He says, "Look, we don't want any money." That's what he told me. I remember that. "We don't want any money. We just want to establish our management team with a major record company. So we can bring you into the label. That's all we want."

Well, that's something I bought. But it didn't happen that way. They still tried – he still tried – I ended up giving him money. In fact, I was the one that funded their office. They opened up an office on Wilshire [Boulevard], and when I had to go in that office there and sit there in the waiting room and wait to see them, and I had funded it, that's when I decided, this ain't the way to go.

So we ended up going to – the first trip, they got CBS to fund their trip, a whole group of them. There's about five of these guys in the Tentmakers – fund their trip all the way to Montreux. That's when they had the Montreux Summit, you see that? That's when I sat in my hotel room and composed a letter distancing myself, telling them that I no longer wanted to be a part of you guys, because several things had kind of made my gut feel like I didn't need to be with them, not because of Benny, but because of him. As it turned out, that guy came to me a couple of years later crying with his tears in his eyes, apologizing, because of the things that happened. Now he's really ostracized himself from so many people. He's got – he's created a bad name. You burn a lot of bridges behind yourself by being manipulative and exploitations and all that stuff. It's not a good thing to do.

So that's what happened, why I signed with CBS, basically. I did draw from some experiences from that group, in the sense that it helped me to decide to go with CBS, and I left CTI for that, only for economic reasons, because artistically and aesthetically, musically, CTI was the way – sort of set the foundation for me. But there was no great integrity lost when I went to CBS, because I was able to still make some creative records.

Brown: After *Montreux Summit,* you released *Say It with Silence* in '78. It was a while down. I'm scrolling down now, because I want to make sure we hit your projects, rather than you as a sideman. You mentioned that *Say It with Silence* is something that you're very proud of.

Laws: That was the best-selling LP, and plus I think I wrote most of the music – all the music on that record. I wrote all the music on that record. It's a best-selling record, too, come to think of it. I wrote – *The Baron* was one. *The Baron,* by Pat Kelley. That was the only one I didn't write. No, no, there was another one too, I think. Joe Sample wrote *It Happens Every Day.* But most of the compositions were mine on that record.

Brown: *False Faces.*

Laws: Yeah. That was the one that really sold the record, because it was a vocal.

Brown: *Love Gets Better.*

Laws: Yeah, that's – no, wait a minute. Ronnie wrote that. That's on – *Love Gets Better* is on there?

Brown: Um-hmm.

Laws: I thought that was on *Land of Passion.* But anyway, I know I did all the arrangements. That's for sure.

Brown: *It Happens Every Day.*

Laws: *It Happens Every Day.* I did all of the arrangements on that.

Brown: Then *Say It with Silence.* You wrote all the arrangements. So you were writing for strings.

Laws: Um-hmm. All of them.

Brown: So had you had experience doing that previously?

Laws: Well, you know what happened? I told you, little by little I was learning, but then I went to one of Don Sebesky's classes while I was in New York. He wrote this book. We talked a lot. I learned a lot just from being around him in New York. Valerie Simpson and I took that class together. You know the singer, Valerie Simpson?

Brown: Oh, absolutely.

Laws: We'd sit next to each other, listening to Don explain this, that, and the other. Oh yeah. So I learned the basic composition of an economic orchestra. We learned how we could make the strings sound big, only with – because that's what he used. He called it a utility orchestra, something like that, some term he used, where you don't have a huge orchestra, but you still get a big sound.

So that's what I used for that. Yeah, I wrote all the strings on that, and then all the rest, like *Family. Family* was a big seller for us, *Family* and *Land of Passion,* all three of those. In fact they sold better than my first record for CBS.

Brown: Which was *Romeo and Juliet.*

Laws: Um-hmm. They sold better.

Brown: Because of the vocals, primarily.

Laws: I think so. That's right. I think so. The lyrics – because that's when I was writing a lot of lyrics back there

Brown: Then *Land of Passion.* Let's jump ahead. This comes in in the latter half of '78. So very prolific at this point. Columbia's putting out – it probably was released in '79. So *Land of Passion.* You want to . . . ?

Laws: That's somewhere in '79.

Brown: Yeah, it was released in '79. It's showing that the recording dates were between October and December.

Laws: *Land of Passion.* As a matter of fact, it got a Grammy nomination, that track. Let's see. All three of those up there, they were Grammy nominated. That's what those plaques are for. I think one is *In the Beginning,* I think one is *Land of Passion,* and I can't remember the other one.

Yeah, I started writing a lot of lyrics during that time. I learned something. Having – like I said, lyrics makes that – bridges the gap between people, because they – words are important. So that's what made those record go.

Land of Passion, I had my brother Johnny and Debra sing the duet on that record, *Land of Passion.* I don't know if I had any other vocal on it. Oh yeah, *We're in Ecstasy.* They sang a duet on that as well.

Something interesting about that. If you notice – I try to do something creative – if you notice, in yellow, each title . . .

Brown: . . . is part of the poem.

Laws: . . . is part of the lyric.

Brown: I consider it poetry, but we can call it a song lyric. And then you have the full lyrics out.

Laws: Yeah, that's right.

Brown: Then, again, we're talking about CBS, now at *Havana Jam,* where you've got all of those – with Tony – Tony Williams, Woody Shaw, Black Arthur Blythe, Dexter Gordon, Stan Getz, Jimmy, Bobby Hutcherson. So you're in another stable, if we can use that term, but these are folks that made the money for CBS.

Laws: We all went to Havana, too. That's why they called it *Havana Jam.*

Brown: Right, *Havana Jam*, right, at the Karl Marx Theater. So how was it being in Cuba, in Havana?

Laws: Very interesting. An austere situation, where you feel like those – you're there. You see those people there who are living in – feel like we're living in the '50s, because all the cars there look like they didn't get any new cars after the '50s. It's so interesting.

I understand that Castro was in the audience somewhere, but we never saw him. That's when I heard Weather Report for the first time, live. I was so impressed. Also, it was where I heard Billy Joel for the first time, live. He was on that tour, and Kris Kristofferson and Rita Coolidge. They were also in that whole group. I was so impressed with Weather Report, hearing that group live for the first time. That's when Jaco Pastorius and . . .

Brown: And Wayne, Joe Zawinul, Peter Erskine, and Bobby Thomas on percussion. Were they a quartet or a quintet? Probably a quintet by then, because Bobby . . .

Laws: I don't remember Bobby Thomas.

Brown: Then it was a quartet.

Laws: I remember Peter Erskine. I remember Jaco and Wayne and Joe. That's all I remember.

Brown: Okay, so it was a quartet.

We're going to jump ahead to 1980 and *Family.*

Laws: That's one, boy. That was another. Frankie Crocker in New York, he had it on high rotation, and it just – all over. That record did really – in fact, we still perform that. Just performed it in Manila.

Brown: The title cut?

Laws: Yeah.

Brown: Because you have *Ravel's Bolero, What a Night!, Wildfire, Family, Memory of Minnie (Riperton), Say You're Mine.*

Laws: That's it, and I did all the arrangements on that, all, everything. That's what I was glad to be, because I feel like I was – I was really kind of nervous about that, because I remember Maurice Spears was doing the copying for me on that. I said, man, I don't

know if this is going to come out all right, but it came out real well. To this day, we still – because we have a – on the website. That record still is ordered all the time, I mean, strong, all over the world. There's no real connection. It's like nobody played the record in this place and all of a sudden they're going to order it. No, it just constantly comes in. So there must be something else that's magnetizing those people to that record.

Brown: I think this is when I saw you bring the Laws family up to Berkeley.

Laws: The family? Maybe so. It could have been.

Brown: Yeah, it must have been around then.

Laws: I remember Billy Taylor was so excited about that record, because I remember we did a Carnegie Hall concert. I had Debra and Eloise and Ronnie. They all played on it. Had a big band, because CBS sponsored the – all these instruments. I had trumpets and trombones, because that's what's on that record. They supported strings. Back then, that's when the record companies got behind supporting you with additional instruments and all that.

I never will forget, boy, people in the aisle just rocking with that song. Billy Taylor came to the dressing room and said, "Man, that was a tremendous piece." He complimented me on that. That meant a lot to me, because, you know, Billy Taylor's a bebopper.

Brown: Oh yeah, but you know he's got that other side where he said *I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free.*

Laws: Yeah, that's right.

Brown: So he had that too. He had that gospel. I think that's one of those dimensions of greatness, is being able to embrace it all.

I'm looking at – I found the aforementioned Bill: the arranger is Bill Fischer.

Laws: That's it, Bill Fischer.

Brown: Because he was – because when we look at McCoy Tyner, *La Leyenda de la Hora,* the legend of the hour. He's the arranger on that. So he was the one that did *Fly With the Wind* as well.

Laws: Yeah, I knew it was a Bill. We just talked about him last week. We have a mutual friend who lives in Pennsylvania. We were on the phone. He was telling me Bill is getting Alzheimer's, unfortunately.

Brown: Here's a date – I'm only going to bring up Victor Feldman because he hasn't shown up earlier. *Secret of the Andes.* It's on Victor.

Laws: Yeah, I remember that record, because it was the first direct-to-disc recording I ever did.

Brown: Yeah, in Japan, right.

Laws: You record a whole side of a record direct-to-disc. So you can't stop. So that was the very first. I think Harvey Mason was on that.

Brown: He's on it. Alex Acuña, Harvey Mason, Milt Holland, Abraham Laboriel, Lee Ritenour.

Laws: That's right. Yeah, I remember. We did that right over here somewhere in California.

Brown: It's listed as L.A.

We're going to come up – there's going to be a junction in your discography here, where you're not putting out any more records. Your biography reads that you were taking care of your family. So we're looking at roughly between '84 – some biographies say '87 to '92, but I'm looking . . .

Laws: '85.

Brown: '85, that's it.

Laws: That's when they were born. They were born in '85. I stopped to be hands on with my kids, my daughter and my son. I had very sparsely started playing. I didn't even record. I even asked CBS to let me do my – I kept asking for extensions, so I could do the last recording I was supposed to do with them.

Brown: You did do one in January-February of '87, *Brazilian Romance* with Sarah Vaughan. Is that something that's memorable?

Laws: Is that '87?

Brown: It's listed as '87. You were on . . .

Laws: That's when Sergio Mendes called me. I think she died shortly after that, didn't she? Because I know she died shortly – there's three singers that died after I played with them.

Brown: Oh no.

Laws: Yeah, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, and Minnie Riperton. But I don't think I had anything to do with it. It's just I happened to be around just before they passed. It was shortly thereafter. I recorded with her. It was almost like a death knell, after I played with them.

Brown: You were on one tune called *Obsession* on this cut, and Milton Nascimento sang with her on this. I have this at home. So I remember this.

Mean Lean. So we can trace it from it's very first recording, back on Atlantic, through to *In the Beginning,* where it shows up as the closing, and then now – so every decade there seems to be another version.

Laws: Yeah, you're right.

Brown: We talked about that yesterday too.

Here's that sideman date with Jeff Lorber. Then Herbie, *This is the Drum.*

Laws: Herbie Hancock?

Brown: Yeah, but that was – that's one of the ones I think that kind of skirted out underneath the wire for most people, because Herbie was really doing *Rocket* and all that kind of stuff. It was another period for Herbie.

Then a couple ones with Harvey Mason – one session with Harvey. Then Lainie Kazan, *Body and Soul.*

Laws: She told me I did – I saw her at the Skirball. She walked up to me, say, "I'm Lainie Kazan." I didn't remember who's that. Then she said, "You recorded with me." So I got a copy of it. Lainie Kazan, yeah. Then I listened to it, actually, after that.

Brown: Diane Reeves, Harvey Mason again, Joe Sample – dapper Joe.

Laws: Yeah, Joe did – he did a retake on, I think, *It Happens Every Day.*

Brown: *It Happens Every Day,* yeah. Michael Martin. I'm not familiar with him. Then some more with Don Sebesky. It looks like RCA Victor, a couple things. Dave Samuels, Larry Coryell, Eddie Gomez, Marty Morrell. Then Pat Williams, *Sinatraland.*

Laws: Yeah, I just did that recently. That's about – that's last year.

Brown: This one is – the actual sessions of this is '97.

Laws: Oh, well now, I did something recently with Pat Williams, right down the street at Capitol Records. I got the music on my stand in my office right now. It sounds like it was *Sinatraland* or something like.

Brown: Maybe he did another – resurrect that one.

Laws: Oh, yeah, I remember that now, because Eddie Daniel's on there, isn't he?

Brown: Right.

Laws: Okay. Yeah, I remember that.

Brown: Then here's another Quincy, *Basie and Beyond,* but you're in the section.

Laws: We also did *Juke Joint,* which . . .

Brown: Yep, that's true. Unfortunately, it didn't show up in your discography, but I know *Juke Joint.* It's got *Stomp.*

Laws: Yeah, I got – that's that dedication. You see that top? It was *Juke Joint.* He wrote me a letter, a note, and sent it here.

Brown: Marcus Miller, Carol [Dubach?]

Laws: Yes, Carol [Dubach?], my friend, tennis player.

Brown: Then here's Eugene Maslav. You mentioned . . .

Laws: Oh my God, that guy is tremendous. That's the guy I told you, Russian.

Brown: Right.

Laws: Remember I told you about the Russian?

Brown: Oh yeah. So I just wanted to make sure we referenced it for the record here.

Laws: Yes.

Brown: Nancy Wilson, *Turned to Blue.*

Now we're into 2005, 2006. So we're getting pretty close. Valerie King. Then Chick Corea, *The Ultimate Adventure.*

Laws: Yes, man. Whoo. Chick Corea. That guy is so creative. I tell you. That was another challenge. It's always a challenge, playing with Chick, but I'm getting better. I'm getting better, because it made me practice more improvisation, because I see how that guy is so creative. I sit there night after night and watch him just play stuff. There's stuff just oozing out of him. There's just different stuff, like compo- – really compositions, spontaneously. I learn from that. I learn even how to practice better.

Brown: Then *Finding the Groove,* Terry Gibbs, "with special guest Hubert Laws." So he put you right up there on the marquee on that one.

Laws: Yeah. You know how much I got paid for that whole record? $500.

Brown: Whoa. Maybe that's why he put you on the marquee! "I can't pay you, but I'll give you some marketing."

Laws: That guy is something else. I rehearsed at his house two or three days, and then he – this guy – I told him. I said, "Look, Terry, pay me what you want." I didn't even put a price. I said, "Just pay me what you want." I never knew he was going to do something like that. That's okay, though. I've done records for nothing. I say I'd rather do it for nothing, because don't tell me how I work for you for $500 to do a whole record – not just one track, but a whole record. Terry Gibbs. That rascal. I say, "You shouldn't have paid me anything. You should have given me a note. That would be better."

Brown: So I'm looking. You mentioned Eugene Maslov. I'm going to just keep moving on that one. Then Kenny Burrell is listed on here. That was with his trio, Robert Miranda and Clayton Cameron, *Live at Yoshi's.*

Laws: Yeah, live.

Brown: So that was the old Yoshi's. That's the Oakland Yoshi's.

Laws: Yeah, that's the one in Oakland, and also we recorded up at UCLA. We did something over there. I don't know if they put – it's a live orchestra and all that. I don't know if they've released that, but we recorded that as well.

Brown: That exhausts my discographical references, because this only goes up to 2008. Are you any projects that you want to make sure . . . ?

Laws: You can't depend on me. You really can't depend on me, because I can't remember everything. I know I've done some other things too. Luba Mason, for instance. I told you that I did with her, and then we went to Panama after that. Yeah, I've done some other things.

Brown: Let's talk about what you're doing now. We referenced earlier, you just returned from the Philippines. Later this month I think you're heading back out.

Laws: Yeah, we're supposed to – I've got to get my flights straight too – we're going to Cape Town, South Africa, for my band. I'm supposed to do a thing in Tempe, Arizona. I was supposed to go to the U.K., but they got a conflict. I was booking that stuff and totally forgot I booked – right in between the U.K. tour with Larry Coryell, I booked a date with Tierney Sutton, the trio I played with, on the 15th. In other words, I'd have to fly back after doing a concert on the 14th, all the way from England to Tempe, Arizona, and then go back to finish the tour there. So I decided I'm not going to do that. Then we go to – what'd I say? – Cape Town? No, Cape Town is before. Then we go to another place: Kauai, Hawaii.

Brown: Oh, because that's one of the . . .

Laws: That's in June.

Brown: Okay. That's a good time to be there.

Laws: Yeah. I think that's – I've got some other things I can't keep inside my mind right now.

Brown: Are you doing your own booking?

Laws: No. I mean, I have someone processing my booking. My booking comes into my website, Spirit Productions. Then I just have – I'm trying to groom the daughter to take over Margaret Johnstone's place. She's been processing my booking for me. She's in – right now, she lives in – she just moved to Mexico, near Guadalajara. So she was doing the bookings. She wasn't doing the bookings. She's just sort of processing the dates that come in.

Brown: Some tour managing. Not actually – who goes on the road with you? Who handles your . . . ?

Laws: So far I don't have anybody doing that. It's very simple. You don't have too much to be done.

Brown: Let's back up now. So you have a career that starts in the '60s, and here we are in 2011. There's an arc where you are signed to labels. In that time, we've seen the industry has flipped over backwards, gone sideways, and everything.

Laws: And it's still functioning well.

Brown: So you're still . . .

Laws: It's very – because of the setup, I told you, with pensions, and I bought some very, very profitable annuities, and with social security and all that stuff, I really don't have to work, I mean, if I don't want to. But I want to. I want to continue productive, and they've been profitable. They've been like I want it to be, from things I do. Like I told you, the last recording I did was with Chick, I think. That was at the Blue Note, because he flew me in to do a date there, and they recorded some of that stuff. So that will be coming out as well.

Brown: Do you have any projects that you are aspiring to accomplish?

Laws: I'm getting ready to record with Kamau Kenyatta again. This is the guy who did the Nat King Cole thing. We just talked a couple of days ago. They're coming up on Monday. We're going to collaborate on a proposed project.

Brown: I know once Wayne Shorter said – he said, "My booking agent could have me working 365 days out the year if I wanted to work that much." So it seems like there's no plethora of work for you.

Laws: I don't want to work like those guys. Like Tierney, right now, she sent me an e-mail. She is over in Tokyo playing the Cotton Club, where we already played. But see, her guy Miles books her all the time. They've got a beautiful group, too. But they're playing all the time. I don't know how – you can overexpose too, I think. So when you go to a venue – in fact, she – in an e-mail, "I hope somebody comes to hear us." That's what she said in an e-mail. Well, because she's never been to Japan. That was the first time, she says.

It's so difficult to get there. My brother Ronnie never played there. He wanted to go with us. I say never. He played with our family. But I'm talking about with his own group. My own group has played several times over there.

Brown: So you seem to have the focus on your projects with your family, and then you're working – like I said, I saw you with Chick come through the new Yoshi's, San Francisco, a couple years ago. It sounds like – now, Tierney Sutton. Are you working in her group?

Laws: The trio. No, it's a trio. It's a cooperative trio. Larry Koontz on guitar and the vocal and flute, which is a very, very unique situation I like a lot.

Brown: It must be easy to travel, too.

Laws: Yeah, it's wonderful. It's just a wonderful ensemble. I like the exposure and the color that we get together. I played – I sat in with them when they played the other night in the Philippines, because they were there too. We played two nights. They played two

nights, but not the same nights. So she invited me to play with them the night before we left. I sat in, played a couple of tunes with them, which she loves, because she likes that combination, flute and vocal.

Kenny Burrell was responsible for us meeting, in the sense that he had me come play a duet for the Grammy pre- – Grammy museum, pre-Grammy awards, two years ago. That's when she was there with Alan Bergman. You know the guy?

Brown: Oh sure, Marilyn and Alan.

Laws: She was doing one of Michel Legrand's tunes. I said, "Boy, that would be nice. Let me sit in with you guys." She said, "Oh yeah." So we ended up playing together. From then on, she said wow. So we've done gigs. We did The Anthology down there in San Diego, and we did Yakima, Washington. We did UCLA twice, and we did the Grammy museum. So we're already playing. Now we're getting ready to do Tempe, Arizona, on the – yeah, like I told you, that conflict I had. That is going to be on the 15th of April.

Brown: I used the word plethora. I should have used dearth or scarcity. So you're able to pick and choose the gigs you want. It seems like you even run the risk of overbooking. You're able to work both nationally and internationally, to your satisfaction?

Laws: Yeah. Well, I wouldn't mind playing some other places. I've never been to Italy, for instance. I've never gone there, and I would like to go to Italy. Once I – in fact, that's with Tierney. See, she's working on it, because they've been there, the Umbria Jazz Festival, which I've never played. I heard that's a nice venue.

There's some places I would like to play. I've never been to Cape Town, which is nice, because we're going to go there. There's some places. I've never been to Australia. I would like to go there. I don't know what's there, but I've heard some guys go down there.

Brown: Now are you going back – it sounds like most of these are jazz engagements. Are you doing any more classical? Or we can call it classical. I always say concert music.

Laws: They're working on it, because you know this Yayoi [Yashida], the pianist who recorded the *Flute Adaptations,* the Rachmaninoff, and that Samuel Barber. She has strong interests for us in Japan, to play some venues, just the two of us. I don't know how they're going to work that out, because when we recorded, we actually sweetened up some of the stuff. But they have strong interest for that as well. So we may be doing something behind that. But right now, no, there's nothing scheduled.

Brown: Any more engagements coming up with Chick? Because that seems to be a . . .

Laws: He just sent me . . .

Brown: . . . a synergistic relationship.

Laws: It always comes and goes. So who knows? But he always initiates it. In fact he told me just recently. Last week I got an e-mail from him. He said we got to do something again soon, very soon.

Brown: That's great.

Laws: But he's always working. He's working. I don't know how that guy can stay on the road so much.

Brown: Is there anything else you want to talk about as far as your musical career, before we switch to some philosophy?

Laws: Oh no. I just brought you something to read. I did all the research. I'm going to give it to you.

Brown: We know you speak of some of your colleagues, your collaborators. Chick, we know, is very much into Scientology. I do know, when we interviewed Benny Golson a little while ago, he's a Jehovah's Witness. I notice that here on the liner sleeve for *Land of Passion*, it says – you have included on here, "Above all, thanks to Jehovah for the gift of music and to my parents for their support and inspiration." Then you go on to give other special thanks.

Laws: Um-hmm. All my records are going to have that epitaph.

Brown: So when did you become a Jehovah Witness? And what precipitated that?

Laws: Years ago. It's hard to say how. But when I finished Juilliard, that's when I first started studying.

Brown: Oh, okay. So this is since you've been an adult.

Laws: Oh yeah, basically. So when I tell you about – when I talk about government, that's a central theme and issue. It's about government, bad government. What I did was, when I printed out for you and Ken, I researched it. I got part 1, part 2. Part 1, problem, part 2, solution. It's three pages each. All you have to do is read them.

Brown: So this has informed your lyrics, because you mentioned *What do you think of this world now?* So your spirituality, your philosophical view on life is very much shaped by this. Does it influence your music as well? Or is it hard to even separate?

Laws: Maybe subliminally. It probably does. But when I write lyric, I match the lyrics to the melodies I've already written. That's what happened in the case of *What do you think of this world now?* It focuses on the same issues you and I discussed yesterday. You talk about politicians who make promises they're never able to keep, but then it does end up telling you what the solution will be, and is. It's already happening. But some people are not attuned to it.

It's like, you ever look for a pencil or your glasses, and it's right there on your face? That's the same thing with the solution. It's right in our faces, but you can't see it because of – that's why – you ever hear of the expression, let the blind lead the blind?

Brown: Well, they say the blind leading the blind, more not as the desired outcome.

Laws: You know why they say the blind lead the blind? Because they are oblivious to the obvious solution before them. They're oblivious to it, and yet it's right there. That's why – it's a metaphorical expression, the blind leading the literal blind, or in some cases the blind leading the blind in the sense that they cannot see the solution that's right – staring them right square in the face all the time.

Brown: When one investigates, one has a spiritual awakening and investigates all the major organized religions and all forms of spirituality, this seems the basic tenet of all. It comes back to that one fundamental maxim of humanity, treat others as you would like to be treated.

Laws: Yeah, but it's more involved than that. That's what I say. It's more involved than that. You see, there's a major, smart creature that's using the very thing that misleads people, which is religion. We all make – just like I told you – music for a purpose. Human beings are made for a purpose. In fact, one of the major issues people think about is, why am I here? What's the purpose? Am I supposed to just live a few years? If I ascribe to a certain lifestyle, should I live – just live it up? Because I'm only going to be here a few years. You hear the expression, say "life is short"? That expression's common.

Religion is one of the main culprits. Conventional religions is the main culprit for keeping people enslaved. I'm going to repeat it. Religion – and I say conventional religion – is a main culprit for keeping people enslaved. Why? Because it's counterfeit. Most people are turned off by religion, because they see the hypocrisy involved, they see people talk about this or that, but there's hypocrisy. And it's true. You see priests who are molesting young kids. You see people who claim that they believe in God, doing all kinds of atrocious things. But they give true religion – because just mesh them all together. They say, they all lead to God. That's what people say. But do they? They don't. See?

But the central issue is government. That's why I told you. I'm going to give you some literature. Take it and read it, and then you ask questions, because you have to see – you

have to contemplate this stuff. You listen – you see the failure. Throughout history, we've tried all – in fact, that paper will tell you. You have forms of government that are aristocracies, patriarchies, what? – there's another one called – well, there's several. You'll see them in the literature I got pulled for you. But all of them, they're all based in human rule. But rulership – it doesn't belong to us to rule ourselves. We're incapable. We're not qualified. First of all, we don't live long enough to have enough experience. We're not qualified.

But if you read – if we read – that's why it makes me so upset when people who I know, people who I know know that, and still defect and go against it. It's really sad. But see, no, all roads don't lead to the same place. They don't. You got to get the right direction, get the right guy. It's like saying all music creates the same result. That's not true. We know that. Bad music can create bad behavior. It really – and you can see it in the form of what's happening nowadays, because music has deteriorated in terms of the populace. It's deteriorated, and it's caused society to be deteriorated, because all parts of society are deteriorating because of several components. Music is just one of them. It's just one of them. The main component is religion. Some of the worst people you try to talk to about God are people who are religious, to tell them the truth, because they've been told a lie so long.

Death is one of the main things. You really – you'd be surprised how it rules your life. How you think about death rules your life. That's – but see, I don't want to confuse the issue. I want to just focus on government, because what the issue is real government, whether you're talking about your family, in your home – rulership, organization, whether it's in your home, whether it's on a city level, whether it's on the state level, whether it's on the federal level, or on a universal level. It's all about government. Who has the right to tell us how to live our lives? Who has the right to do that?

I read that article. I pulled it out on my computer, because I was trying to figure out what could be the most effective way to explain to you what I was trying to tell you yesterday. So, only three pages, each one, problem, solution. Look closely at it.

Brown: Philosophers have been dealing with the issue of the human condition for so long. So when I think back about "the unexamined life is not worth living" [Socrates], you have to look into yourself to find truth. If you can't – if somebody's not supposed to – or if I'm going to extrapolate from what you say, that the truth is not something that can be imposed by man or by humankind. The other one is, Niezsche [Karl Marx] said, "Religion is the opiate of the masses." When we talk about music, we were saying it's a unifying force. Now there is good and there is the other kind of music, as Duke Ellington would say, but I will agree with you that religion is something that divides people. What we have been discussing on and off mic has been something that could bring people together. What is – how are we going to come together? You said one government, and without reading the document, I won't – we won't continue to dialog this.

But I wanted to ask you, since you've been a son, a father, brother, grandfather. Those interpersonal relationships is what we said brings happiness. It's not material wealth. Can you give us the benefit of your experience as a musician? Having traveled around the world, having played music that has brought so many people together. Where you go, people are coming together to hear your music. So your music is a unifying force and a healing force. Can you talk about what it is you can impart from that experience and what music has brought to you and what you feel music – whatever wisdom you gained from your life, to be able to share any of those insights?

Laws: Music has given me the opportunity to make many friends, many relationships. But those relationships, that doesn't govern moral behavior. See, music can make you feel good in some ways. It can sort of corroborate what your sentiments are. But it cannot dictate moral behavior. You can have the same person in prison love your music. See, because they've violated some morality of government. You can still – you can be united in the fact you like the same pieces. That doesn't have anything to do with your good or bad behavior. Okay? That's why I said, music is great, but it has very little to do with governing good behavior – not good behavior, but making you avoid bad behavior. You can still be involved with bad behavior, even though you listen to good music.

That's why, for me to go into any great detail about it, I think you have to live with what I extrapolated from my computer for you, looking at it in two lights: one, discussing all of the failures of bad government, and then looking at the features of good government.

Just to answer your question, yeah, I've seen music – the music I have performed earthwide, the places I've gone – made a lot of friends. People enjoyed – but it's short-lived. I mean, my relationship with them is short-lived. I was in the Philippines. People loved our music and all that, but only a few people I may continue being in touch with. And I can't say my music's going to make those people love their sons, love their daughters, or love their mothers, or love their fathers, or treat them well. I don't know if that's going to make that happen. It gives a certain level of satisfaction, but it doesn't govern moral behavior in the most finite way. That's why I say, it's good to understand some other issues. It's good to understand how your behavior is governed by – what divine influences there are.

Brown: Okay, so divine influences, but we all – most of us who have been able to inculcate that discipline had strong models. Gandhi says, "You have to become the change you want to see." Or, as a father, you have to model that behavior for your children. So a lot of that, maybe there is divine, but as human beings, we have the interpersonal relationships that we're dealing with. I overheard – I remember hearing Dick Gregory say – he says, don't have your kids lie for you, if somebody comes to the door and you tell them – because if they're going to lie to that stranger, they're going to lie to you.

Laws: Um-hmm. That makes sense.

Brown: So that whole issue of modeling the behavior, becoming that change that you want to see you yourself being an example, a model – you talk about your father. That's where you got your – that's where you feel the grounding for your discipline.

Laws: Yeah, I saw that, but I also saw the frailty and the failings.

Brown: Well, they're human beings.

Laws: So, that's why we can't use that as a model. See, a model's not that. You can't use it.

Brown: How do you inculcate that to a child?

Laws: Let's put it this way, because we show them that we are also fallible. So, in other words, you do your best, as you do. You do your best. I saw my father as I should have seen him. He's a human being with frailties just like me, but he was doing his best. The good part, I pulled from that. But he was not my ultimate model, not my ultimate, because what you do, if you follow the ultimate model, you're just going to continue some of the frailties, some of the failures. It's just like me playing my instrument. Heck, I can see that somebody would make a mistake or whatever, but I'm not going to try to follow that mistake. I'm looking to the one whom I felt is the utopia. Then I followed that as a model.

Right now, as I speak, I'm pointing out things that I've done personally, but I don't look at myself – I say many times, music is bigger than me. It's something bigger than me. It doesn't stop with me. It doesn't start or stop with me. There's something greater. So if you look at me as a role model, then you can be limited, because I'm only going so far, and I'm still struggling to try to be good.

Brown: I think we as mature human beings understand the pitfall of choosing one hero. That's that old – the great man theory. You don't want to base it on any one. You want to be able – we'll close with this, and maybe we'll continue this off mic. But you had your baby granddaughter here in your lap. I have – I just became a grandfather. I want to be the best person I can be for that child, so that she can be the best person she can be. That's what we do as parents. We want to make the world a better place for our children.

Laws: Right, and you know what I do? I say, I point you to what I'm trying to describe to be. I point you to that real model, the ultimate model that you should imitate. That's what I'm doing. Not me, because she's going to see the frailties I have. So that's why I say, I keep pointing away from myself, because I can't be the ultimate. Maybe you see what caused me – whatever successes I may have, you may see that part and say you want that too. Well, don't look at me as the final, because I'm just trying to ascribe to something greater than me. That may make me have whatever degree of success I may have. So you

see, but I can't point to myself as that model to follow. I'm just – I'm trying to emulate that. Whatever you see in me, okay, if it's good, do that, but I'm not the ultimate one to look to, because I'm going to die. I'm dying. I'm getting older. I don't want you to get older, but that's the way it is.

But there's a solution. There is a solution where that doesn't continue – that will not necessarily happen – continue to happen. That's why I want you to look intently at what I'm going to give you, the material. I'm just – you read it in your spare – well, not only should say spare time. You should really look at it, compel yourself to read it, look at it, and we can talk after you've done that, because then you'll have some questions. Because I can't – the way it's written out, and written so well, I can't give it to you better than that. I can comment on it, but I'm having you look at something beyond me.

Brown: I don't know what to say after that.

(transcribed and edited by Barry Kernfeld)