

Views from the Rock

For Robert Dietsche, a tale of two cities

Many of the stars of the day have long since been forgotten. Others live on in the annals of the city's musical history, from visitors like Duke Ellington, Count Basie and Louis Armstrong to locals like Harry Gillgam, Tommy Todd and Sid Porter, a star at the Chicken Coop, who knew "every song in all keys."

Portland's golden years of jazz began just as World War II was ending, writes author Robert Dietsche. "Inland seaports with good railroads make for great jazz, especially during wartime when there is an acceleration of fresh ideas and fashions from the thousands of servicemen and defense workers arriving," he writes.

Little Harlem ran from Northeast Fremont and east from North Interstate to Union Avenue, now called Martin Luther King Boulevard. Action central was Williams Avenue, an entertainment strip lined with hot spots offering jazz 24 hours a day.

Dietsche, a Manzanita resident, is a chronicler of these halcyon days in "Jump Town: The Golden Years of Portland Jazz, 1942-1957," from the Dude Ranch to McLendon's Rhythm Room.

"Jump Town," published in 2005, remains the go-to work on jazz and its performers in the Rose City, places like the

CANNON SHOTS
R.J. MARX



Dude Ranch, Jimmy Mak's, the Chicken Coop and Madrona Records, "the meeting place along Williams Avenue," Dietsche said in 2017.

"Jump Town" stands as a reference for old-timers savoring the nostalgia and young fans seeking to connect with the city's musical roots.

An author's story

The son of a Nabisco executive, Dietsche graduated from Toledo's DeVilbiss High School. He headed westward to the University of Oregon on a partial tennis scholarship to study English. In Eugene, he met his wife Susan, a marriage still strong after 55 years.

Dietsche taught in the Beaverton and Oregon City public schools before making a career shift in 1973.

Inspired by his friend Walter Powell — founder of Powell's Books in 1972 — Dietsche opened Django Records, named after the great Belgian jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt.

The venture provided an opportunity to explore his love of jazz and turn it into a lucrative career.

"It was the first used record store in Oregon and it took off like fire," Dietsche recalled. "My God, all those people who were giving it away to Goodwill, we were getting money for."

"Everybody came in," he said, from the comedian Jack Benny to the Grateful Dead and former Portland Mayor Frank Ivancie.

The store remained under Dietsche's ownership until 1999, when it was sold to an investor seeking to expand into a national chain.

"It was mostly jazz those first few months, having been pared from their collections, and the rock section was only one crate at first," wrote a friend of Dietsche's in an online music forum. "Their average price was \$2.50. The rock section soon grew to half the store, but it was still the favored place for jazz collectors, and there was a good section of other categories too."

'Tatum's Town'

What Dietsche does for Portland in "Jump Town" he replicates for his childhood hometown in his new book, "Tatum's Town: The Story of Jazz in Toledo, Ohio (1915-1985)."

Dietsche chronicles the urban culture of a Midwestern city where "dance halls, gaming halls, pool halls and taverns proliferated — and if you messed with the wrong people, "you might find yourself in a cement suit at the bottom of the Maumee River."

From such early 20th-century beginnings came the unparalleled pianist Art Tatum and famed lyric writer and vocalist Jon Hendricks.

"For her size and weight, Toledo, Ohio, has more than her share of great moments in jazz," Dietsche writes.

Tatum himself, whose "left hand was a wondrous thing," exercised his fingers to master keyboard intervals by "carefully manipulating selected Brazil nuts between his fingers so as to extend his reach on the piano."

The author sets the scene: "Sitting at the piano, one eyelid at half mast, his head turned upward, a glass of beer and a pack of Luckies within reach, was Art Tatum, a legally blind native Toledoan who would become the greatest piano player of them all."

Dietsche's look back began in 1980 with a profile of Toledo guitarist Arv Garrison, who appears on historic recordings of saxophonist Charlie "Bird" Parker. Garrison, "a lady-killer with blonde wavy hair," was a pioneer of bebop jazz in the 1940s, first attracting attention after winning a high school variety show.

"I found out he went to my high school," Dietsche said. "If



LEFT "Jump Town," a history of jazz in Portland.

RIGHT "Tatum's Town" chronicles the urban jazz culture of Toledo, Ohio, in the 20th century.

you look up four of the most important albums Charlie Parker did — he's on them."

After researching Garrison's career, Dietsche delivered a piece for the Toledo Blade newspaper that won him a fan letter from the foremost jazz critic of the era. "I got this letter from Leonard Feather congratulating me on the job I did," Dietsche said. "There's no higher honor. That really got me into the story."

"I've got this thing about Toledo, my mistress," Dietsche said. "I always wanted to go back. I didn't care what Thomas Wolfe said. I figured out a way to do it: Go back and write a story and have fun."

Forgotten talent

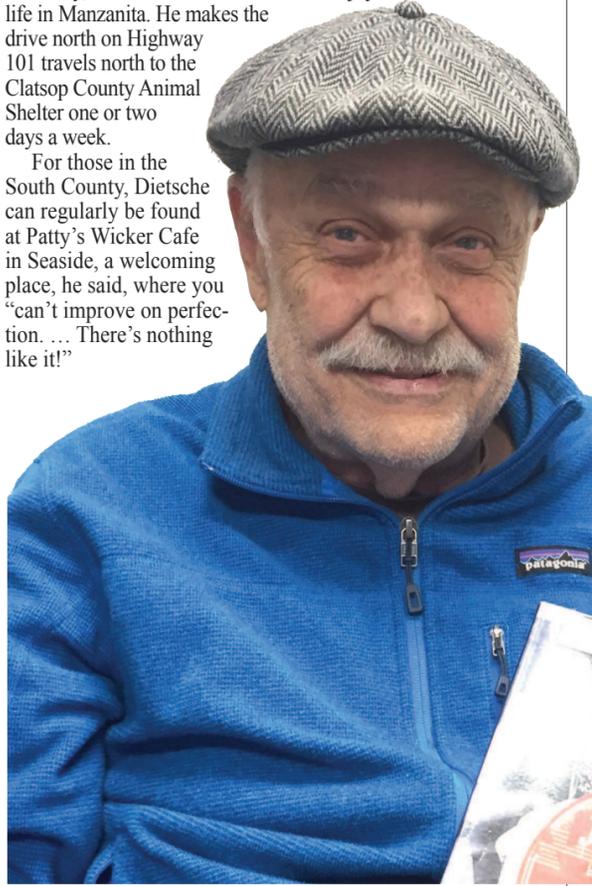
"Tatum's Town" caps a career of education, music and history, earning the author a certificate of merit award for excellence from the Association for Recorded Sound Collections. The awards are given to authors of books, articles or recording liner notes to recognize those publishing work considered the best in recorded sound research.

Meanwhile, Dietsche's literary efforts continue with "Eight Forgotten Ones," a work in progress about eight great, underrated musicians Dietsche has developed particularly affinity for — like trombonist Ray Sims, the brother of saxophonist Zoot Sims — and Portland arranger Tommy Todd, who took Hollywood movies by storm in the 1940s. Todd, "the most talented guy to come out of Portland, provided charts for Benny Goodman, Lionel Hampton and Tommy Dorsey before his death in obscurity in the early 1980s.

"Tommy Todd was in the Billy May category," Dietsche said, referring to the great film and television arranger and composer. "Nobody knows anything about him. He was fascinating."

Today, Dietsche and his wife Susan enjoy life in Manzanita. He makes the drive north on Highway 101 travels north to the Clatsop County Animal Shelter one or two days a week.

For those in the South County, Dietsche can regularly be found at Patty's Wicker Cafe in Seaside, a welcoming place, he said, where you "can't improve on perfection. ... There's nothing like it!"



Manzanita author Robert Dietsche.



Yes, we have apples!

Epic apples and the taste of autumn

For the past month, I've been eating apples all day. For breakfast, I chop one up to add to my yogurt or oatmeal. At lunch I might slather a rice cake with peanut butter and top it with apple slices. I've made Waldorf salad; added apples to tuna salad and chicken salad; I've dipped apple slices in honey. I've made eight apple pies already. Last week I made an apple crisp.

The reason for all this apple eating is our two apple trees. They came with the house when we bought it; for the past two years, the trees have created a mother lode. In addition to all the fruit we've personally eaten, I've bagged up at least 100 apples to distribute to friends.

When we lived in New York, one of my favorite fall rituals was our weekly trip on Sundays to Salinger's Orchard located on Guinea Road in Brewster. In addition to their "U-pick" possibilities and their popular pumpkin patch, Salinger's operates a market where one might purchase cider; cider donuts (plain or with powdered sugar); apple, peach, cherry, pecan, and pumpkin pies; jams, apple butter, organic honey, and, of course, apples by the bushel. They focus on the New York heritage varieties, including Cortland, Rome, Braeburn, and a small, very dark red apple called Macoun, available only in October and November.

I've yet to determine what kind of apples are growing in our yard. All I can say is that they taste a lot like a Macoun. For better or worse, the apples have attracted a lot of attention. We're probably known in the neighborhood as Those People With the Apples. The branches, which I fully intend to cut back this winter, extend over the fence. This has created some issues as some of the apples drop into the street. One neighbor asked me a little indignantly if I planned on letting them all go to waste. I think she was a little surprised when I said I collect them as they ripen and they haven't all ripened yet.

People's reactions to the apples I give them have been interesting. One or two people said they prefer Gala apples; I said, OK, well, you can get those at Fred Meyer. Most of the recipients of my apples make things with them. They send me pictures of apple cider, apple pie, applesauce, apple brown Betty. The most enthusiastic recipient was my tree guy, Arborist Archer, who pronounced them "epic."

Apples are good for you. They're an excellent source of fiber, as well as vitamins A and C. My min-pin, Lucy, likes them, which is good as they're natural teeth cleaners and also freshen dog breath.

Meanwhile, the harvest is almost over. There are still quite a few apples left on the tree, which means I'll probably be giving them away as the bottom drawer of my refrigerator is completely filled with apples, and there's only so much room in my freezer. Last week at a friends and family dinner at Maggie's On the Prom introducing the new menu by the new chef, Brad Dodson, recently the executive chef at the Pickled Fish and the Shelburne Dining Room in Washington, the chef introduced an appetizer platter of smoked steelhead salmon, Tillamook aged cheddar, crackers, mustard, organic honey, and sliced apples. I'll be creating my own rendition of this dish this week for my book group (if you're interested, we read "The High Season" by Judy Blundell). I'll serve it along with apple pie, apple crisp, and a gluten-free apple crumble.

Long live the back yard apple!

VIEW FROM THE PORCH
EVE MARX



'WE'RE PROBABLY KNOWN IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD AS THOSE PEOPLE WITH THE APPLES!'

LETTERS

Right leaders for the job

Cannon Beach is an extraordinary place and I'm grateful to operate a business here. For three decades I've participated in public discussions about a variety of local issues. Often these discussions become polarized, pitting people who seek to conserve our village culture against others who want the area to become

more urbanized.

I'm with the conservers, because I've watched how quickly coastal communities can grow beyond their livability. I'm also keenly aware of challenges that must be met in order for the town to function. Three issues that top the list are traffic flow, parking, and affordable housing.

We need local leaders who can address these priorities without dividing our commu-

nity in the process. Indeed, that's the only way we can move forward. So I'm endorsing Robin Risley to fill the seat being vacated on City Council. Robin is the right person to help bring people together and build consensus around workable ideas. I also support the re-election of Mike Benefield, who has served as a voice of reason at City Hall.

Robin Risley and Mike

Benefield can help replace polarization with balance and stewardship. They are worthy of our support.

**Watt Childress
Cannon Beach**

View from the dunes

The Dunes. It is interesting to note that when people write in complaining about the dunes, they couch their complaints as "safety"

and "access" issues rather than what their complaints really are — the dunes are blocking their views from Breakers Point.

The silliest of these complaints is that "people are doing bad things in the dunes." People are also partying, camping, drinking and littering in the forests and on the beach as well. Does that mean we should chop down our forests or pave over our beaches?

Most of the people who

live here do not have ocean front homes. They cannot see the beach from their window. They still love it and enjoy the incredible beauty of this place. They also love the dunes and their sense of quiet, peace, and otherworldliness.

So lets not make up disingenuous reasons to shave down the dunes and just be honest — you want your views above all else.

**Lisa Kerr
Cannon Beach**