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JACK DeJOHNETTE
NEA Jazz Master (2112)

Interviewee: Jack DeJohnette (August 9, 1942 -)
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Brown: Today is November 10th, 2011, and this is The Smithsonian Oral History Interview with NEA Jazz Master, percussionist, pianist, bandleader, composer, arranger, educator, and my hero, Jack DeJohnette, in his house in Silver Hollow, Upstate New York. How are you doing today, Mr. DeJohnette?

DeJohnette: I'm doing great!

Brown: Great, great.

DeJohnette: Great.

Brown: If we could start the interview by you stating your full name, full birth name, birthplace and birth date?

DeJohnette: Okay. Jack DeJohnette...born in Chicago, Illinois in the county of Cook, August 9th, 1942.

Brown: And if you could tell us the names of your parents.

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DeJohnette: Yeah, my mother's name was Eva Jeanette Wood and my father's name is Jack DeJohnette Sr. in that case.

Brown: Oh, so you're a Jr.?

DeJohnette: Yeah, I'm a Jr.

Brown: No middle name?

DeJohnette: No.

Brown: And do you know where your parents are originally from?

DeJohnette: Yeah, my mother was from Lionel, Georgia. My father was from Oak Ridge, Louisiana.

Brown: And did they meet and marry in Chicago, do you know anything about that?

DeJohnette: Mm-hmm.

Brown: And do you have any siblings?

DeJohnette: I have a half-sister who's ten years older than I am named Izola but last I knew she was in a nursing home. She was having some mental problems, I don't know whether she's alive or dead.

Brown: So, essentially you were raised as a single child?

DeJohnette: Yeah.

Brown: And did you have extended family in your...

DeJohnette: My extended family was my grandmother, Rosalie Anne Wood. She was actually my legal guardian. Adopted me when my mother was pregnant again with another child, and of course a decision had to be made. It was life or death to be saved...

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I would have had a brother and naturally that was aborted, stopped. So, in the interim my grandmother, being nervous about the outcome of the procedure took out guardianship, so you know, she was my legal guardian. She also had a niece. She came from a big family in those times, where they had 20, 21 kids, 22 kids. So she had a lot of sisters and brothers. Some of them I knew, some of them had mostly died away by the time I was able to ascertain who they were but there was a couple of sisters left and she had a niece named Dorothy Dixon. She had two daughters who subsequently between them had nine kids who became my first cousins. They became my sort of cousins *and* brothers and sisters. We're still close today in Chicago, so they're all still here and I was just there (with) my wife, Lydia, playing in Chicago and we hung out and had a great time. They're really great.

Brown: In what part of Chicago was your house at that point, where you were born and raised?

DeJohnette: The south side of Chicago. 604 East 51st Street, near Washington Park, I think. Right opposite the park, actually. It was a nice neighborhood. It was really nice. We had a pretty big house and actually my mother and my father went to California. To Oakland, actually. My father went to look for more work and consequently he went out ahead. My mother came out afterwards. Consequently, things didn't work out so my mother was scuffling a bit out there so my grandmother sent for her to come back to Chicago because she had a nice house, a big house. I guess, 2 bathrooms, a big living room. They had a sunroom, another bedroom, pantry, kitchen, small room where her niece and her husband roomed. Then another big bedroom with walk-in closets and a big bathroom, shower. My mom and I came back when I was 4 years old. That's where I spent a lot of my time growing up until I was a teenager and we moved around after that.

Brown: Do you remember which schools you went to? Which elementary school, junior high or high schools?

DeJohnette: Yeah, I went to Frances E. Willard grammar school.

Brown: And it was in the neighborhood?

DeJohnette: Yeah, it was like, 2 or 3 blocks from my house. I could walk to school.

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Brown: And was the neighborhood integrated or segregated?

DeJohnette: The neighborhood was mostly segregated but there were black-owned businesses and it was kind of cool. It had its own thing. I also had an uncle named Roy Wood who we'll get to later on who is instrumental... ..who loved jazz and who was instrumental in my being drawn to the music. Anyway, the neighborhood was, it was well to do. We never felt poor, it wasn't a ghetto neighborhood. It was okay, you know? It was a middle class neighborhood. They had paper stands, they had a local shoe shop, barber shop, local grocery marts and eventually of course A&P's kind of moved in. The usual thing that happens in neighborhoods, where like a TV repair place but they...would never get the parts that they needed on time, and eventually... ..people got frustrated. In a way, it was a bad call because it made the black businesses look bad. But then AT and A&P came in and started hiring local kids in the area and it shifted a little bit. I mean, I remember a time when Joe Louis had to pay taxes. He had Joe Louis milk and Joe Louis this and you know...

Brown: [laughing]

DeJohnette: ... But yeah, it was okay. It was a safe neighborhood.

Brown: Now, I know we're going to talk about uncle Roy Wood. Was there music played in the house, and if so, was it radio, were there other people playing music?

DeJohnette: Yeah, well there was radio and in the area in those times there was, it wasn't unusual for you to study or take up piano. My grandmother knew a woman downtown named Antoinette Rich who had a studio their with spinet pianos, and she had students. My grandmother took me down to study, to start teaching me piano lessons.

Brown: Okay, and what age was that?

DeJohnette: Oh, 5 or 6. Something like that.

Brown: So you were already in school. You were either in kindergarten or first grade when you started taking piano lessons.

DeJohnette: Yeah, yeah.

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Brown: And did you have a piano in the house?

DeJohnette: Not until after my piano teacher convinced my grandmother that I had perfect pitch and that I should study piano. It turned out that my grandmother had a friend named Viola Burns who lived around the corner who taught piano. She had, at that time, they had knew kinds of tools, innovative kinds of tools to teach you learn a piano, learn how to read fun. My grandmother got a spinet piano from Antoinette Rich for a fair price, so we had a spinet piano at home. Although, before that I had a teacher who had I not been so interested in music would have turned me off. This guy was an old crotchety guy. He used to come up if you hit the wrong notes and he'd smack your hands. I was really pissed at this guy because it's like, "He's not my father. The nerve of him; to hit me because I played a wrong note." You know, I just didn't like his attitude. He's somebody who didn't express a love for music and a love for passing it on, making music interesting and fun. So I complained to grandmother, I did not want this guy coming back to the house and sure enough she called her friend Viola Burns and she was a lot of fun. She was like a friend, too. She and her husband were really nice to me. I used to walk their dog. They had a dog that I liked named Snubby. She taught me how to read and play classics, classical piano. She had other students and she'd have recitals and things like that. So, through her I kept my interest up.

Brown: Now, when your grandmother first took you to get piano lessons was that because you had expressed interest in taking piano lessons or was that just you, because that's how a lot of folks got into because that's what was done. But, had you started to already exhibit or express a passion for music?

DeJohnette: Well, I liked playing the piano. I liked listening to music. My uncle Roy had a lot of jazz records, like the old 78s. He used to have a Victrola that you cranked up and I used to play all of these at an early age, 5, 6, 7. I used to listen to these Decca records, and the Okeh records, and Columbia records which had, you know, Duke Ellington, Billie Holliday, Count Basie, Slim Gaillard, Dusty Fletcher. So, I used to listen to those records and be fascinated by the music even before I knew it was jazz. I actually listened to... ..we got eventually, what was it? A short wave radio console, which was a radio and record player with the big heavy weighted...

Brown: Tone arm?

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DeJohnette: The 78s where could stack records up and drop them. So I used to spend a lot of time just listening to the radio, listening to classical music from Europe, listened to The Grand Ole Opry and just fascinated by all these different kinds of music, you know.

Brown: Mm-hm.

DeJohnette: I was drawn to music before I even realized I was really smitten by it.

Brown: So if we could talk about your uncle and you could state his full name, presumably he lived in the house?

DeJohnette: When he was in the house! [laughs]

Brown: Cool. Most of the references on you say that he was very instrumental in cultivating your interests in music through, or perhaps in jazz at this point. Was he a musician himself?

DeJohnette: He liked to play around, tinker with the piano. But he also was a street person so he liked to go out and hear jazz and he knew all the people that were in that world, and he actually had a few businesses. He had a tavern at one point... ..So, he knew a lot of people, the street people. He knew boxers, he knew all the hustlers, things like that. But again he used to take me around. And my grandmother, Rosalie was sort of a trailblazer because she, along with some other people, I think Mr. Hall was his name, started the first black owned insurance company, Metropolitan Mutual Life Insurance Company of Chicago. Which, was on, it's still there! There's also a funeral home, Metropolitan Funeral Home, next door to it, but she started in on the ground level when they started. My uncle used sell insurance; used to work for the company. So my uncle loved jazz, loved music, and he used to play the piano and sing sometimes. He used to take me around with him a lot, so I kind of looked up to him because he also was a lover of electric trains. Lionel electric trains, he used to buy electric trains and as a matter a fact, his son who is Roy Wood Jr., who lives in Birmingham is a avid model HO model railroad fan. Builds his own scenery and everything. So, he carried on [laughs] that tradition of the trains. But my uncle used to have all these trains and he'd set them up so they'd run through the rooms, he set them up every Christmas so you know... ..uncle was the king in the house! He'd set up all these trains and have the latest running around.

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So my mother Jeanette used to write poetry and she actually was the original composer of “Stormy Monday,” and she wrote that. We knew T-Bone Walker. She sold it to T-Bone Walker for 50 bucks, so that became a big hit! You know, those days musicians used to sell, they used to buy, they'd sell songs. Jazz musicians would say, "Hey, I need a tune for a record date, send me a tune," and they would put their name on it. They'd buy a song, so that's what happened.

Brown: Does she have any other credits that we might know of?

DeJohnette: No...

Brown: Well hey, all it takes is one...

DeJohnette: Yeah, she kept writing poetry. She wrote a little children's book. I have her poetry and stuff. There was creativity in the family. I kept playing piano, then I lost interest until I was in my teens and got interested again when rock n' roll came in. I used to love listening to jazz on radio stations all the time and when my uncle became a jazz DJ... ..well, let me go back with my uncle because uncle was sort of a self-made individual and that he taught himself to do people's income taxes. He taught himself how to get a diploma. Somehow he taught himself how to be a broadcaster, an announcer, a radio announcer and he might have gone to announcer's school. I'm not sure but he became innovative in the race relations and color barrier on the north side of Chicago, a radio station called WVON, which was all white. He was the first black announcer to announce the news on WVON. They were so impressed with him. So he did that really well and made a name for himself as an announcer, and I think later he went to, I forget which other station he went to. He became a jazz DJ and of course all the records were sent to the house so I had access to all the latest Jazz records. I was like a kid in a candy store. I think that came later when I started to go to high school and I graduated from grammar school. That's an interesting part of my life. My uncle used to take us out to clubs and actually there is a picture, which I'll show to you later, of me with T-Bone Walker and an orchestra at the Pershing, but downstairs, not up at the top. I used to play these little saxophones, that had the little piece of cellophane in them, and you sing through them?

Brown: Mm-hm.

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DeJohnette: They called them kazoos or something like that.

Brown: Kazoos, right right.

DeJohnette: And I used to play along with the records, and there was this blues that I forgot what it's called, but it was a blues with a saxophone player, I don't if it was Illinois Jacquet, it might have been. But it went something like [sings a blues melody]. OK, it was my grandmother, my mother, my uncle and I brought my little horn and he told T-Bone that I knew this particular song, so T-Bone let me up. So picture T-Bone handing me the mic and I'm in my short pants and I'm playing this little horn and it freaked me out because when I started playing the melody and getting into the tempo, the whole band came in behind me! [laughs]

Brown: Wow!

DeJohnette: And I was like, "how'd they know that!?" and I played the solo. . . I wasn't afraid to get up and perform.

Brown: So, this is after you got out of elementary school?

DeJohnette: No, this was when I was about 5, 6.

Brown: Oh, Okay, short pants, right, okay. [laughs]

DeJohnette: No, not in high school, no short pants! But I forgot to say this was going back, around the time "Stormy Monday" and that business was happening. I was still a youngster then.

Brown: So did that lead to a gig? [laughs]

DeJohnette: No, not to a gig but my uncle was proud of me. But we jump ahead. I went to high school. I went to, where did I go? I had some situations in school where I...
...which school did I graduate from after grammar school? Oh, I can't remember that. But I do remember where I went to high school. I went to CVS, Chicago Vocational School, which was very interesting. At that time I was singing doo-wops. I had a quartet and at the time we'd sing at the battle of the doo wop bands. I used to sing lead and second

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tenor. At that time there were groups around like The Diablos and The Cadillacs and The Wrens, and you know, Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers. The Ravens and James Brown, “Please! Please! Please!” had come out around that time I think.

Brown: Well, you had several black record labels there too, Vee Jay records...

DeJohnette: Yeah, Vee Jay! Yeah.

Brown: ... and then of course Chess and all them, but Vee Jay was putting out then. It must have been; that was the sound in Chicago at that time.

DeJohnette: Like I said with my uncle. I was playing piano and I got interested in playing piano with rock n' roll. Fats Domino came out with “Blueberry Hill.” I started singing and playing at little functions. When I went to high school, I went to Chicago Vocational High School on 87th and Chicago Avenue, I think it was. It was originally a naval academy and then it became a vocational school, which was all white, all male. . . . When I went to it, it became interracial and coed all at once! So that was very interesting.

Brown: So this the late 50's; this is already after Brown v. Board of Education?

DeJohnette: Yeah mid 50's, I think. So yeah, you might have some dates there that might be more accurate than my memory serves me. So, I took foundry in the early years as a vocation but they had band there so I took band as well. I played acoustic bass the first year in the concert band and then a group of guys... ...a guy names James Willis, who played clarinet but also play bass and all this time Ahmad's at The Pershing. “But Not For Me” was popular then. He was now was on Argo or Chess Records then. There was another guy who played flute named Graph Smith and he was a fantastic drummer. He played drums and so we'd be in the room. We'd cut classes actually and be up in the band room in one of the rehearsal rooms and we'd be playing Ahmad. We'd be playing “But Not For Me” and “Billy Boy” and we'd be playing. So eventually I got to where that was one trio. Then we had another quartet with a saxophone player and a drummer named Tony Brazinski. Bassist from the... ...Philippines? I'm not sure but Bernie was his name. Anyway we used to play for the functions at school.

Brown: So you were a dance band?

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DeJohnette: Sometimes a dance band, sometimes just a show. We played, I think there was something, a song called “Tequila”; we used to play the hits.

Brown: [laughs]

DeJohnette: ... So all this time, I hadn't started playing jazz yet, but I had a combo locally around my house. The drummer, [I think] his name was Johnny, he liked to mess around with cars, fixing up his car, and he played drums as a hobby and he left his drums down in my basement. This is during the time when my uncle had the jazz records. So I used to get these jazz records and go down to the basement and play with Max Roach and Clifford Brown and Charlie Parker, Mal Waldron, Jackie McLean, Art Blakey, Miles Davis and Shelly Manne. So, it took me about a week just to get my independence on the drums, it somehow came natural to me.

Brown: So you're just working it out yourself? You didn't have anyone showing you anything?

DeJohnette: No, I got a couple of books, Wilcoxon books but I didn't like the books so I got the 26 rudiments and worked through them. Practiced those while I was watching television. I used to practice on all kinds of surfaces because we used to go to the jam sessions in Chicago you had to play sitting in on people's drums which had different tensions on them. Some guys had their drum heads loose, some had them tighter and I found that some guys couldn't play the drums if they weren't a certain tension so I purposely used to practice on pillows. I used to practice on a table, practice on books, practice on different surfaces so I wouldn't be thrown. My technique would stay steady whatever the tuning was. So eventually I really found that drums came to me naturally.

I started playing jazz piano through a guy in high school named Red Smith. He wanted to go... ..there was one of those talent contests at WG in Chicago and he wanted me to play piano. I think he wanted me to play “Estrelita”, the song by Charlie Parker and he said, "Man, you heard of Charlie Parker, you know?" We played “September South,” something like that. We didn't win but I got a little more serious about playing jazz after that. Then I started getting some books; working with scales and things like that. Then Muhal Richard Abrams lived around in the neighborhood so I got a chance to study with him. Actually, the guy who really helped me with learning how to play chords and learn standards was Pat Patrick, who's the father of Deval Patrick, the governor of

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Massachusetts, right?

Brown: Right.

DeJohnette: And I remember Deval and his sister Rhonda when they were kids. They probably don't remember that but you know Pat used to come up to New York and visit him. Anyway, I'm kinda jumping around.

Brown: If we could go back to Pat, you said he was showing you on the piano...

DeJohnette: Well, I'll bring you up to date with that.

Brown: Okay.

DeJohnette: Because when I started to really flow with jazz, I got kicked out of high school and there was a funny story. I was late for class and we had a canteen and you know I was coming in late for class and the name of the principal of the school was Jim Crow! [laughs]

Brown: [laughs]

DeJohnette: ...And he was the guy standing in the door when I came in saying, "You! DeJohnette! I saw you over at the canteen! Come with me!" And he kicked me out of school. I didn't tell my mother for a few days until they sent a note home and she found out. Now eventually I had to go to a private high school. Central YMCA. I went there and got serious about studying because there were grown ups there who were working and wanted to go back to college and get degrees and they would correct you if you were in the classroom fooling around. They're talking about going back to college and stuff like that. I got it together so a semester there and I went back to public school and graduated. But anyway it was just a funny story about him. So then I started going around to the sessions. I had a group with a quintet and we learned a lot of tunes. We had a trumpet, tenor, bass and drums. A guy named Bobby Miller was on drums and what was his name on bass? I can't remember now. Wayman was on saxophone and John was on the trumpet. I have a photo of that group. We were playing like Thelonious Monk's "Jackie-ing" and I put this band together and we played arrangements. The guys were still kind of learning how to play through changes. We were all kind of learning but it was cohesive,

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so we went down to this jam session at this place called... it was a lounge. I forgot the name of it. They had jam sessions on Wednesday nights. So I came and the house group, Muhal was playing. We came up and we played with our group and we played arrangements and we were amazed that we got these big applauses because, I was tackling some really difficult music. Thelonious Monk's music and arrangements of "Close Your Eyes" from Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. So they were impressed that as young as we were the type of things we were trying to go after like Monk's "Jackie-ing". They were saying, "Oh man you're all trying to play that music?!" They liked our enthusiasm and that we were trying to do that. So another time I was doing a jam session... Archway Lounge was the name of the place!

Brown: Great!

DeJohnette: I was sitting playing some rhythm changes but I didn't know the rhythm changes and this guy named E. Parker McDougal was playing tenor at the time, well known, established tenor player. Finally I got yelled at like, "Okay! Stroll!" That was the word, "stroll" means you have to lay out. So after that, Patrick lived around the corner from my grandma's house. By that time my grandmother had moved out south to 7845 Indiana. That neighborhood at one time was all white and then there was a mass exodus of white folks that went further and further out. They went further north...

Brown: And further out west in Chicago.

DeJohnette: Right, right.

Brown: Now, this is after you graduated from high school you had moved out of your grandmother's house?

DeJohnette: No we were living at my grandmother's.

Brown: Oh, so the whole family moved to this neighborhood?

DeJohnette: Yeah.

Brown: Okay.

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DeJohnette: I didn't move out. When I was going to the high school I forgot to mention my grandmother had moved to 78th and Indiana and bought a house. My cousins were there and my mother and I moved in. Actually my cousin, Dorothy Porter moved to their old place so her mother had a room and I had a room. . . Where did we leave off? . . .

Oh yeah, at the band with Pat Patrick. Pat lived around the corner and he said, "Listen, I'll come over and help you learn changes, you know, 'rhythm changes.'" He said, "Learn standard tunes because that's what all the bebop tunes were written off of, standard changes." I started to do that and then I started getting a pretty good reputation as a pianist around Chicago.

Brown: While you were still in high school?

DeJohnette: Yeah, I was in high school. I played with saxophone players, backed up singers, played solo piano, sang standards. Now, the drums... I got real serious about the drums after my grandmother passed away. She left some money. So what I did was I bought a car, I bought a set of drums and Wurlitzer had come out with a portable electric piano that you could take around and also had a little battery pack and a little self-contained speaker in it. I bought one of those because it enabled me to hustle gigs. I'd go to places and said, "Listen, I could improve your business if you have live music." And of course they'd always say, "Well, I don't have a piano here and I don't have this and this," and I'd say, "Not a problem. Try one weekend, and I've got my piano I'll bring it in, see if it improves your business." So I started hustling work and I started getting work for myself and getting established around Chicago as a decent pianist. So then I bought a set, I went downtown, a famous drum shop. . . Chicago Drum Shop I think it's called. I bought a snare, it was a Gretsch drumset, dark pearl drumset. 20" bass drum, 13" mounted tom and a 16" by 16" floor tom tom. A whole set of K cymbals, K ride, K crash, K hi-hats. No cases, bass drum pedal and I think a chrome snare drum, a metal snare drum.

So, my mother went to work and I would set my drums up in the living room and practice with records. *Seven Steps To Heaven* had just come out. So I had a big speaker, I would play along with the records during the day. I played about 3 hours a day on the drums then I'd take a break and play another three hours on the piano. So I wanted to bring up my drums to the level of my piano playing so that I could work on both instruments. So eventually I started working, getting well known, [with] quartets, quintets, I had my own

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bands. In that period I got the opportunity...

I guess, I'll go back a little bit when I guess I'd left home for a while and I was living on my own and I started working with Sun Ra and his Arkestra at a place called the Wonder Inn. Sun Ra used to rehearse there all the time. At the time the band was John Gilmore, bass player Ronnie Boykins, Marshall Allen, who is still alive. I think he's leading the Arkestra--and who else was in that band? Drummers would come and go, horn players would come and go, but I really enjoyed playing with Sun Ra, he was quite a character...

Brown: [laughs].

DeJohnette: ...And when you work with Sun Ra you never ask how much you got paid, you just go and do the gig and you'd get something [laughs]; nobody ever asked about that. I did other gigs so I was not constantly a full time member of Sun Ra, but I did work with him quite frequently and rehearsed with him.

Brown: How did you get into that band?

DeJohnette: He just needed a drummer and I started playing. I used to sit in at the rehearsals. Because I had my band, I worked at the same tavern and I used to use it to rehearse there. So Sun Ra would rehearse in the afternoons at the club and I lived right nearby, so I'd come by to sit-in and play some of Sun Ra's music.

Brown: What was his repertoire like then?

DeJohnette: Oh, he was doing things like [sings "Take a trip to space, the next stop Mars! Take a trip to space, the next stop Mars!"] We'd make the costumes. We played "Interplanetary Music." All the things they used to do. He had this guy where he made a whole bunch of records called the Sun label, on the Sun label. He just really believed in Sun Ra and made records.

Brown: About what year are we talking about at this point? Had he already released "Heliocentric Worlds" or has he been doing ESP yet? Are you still in high school at this point working with Sun Ra?

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DeJohnette: I think so because my grandmother was down south and I was staying at this house that was a friend of mine's and he got called up to go to [military] service. So I kept his place. There was a room downstairs, in the basement, the place had a kitchen, a nice big room and I'd get phone calls from the people upstairs. It had it's own separate entrance so I had my own place and kept paying for him so the people upstairs were happy! I played with Sun Ra subsequently, I played with him again when I came to New York but we'll get to that as we move up the line.

Brown: And about how long were you working with him at this point?

DeJohnette: It varies. It was on and off for a few years I think. But in between that I was working with people like Eddie Harris and Pat.

Brown: Was Pat Patrick already in Sun Ra's band at this point too?

DeJohnette: Yeah, he was playing on and off with Sun Ra. Pat would play when Sun Ra needed baritone or an alto or something because Pat played all the horns . . . Pat also helped me when I came to New York, but we'll talk about that later . . .

I had a trio and I started working and getting gigs as a drummer. This was maybe the late 50s going into the 60s. I was working with some blues bands and I actually had a gig where I had hired Eddie Harris, he had *Exodus To Jazz* was popular then. I hired Eddie as a special guest for my group and he came and I was playing piano. It was Eddie Harris who'd heard me play drums, so I was getting a pretty decent reputation as a drummer around Chicago. And there was a place, a DJ a disc jockey named McKee Fitcher had a club named McKee Fitcher's who got jazz in his club. It was right next to the Tivoli Theater, they used to do stage shows. And there's another theater called the Regal Theater where you used to could see Betty Carter, Miles Davis, Jimmy Smith, Leon Thomas, Moms Mabley, "Pig Meat" Markham. All the groups, Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers would play at McKee Fitcher's. It was one of those railroad bars, very narrow. It had mirrors and booths and the stage was like this small, you know, had a spinet piano. Anyway, I used to play jam sessions there, and Coltrane used to come and play there. This must have been 60', 61' maybe. I'd go almost every night to hear Coltrane and it was... what can I say? It was the most amazing experience of hearing music. I'd never heard any music like that.

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Brown: That was with the quartet? Elvin, McCoy, and Jimmy? Or Reggie?

DeJohnette: Yeah. Each set they'd keep going higher and higher and higher. It's just awesome the level that it could get to. It got to beyond music, really. It got to some kind of spiritual uplifting feeling, you know? One night Elvin didn't make it back for the last set, so the place was packed. I've told this story quite a few times but it's a nice story. So, McKee was getting a little antsy and looking at his clock, people are waiting for the next set. So he said, "Coltrane! Let Jack DeJohnette play, he's a good drummer, he plays at the jam sessions. It's a little late and people are waiting for the next set so..." And John nodded and without asking, "could I play" or whatever, went up to the bandstand and I followed him up and I subsequently played three tunes with him. And it was through that, playing with John, I mean I had been playing with the records at home so I was prepared and my time was good so I could hold my own. We played and McCoy and Jimmy just played straight on. They didn't give me any funny looks. I guess I felt okay...[laughs].

Brown: [laughs].

DeJohnette: ...I'm doing okay, so, something about Coltrane was I realized how, why Elvin had to play the way he played because John was like a train. He was like a magnet and you felt this pull. So, whatever you could play or throw at John, he was like a sponge he'd soak it up. Playing with John was a really great, physical and spiritual experience and I played three tunes and then Elvin came.

Brown: Do you remember which tunes?

DeJohnette: Oh, I think maybe "Mr. P.C.," "I Want To Talk About You", and something else. I forget what. We were about to play "(My) Favorite Things" but Elvin came back for that. So, anyway I'll revisit John Coltrane later because he appears in my life again.

Brown: Did he say anything to you after? Before Elvin took over?

DeJohnette: He just said "thanks" and Elvin said "Ah! Thanks man!"

Brown: [laughs].

DeJohnette: Yeah, just "thanks man!" and he came up.

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Brown: Did he hear you? Do you know if he was in the audience to hear you?

DeJohnette: He heard me a little bit. He remembered later; we talked about it. "Jack filled in for me," you know.

Anyway, after that I got a reputation playing drums in Chicago. I got the first opportunity to travel with Eddie Harris. He had Harold Jones was his drummer and Harold was going to music school. He had some finals that he had to be around for so I subbed for Harold. Eddie's band was Willie Pickens on piano, I think Roland Faulkner was on guitar, and a bassist from Detroit. I can't remember his name now. Anyway, we went to Kansas City and we played a week there opposite a group, an organ trio, Eddie Shambley. But also that same week Aretha Franklin had just made her first record for Columbia and she was on the bill and she didn't have a band! She came with her and her mother and so when Eddie got there they wanted Eddie, wanted his band to back up Aretha. Well, the guy Eddie... ..well first thing he had never said anything to Eddie about that. It wasn't in the contract, so Eddie says "Yeah, well, okay, pay me some money" and the guy didn't want to pay what Eddie asked for so the guy hired Eddie Shambley to be her back up band. Yeah, that was quite an experience.

Brown: Do you remember the name of the venue?

DeJohnette: Maybe it was The Mardi Gras, but also I played again with Eddie in Philadelphia. The name of the place was The Mardi Gras in Kansas. So when we came back after we did well, and so Eddie said to me, he said "You know, you play good piano, but you know I'd hire you more if you played (drums)," he said, "Eventually you've got to make your decision which one of these instruments is gonna be your main one." 'Cause Eddie play piano, he played trombone, he played all these instruments. He said, "you gotta make yourself known on one." So he said, "But if you make drums your instrument, I think you'll go far on drums."

HOUR 2

Brown: Jack, if we could, I want to try ask you a few more questions before we resume your recollections about Chicago. I wanted to ask you if any members of your household were involved in the church; and did that impact you, and if so, what denomination was

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that?

DeJohnette: Well my grandmother was a Christian Scientist. She went to Christian Sciences. My mother didn't go to church until later. She went to Baptist Church much later on in her life, toward the end of her life. But my grandmother went to Christian Science Church and so as a result, I went also. They had a Sunday school for me, and they had the major service for the adults, which went on simultaneously but in different parts of the church. My grandmother was a spiritual woman in the sense that she chose Christian Science because it was founded by Mary Baker Eddy, had numerous churches around the country, around the world, and also she started something called the—well people carried it on—called Christian Science Monitor... ..which is a great newspaper for telling, really good journalism. The thing that Mary Baker Eddy did was take the Bible and she wrote something called “Science and Health” which was a key to The Scriptures; the Scriptures being chapters of the bible putting a metaphysical or physical or metaphysical-spiritual spin to them. Christian Science got a reputation for saying “You don't believe in going to doctors!” and basically that's not true. My grandmother had a physician. It was teaching people mind over matter and Mary Baker Eddy used to say, it was a quote she said, “Man is not material,” or humans are not... ..I'd change it to say, “Humans are not material they are spiritual, and there was something beyond the flesh.” So people used to have testaments. People would come in and give testaments about some illness they had, and they used the power of the mind and belief that they could heal themselves and some miracles would happen to some of us. I used to be sort of... in the Sunday school go up and sit down and hold the book. The sort of person that when I stood up, everyone stood up, that kind of thing. And I used to read the Science Scriptures of Mary Baker and I haven't done it in a long time and I didn't realize how deep it really was for that. But in terms of now that I look back because I have a spiritual leaning in my outlook to things, I think my grandmother was a very warm and spiritual person so I think I got that influence on me to this day.

Brown: So if we could also look at the historical records, perhaps correct a few things that continually show up in your various biographies. Could you perhaps clarify your experience at the Chicago Conservatory of Music?

DeJohnette: The Chicago Conservatory, I took private lessons there. It has been said that I graduated from there, somehow that got put down in my historical records. That is not the case, I did not graduate from there. I took some private lessons with some good

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teachers there and proceeded on my own with various other people like Muhal Richard Abrams and listening.

Brown: So your studies there were exclusively piano? No theory, no drums?

DeJohnette: No, no drums, nothing else, just piano only.

Brown: Now would you like to... ..if we could pick up the chronology of your experiences now: out of high school, having played with Coltrane, working with Eddie Harris, Eddie now encouraging you to choose, and you chose to be a drummer. Maybe we could talk about some the other local musicians who might have influenced you or inspired you?

DeJohnette: So Chicago is really noted for a lot of great local musicians. Sid Catlett, Ike Day. You had a legendary drummer, Wilbur Campbell, a bass player named Rafael Garrett who was really originally Donald Garrett and later changed to Rafael Garrett. Nicky Hill, a fantastic alto/tenor player and Ira Sullivan who lives in Florida now but who's still very active playing, who played the saxophone and trumpet, and composer. And Joe Segal who was very influential. Joe loves Charlie Parker but he kept jazz alive with something called The Jazz Showcase, which started as I remember, at the Sutherland Hotel in Chicago, on the Southeast side of Chicago and Joe used to have jam sessions there with Nicky Hill. Sometimes Roy Haynes would show up and play. Sometimes Philly Joe Jones would come and play, so I saw a lot of great musicians. I'd see Gene Ammons, Eddie Harris, Herbie (Hancock). Herbie used to live around the corner from me when I lived down south. And of course Von Freeman, Chico's father, who was legendary and who's also one of the NEA recipients. And I used to play with Von at the sessions and back to Joe, Joe's been really influential in keeping jazz going locally and nationally in Chicago. His Jazz Showcase has moved many places. A lot of us have gone to play in Joe's place. It's kept jazz alive in Chicago. So he's done a lot of good stuff; good for jazz. Now Wilbur, let me talk about Wilbur Campbell... there was Wilbur and another drummer. It'll come back to me. He was in and out of jail a lot but he was really, really a great drummer. It'll come to me. But Wilbur! Wilbur played vibes and Wilbur played drums and he composed and I'd over go to his house and he'd sit at the piano and he'd play the piano like he'd play the vibes. But I used a lot from watching Wilbur. Wilbur could swing, they called it "Chicago Swing." Loose, and he had this fluid technique. He had this way of playing, like when he played his "fours," he would... ..it sounded like

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somebody making jambalaya and you'd wonder how he was going to come out of it. That had a big influence on the way I played; this kind of whirling, spiral kind of sound. Wilbur had that way of playing that kind of had an influence on me of playing the space of four bars or eight bars without sounding rudimentary or technical, but there was a lot of technical stuff involved but it just flowed, the way his ideas flowed. You'd just wonder where it was coming from. So Wilbur was very influential, there was another guy named Art McKinney, Arthur McKinney, who played drums and around the time that Tony was playing, and Elvin. Art started playing. Changing the beats around on the ride cymbal, not using the hi-hat all the time, and using it just for different things. He was really technically working on a lot of different things. He played in one of my trios that I had. Somebody else who was in my trio was, hmm, Earth, Wind and Fire...

Brown: Maurice White?

DeJohnette: ...Maurice White, and his brother...

Brown: Verdine?

DeJohnette: Verdine. They used to... ..Maurice was pulling out all the sessions. He used to do a lot of the Chess sessions. So he used to do a lot of stuff. He came from the South, I think from Memphis or... ..was he from Memphis? One of the cities down South, I forgot where it was. He came up and he used to play really good jazz drums and funk drums and eventually worked with Ramsey, but he was in one of my trios.

Brown: Can we talk about what he was like back when he was that young? Was he already spiritually...

DeJohnette: Maurice was just a natural; just work came to him all the time. He was just in demand, working a lot. And the next time I saw him he was playing with Ramsey and came down front playing his kalimba! He came to visit me, Lydia and I, my wife and I. We lived in New York on 82nd Street and he came through and he said, "I'm on my way to California." Charles Stepney was their producer. Charles Stepney was another Chicago musician who was a great pianist, composer, and arranger, and was a kind of father figure, guiding light for what came to be Earth, Wind and Fire and Maurice was telling me, "You know, I'm going out. I've got this band and we're going out to California!" and the rest is history. Earth, Wind and Fire. So a lot people say, "You know, Maurice used to

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play drums in my trio!" [laughs]. When I played piano. He played good too, he's great. Now, another drummer that was really great was... He played drums with me and another bass player named Scotty Holt, was McCall. Steve McCall.

Brown: Left-handed.

DeJohnette: Yeah. Steve used to play with me when I played piano in Chicago also. Steve and Scotty Holt, the bassist who taught me a lot about learning the words to the songs I was playing, get the spiritual thing out of it. He later came to New York, which we'll talk about later when I come to New York. But Scotty Holt, who else? A drummer named Marshall Thompson who played drums and they called him "The Maestro." He was a tap dancer at first. His wife is Irma Thompson. She played piano, jazz piano. Very good. They were great influences and great mentors to me in Chicago. Who else? There was a tenor player named Tommy "Mad Man" Jones that I used to play piano with, and he was a good saxophone player. He played commercial saxophone; really could play. There's a bassist, writer, composer, you may have heard of him, he play played piano, his name was Earnest... he lives in Pittsburgh. He played bass with Erroll Garner... Earnest McCarty!

Brown: Say it again?

DeJohnette: Ernest McCarty, yeah. He could play classical piano up a storm, played great bass, he was intellectual, but warm. He's written plays and stuff like that. Look him up, Ernest McCarty.

Brown: Is he still alive?

DeJohnette: He's still alive, yeah.

Brown: And he's in Pittsburgh?

DeJohnette: I think so. He must have a website, I think. But anyway, Ernest was great, there. Daddy O' Daylie. You ever hear of Daddy O'?

Brown: Yeah, sure.

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DeJohnette: Sid McCoy. He had a show called... ..he was one of the great jazz DJs in Chicago, called, "The Real McCoy" and he had his theme song was, "The Real McCoy" by Frank Sinatra and then he'd come on. He had this smooth voice and he'd say, "Hey, hey, Old Bean, and you too baby! It's the Real McCoy!" He used to come and hear me and Daddy O' used to come and hear me, because I think Daddy O' discovered Ramsey...

Brown: That's correct.

DeJohnette: So I had this trio with Ernest McCarty and a drummer name Butch McCass and we played at this supper club out on 75th and I was trying to see... Sid and Daddy O' came around to hear me play, and I was trying to see if I could get a record deal out of them, and nothing came of it so I eventually left and came to New York. I had exhausted everything in Chicago that I had, but let us go back.

Brown: So, the chronology is, you're already out of high school, you're working professionally and then if you could talk about your relationship with Wilson Jr. College?

DeJohnette: Okay, well then... Wilson Jr. College was where I went. It's a city college because it was affordable and I was majoring in music there, music education.

Brown: What inspired you to go back to school?

DeJohnette: Well, I wanted to try, I thought I was going to be a music educator. So when I went there I met Roscoe Mitchell and James Willis, who had been in high school with me. He was playing bass. Joseph Jarman was around, well I don't know if he was there, but through Roscoe I met Joseph Jarman. Henry Threadgill was around. Muhal was around and I'd go to Muhal who gave me advice about music, about life and about helping me get over my fear of coming to New York, going to New York. I also met my first wife Deirdre Davenport at Wilson Jr. College, and she played the piano, too. She was influential and inspired me to pursue my music. So, we used to go and hear a lot of music together. But Joseph and Roscoe and Muhal. I introduced Muhal to Roscoe and Malachi [Favors]. Muhal did a lot of gigs around Chicago, and I must talk about another great musician, composer, pianist was Andrew Hill, because Andrew was also prominent in Chicago. Herbie as we know was also from Chicago, and Tony Williams actually was born in Chicago and then moved to Boston. So, a lot of great musicians came out of Chicago.

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Brown: But it seems like at this time when you were there in the 50's you got Ramsey Lewis, you got Ahmad, you got Herbie, you mentioned Andrew. There's almost a concentration of the musicians who would go on to shape jazz in the 60's.

DeJohnette: Yeah, there was another pianist named John Young. Blues guitarists. There was another drummer named Gerald, originally his name was Gerald... but his name was changed to Asia Rama. Claudine Myers. They used to be Gene Ammons' rhythm section. She used to play organ for Gene Ammons. Willie Pickens again was playing with, actually... Willie played with Eddie but Willie didn't travel, he wanted to stay home and raise his kids. After that Willie played with Elvin for a while in his traveling band, The Jazz Machine.

Roscoe and I spent a lot of time playing together. We'd go to school, after school I'd go to his house or he'd come to my house and just the two of us would play. Me on piano or drums and we'd just improvise. It was pretty amazing the stuff we played and. . .

Brown: Is there any documentation, you guys run any tapes?

DeJohnette: No, I mean sometimes Muhal would come and play and we would just improvise. But Muhal decided he wanted to... there were these alternative musicians around and I was doing all kinds of different gigs but we didn't have a place where... there was Muhal and Roscoe and myself. Everybody had different new ideas about composing and how to perform and we didn't have an outlet for that, so Muhal decided to get a charter to create the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians of Chicago.

Brown: And when you say charter is that a city charter or a state charter?

DeJohnette: Maybe it was a state charter. I'm not sure whether it was city or state. After that on 39th street he found a building where we could have a home, a rehearsal. A big, nice space, you could have an orchestra, or we could... ..artists like ourselves could present our music in a setting. I mean, before that... Joseph Jarman... we used to put on concerts with Roscoe and Joseph and maybe Willis or Malachi and the houses of Chicago had these lofts, not lofts...

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Brown: Attics?

DeJohnette: Attics. So we used to give concerts and charged something for them. Joseph claims I broke up his marriage because we were doing these concerts. Playing free... what was called free music then. But that's when we started playing music and trying to create atmosphere for the music. But Muhal was very influential, still is, I mean, the AACM still goes on. Muhal lives in New York but it's carried on by... ..I forgot who is running it now but their orchestra is still happening and there are some groups that come out of that. I think Muhal created another alternative and a group of musicians out of which later came Lester Bowie and Famoudou Don Moye and Joseph and Malachi.

Brown: Art Ensemble of Chicago. Now before Don Moye, Famoudou, got into the group, Robert Crowder, the drummer...

DeJohnette: Yeah...

Brown: ...you haven't mentioned him, did you know Bob Crowder?

DeJohnette: No. I don't remember hearing Robert with the group. When I heard it I was already in New York, and they had already established themselves with putting paint on their faces and everything.

Brown: Well did you guys meet? Did you talk? Was it just always musical?

DeJohnette: No, because Lester came in afterwards. I had gone to New York.

Brown: OK.

DeJohnette: The St. Louis crowd came in.

Brown: From BAG, Black Artists Group? Lester, Julius Hemphill...

DeJohnette: Yeah, Baikida Carroll and also although he wasn't a part of it, David Sanborn was from St. Louis also. Julius was a genius but anyway we'll talk about that later, too.

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Brown: So, you were still there, let's say, 1965, 1964. So Roscoe... ..Delmark records, he's already starting to record. That's where I heard Robert Crowder and Roscoe Mitchell's quartet.

DeJohnette: Okay.

Brown: Some of those early recordings.

DeJohnette: Oh, okay.

Brown: And then Air with Threadgill, Steve McCall and Fred Hopkins.

DeJohnette: Yeah, that was a great group.

Brown: So these were already in formation at this time before you left Chicago or not yet?

DeJohnette: No, they hadn't formed. They formed once I got to New York and then they came to New York.

Brown: That's when they...

DeJohnette: That's when they took off. They weren't there, Art Ensemble wasn't there when I was there. It came after I left.

Brown: What did you say about how Joseph Jarman's wife blamed you for breaking up their marriage?

DeJohnette: Well, Joseph blames me! His wife got on his case about me saying, "Can we use your place?"

Brown: So how long did that last? Until you got the space, until Muhal got the space?

DeJohnette: Yeah, different people [laughs] yeah that's funny... Where do you want to go next?

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Brown: Well, the chronology... Most of the biographies say you left Wilson college, so you didn't finish?

DeJohnette: No.

Brown: Do you remember how long you actually attended?

DeJohnette: I think I stayed there maybe a semester.

Brown: Just a semester?

DeJohnette: Because then I decided I'm just going to go sink or swim with music. Being a full time musician.

Brown: And so we'll try to place this chronology at 64, 65, but definitely before 66,

DeJohnette: Oh yeah definitely before that. I came to New York, I left, told my wife, Deirdre "I'm just going up..." I took my drums. I took 28 bucks. Took this set of drums with no cases. Somehow I managed to get them underneath a Greyhound bus and took it and went to New York! Now it was Muhal who said... I said, "What do you think about me going to New York?" and he said, "Ah well, you know Jack, New York is not that bad." He said, "It's a little faster than Chicago but it's just the same. It's got the same stuff but just more of it." And so I said, "Okay." So I went up to go for a weekend and I was planning on coming back. but I had guys that told me when you come New York go stay at the Sloan House Y on 34th street. It's opposite now what is now the city center or something, opposite of that. And I stayed in the Sloan House YMCA and it was cheap and it was reasonable. I think it was 2, 3, 4 dollars a night. It had a suite, bath but you had your own private room and bed. So I came up with my drums. The first place I went was up to Minton's, and Freddie Hubbard was playing. I think Freddie was playing with Harold Mabern, who I'd have to say was also from the south side of Chicago and played with another fine drummer named...he had a band called The MJT+3, The Modern Jazz Trio +3, you'd recognize his name. He was known for really swinging and they had a hit called "Sleepy," it was a local hit in Chicago. Frank Strozier played in the band and who was the bass player? Anyway, Harold Mabern was on the piano and I think it was Al Foster on the drums, I think Al was playing drums. So I asked if I could sit in on drums. And Freddie I'd met in Chicago when he came through sometime with Art Blakey. I

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jammed with him and Reggie Workman so we weren't like strangers. So, Freddie let me sit it and he called "Just One Of Those Things," [counts off a very fast tempo and sings the melody]. Well, you know I'd done my homework because I used to play with Max Roach records, and Max used to play the fastest tempos playing with Charlie Parker and Dizzy. So, I knew how to play those fast tempos and it was so fast that... Larry Ridley was playing bass and he was playing half-time through the whole thing. He just played half-time through the whole thing. I remember that, and then Freddie brought the tempo down [snaps fingers in medium tempo] like that. But I also went to Birdland because I was trying to pack everything I could into this weekend. I went to Birdland and Roy Brooks was playing drums, I forgot who was playing bass. Earl Grey, trombone player and the saxophone player who played with Basie's band. It was a tenor player.

Brown: Frank Foster?

DeJohnette: No, the other guy.

Brown: Herschel Evans? Frank Wess?

DeJohnette: You'll get it, and Earl Grey. Did Earl Grey play trombone? Because they were kind of a team. Al somebody... anyway, so I played piano. I sat in on piano, played "Well You Needn't."

Brown: This is at Birdland.

DeJohnette: Yeah, Birdland. I first played... sat in on drums, and then I sat in on piano. And I remember Tony Williams was in the house then.

Brown: And he was already with Miles at this time.

DeJohnette: He was with Miles then. I heard that Miles Davis Quintet when George Coleman was in the group. They came through Chicago when *Seven Steps To Heaven* came out. I remember, because they all had jackets with their names on them. Miles had these gray jackets they all had to wear with their names on them.

Brown: Really? Miles had his guys wear uniforms?

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DeJohnette: Because Miles was in his French Italian tailored suits and they were wearing... .. I don't think that lasted too long. Anyway, Birdland. I caught Birdland before it closed. I think it closed maybe the end of the year or the next year. I can't remember. But I go back up to Minton's and in the house happened to be the organist John Patton and John said to me, "Man, Have you got a set of drums?" and I said, "Yeah" and he said, "You got a set of drums man, you got a gig." I said "Oh really?" I got hired on the spot thanks to John Patton so I called my wife at the time, Deirdre, I said, "Well, guess what..." and then I made the decision, "OK, drums, this is not an accident, drums are what I'm gonna make my main instrument." Because from my experience as a pianist and playing so many... knowing what different drummers do for a soloist, I think I can make a stronger contribution as a drummer, and it also made me a good listener. Listening to the whole ensemble, you know? I was really quick. So I decided I was going to make drums my thing so I started... this brings us up to Pat Patrick, because Pat lived in the lower East Side and also there was also... a club called Slug's in the far East. I found a place, well, Pat lived on 4th street between avenue A and B. . . 3rd or 4th street, and I asked Pat, "Listen man, I got a gig now. Can I stay with you?" Or Pat actually offered me to stay at his place for a week or two, until I could save up some money to get an apartment for myself.

Brown: How long was the engagement with Patton?

DeJohnette: It was on and off. We worked at a club called Galaxy Lounge on Long Island or Queens or something like that. I remember we got to the gigs, we carried this drum set. I had no cases for it. Him and I together on a subway, going up and down the stairs with this drum set. Trying to get cabs, with a drum set. You know they'd see you and keep going.

Brown: But you had the big yellow cabs back then and they still wouldn't stop for you?

DeJohnette: Eventually you'd get them, but it wasn't easy. But anyway I had a gig and Pat let me stay at his place and after a couple of weeks I had enough money for security, and rent was under a hundred dollars a month then. They had refurbished these buildings so I had kind of a one-room apartment with a small kitchen and a bathroom.

Brown: Were you still Lower East Side?

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DeJohnette: Yeah, between Avenue A and B. Actually Pharaoh Sanders moved in up over me. I started working and then going around to sessions and sitting in and found New York. . . I really liked New York! Here I was in Mecca; this was the Mecca for the arts and for musicians. A lot of musicians like Freddie had moved to Brooklyn because Brooklyn was much cheaper. You could take a subway and get back and get into the city really quick. So eventually there was Slug's and there was... . . .I got to know various musicians in New York. The first musician that really I got tight with was John Hicks. Not John Hicks, sorry. Charles Tolliver. So Charles and I would play sessions together, go to the Blue Cornet and do sessions. I used to sit in with Charles Davis who was playing baritone at the time, who now plays mostly tenor but there was another bassist named Herbie Lewis who lives in California now, but Herbie's originally from California but he...

Brown: Herbie passed.

DeJohnette: Herbie did? Oh, when?

Brown: It was a while ago.

DeJohnette: Okay.

Brown: But go ahead, I worked with him. That's why I know.

DeJohnette: Yeah, Herbie was great man, great bass player too. Herbie had a loft, so a lot of musicians used to go over there play in the lofts all day and all night. Some guys would fall asleep as music would still be going. So it was a very fertile period for the music then. Cecil McBee was in there, and around Slug's I got to meet people like Hank Mobley, Kenny Dorham, and played with all these people I'd heard and played with on records. Clifford Jordan, I saw Max and Art Blakey and Coltrane. So Tolliver said, "Listen man, you know, I'm gonna tell Jackie about you. You gonna get a call from Jackie," and I said "Ah, man..." and then Bobby Hutcherson was in the area and I got to be friends with Bobby. And Bobby, Tolliver and Larry Ridley, and I think Cecil McBee. We got Cecil into the band but Jackie called me and said "Yeah, Charles Tolliver told me about you. I want you to play in the band." Tolliver was composing a lot of music then so we started to have rehearsals. And I started to work with Jackie and we went to Pittsburgh, did some gigs. We played at the Left Bank Jazz Society which was Gary

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Bartz' father's club in Baltimore... we played Slug's and subsequently actually my first record date was with Jackie but that record, a couple of records didn't come out until after I was with Charles Lloyd. So my first record date was with Jackie. I guess we did one with... we recorded with Bobby Hutcherson and I'm not sure what we did.

Brown: I have your discography right here and...

DeJohnette: There was "Jackknife" and there was another one, two records with him. One with Larry Willis and...

Brown: Yes, right. The other session with Bobby.

DeJohnette: Bobby Hutcherson was on that session?

Brown: Yeah, so the very first session, "Inglewood," probably at Van Gelder Studios, July 1965, Charles, Jackie, Bobby, Larry and yourself. You recorded two tracks "Climax" and "On The Nile" and then the "Jackknife" session. That was in September 1965. That one included "Soft Blue," another take of "Climax," and then "Jackknife" and "Blue Fable." The first session was not issued. The second session, the one you just mentioned, was the first.

DeJohnette: First session didn't get issued?

Brown: According to the... ..it probably got issued later but wasn't issued at that time, but those are alternate takes, but it's showing here that the *Jackknife* album has those same titles but not with Bobby.

DeJohnette: Yeah, OK. I would like to hear that.

Brown: Actually I wonder if they were released later, because I know that Blue Note released a bunch of alternate takes from those sessions.

DeJohnette: Yeah, I'd like to check into that. So, I played with Jackie for a while and then I free-lanced a bit around New York. I played some with Sun Ra. I played with Betty Carter, John Hicks and Cecil McBee. I'd have to say about John Hicks and Don Pullen because both of those guys, I think John came from Milwaukee or St. Louis...

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Brown: Don Pullen... For some reason I'm thinking Memphis but we'll go back and check the record.

DeJohnette: But Don came from St. Louis, because Don stayed at my house for a week, and he was on his way to New York to play with Grant Green... ..so both of those guys... ..Don Pullen was a friend of a bass player named Lenny... ..something or other, and he played cello too. Good bass player. He lived in Chicago, he's from Omaha. Don came through Chicago and this is before he started playing free and he stayed at my house on his way to New York. I'll tell you a funny story about the next time I heard Don but we'll get to that. So back to New York. I'm free-lancing, playing with Betty Carter and that was really one of the highlights. Played with Betty until Charles formed a band, Charles Lloyd. Charles at the time, he had Gabor Zabo in the band. I think Pete La Roca was playing with him at some point and then Charles had Reggie Workman and Gabor. Then Gabor started to leave and go for his, to form his own band. Reggie was in the band and I talked to Charles about forming a new band. He asked me about a piano player. I'd heard Keith Jarrett with Art Blakey and he at that time had a guy named Chuck was on saxophone and trumpet was a guy from Rochester. Had some good hits, you'd know his name. Anyway, Keith asked...

Brown: Chuck Mangione and his brother Gap?

DeJohnette: Chuck Mangione! Chuck Mangione was playing trumpet. Frank Mitchell was playing tenor saxophone and Keith was playing piano on a song called "Buttercorn Lady." Charles asked me about a pianist, and Charles had heard Keith in Boston and so we both said "Oh! Keith, let's get Keith!" Then Reggie didn't work out so I'd been playing with Cecil so I suggested Cecil McBee, and then the Charles Lloyd Quartet was formed. So I was still doing some freelancing around New York. I got a chance to play with McCoy and Joe Henderson, Ron Carter. What was the bassist's name? He played with Sonny Rollins...

Brown: Bob Cranshaw?

DeJohnette: Not Bob, Bob still plays though... ..it'll come to me. Anyway.

Brown: It wasn't Buster?

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DeJohnette: No. It'll come.

Anyway, we started doing Charles with the quartet, we started playing Slug's and we started playing The Left Bank Jazz Society. Charles had a manager named George Avakian who had done some work with Sonny and Miles. George worked at Columbia Records and so George got Charles a contract... ..Well, Charles had been working with Chico Hamilton and he'd done "Forest Flower" with Gabor and so George got Charles a contract with Atlantic Records. So, subsequently we went in and did *Dreamweaver*, and of course at this point in time The Beatles had come around. The British Invasion. Rock had come on the scene, Hendrix. It was a real interesting, what, '68? I think around...

Brown: We're in '66 at this point if you're just forming Charles Lloyd...

DeJohnette: Well yeah, he came later. That was my first band that toured internationally. We started touring Europe, and George was getting gigs on the fly as we were going over there and getting a lot of press. He knew how to bill the band. We were constantly going to Europe and then coming back, then going out to the West coast. That group subsequently got invited in '67... ..we got invited to play in Russia and we got invited there, no fee, no money, but George saw this as great exposure, for the band to get international exposure. For a jazz group to play in Estonia, playing the Estonia Jazz Festival and it worked! He was on the phone getting press. Of course there was trouble. They didn't want us to play the festival. They'd say "Oh, you'll play today" and then it wouldn't happen, "You're going to play the next day!" We were constantly followed by the KGB, going into our clothes, into the room, checking everything and not leaving stuff the way they... they wanted it known that we were being watched. So we eventually got the chance to play and after we played, they took our instruments off because the audience wouldn't stop applauding for at least ten minutes or so. That was a big thing; they would keep telling them "Stop! You're acting like children!" They took our instruments off but the audience kept on. It was quite a thing, because the only jazz they got a chance to listen to was Radio Free Jazz, Willis Conover, Voice Of America. After that we went to Moscow, and we actually wound up staying at the home of this dissident writer, Yuri somebody. Everyday was dull, colors weren't there. People couldn't get basic things, during the Communist part of Russia you couldn't get... stores didn't have much in them and all the colors were gray, and you couldn't... ..they told us to bring toilet paper, things like that. We stayed at this dissident's house and one night no sooner had

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we got there they had to hide us. There was a knock on the door and they were asking "Was anybody there?" and they said "No no, there's nobody there," and we don't know what happened to this guy after we left, but George capitalized on it and we got a lot of press from that. . . When we came back, the *Dreamweaver* album apparently sold over a million copies, which for that time was really good. The Charles Lloyd Quartet was bridging that crossover stuff that was happening, and then we played gigs opposite Miles and occasionally Cecil or I would fill in with Miles' band. If Tony couldn't make it I would get called and I would play with Miles and replace Tony for gigs and Cecil McBee would replace Ron... Occasionally in between that I'd do sideman gigs, I'd do recordings, do some gigs with Herbie and McCoy. Did some trio gigs with McCoy. I guess I did some gigs with... this was later with Stan Getz and Bill Evans. But The Charles Lloyd Quartet became a great band that I wanted to stay with.

In that period, I got called, I think it might have been 66', to play the Plugged Nickel with Coltrane, and so I went back to Chicago with my first wife, Deirdre. We drove back to Chicago and I played with Coltrane. By then the band was Pharaoh Sanders, Alice on piano, Jimmy on bass and another drummer Rashied Ali. That was amazing, that week. We'd probably run out of tape before we'd finish.

HOOR 3

Brown: So we left off talking about your trip in 1966 back to Chicago to perform with John Coltrane and Alice and Pharaoh...

DeJohnette: Yeah. At the time we played the Plugged Nickel... which was in the old town of Chicago. North Side of Chicago and the place was packed. The music that John was playing then... ..he was playing "My Favorite Things," and he was playing other compositions like "Leo" and what else... One of the things about it was... I remember Jimmy Garrison was playing and he'd found a way to play. He said he was kind of frustrated. Quitting every night and John said to him "Look man, stay! Find something, find something in the music. I want you to stay." Jimmy had found something that cut through all of the polyphonic voices, collective playing that was going on. Then two drummers and Alice and the music kind of just flowed a little bit and Pharaoh... Pharaoh was playing this other kind of way. Underwater kind of playing which he was doing that by the way because he sounded so much like John that out of respect he didn't want to be

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doing that. So he found this; he went this other way. But John and he spent a lot of time going around looking at mouthpieces and reeds and all that stuff. But at any rate, back to the music. The music was really powerful and maybe the songs didn't sound like they were together but John would play these long sets and some nights, like I said, Roscoe Mitchell came by and sat in with us, with the band. So John... it was about the sound. There was something about the sound he liked; it wasn't one specific thing. So it was "about the sound." I remember that gig was so physically demanding that I would go home and sleep. We did two sets, but man I was wiped. That was the most physically demanding... musically and physically gig I had. One, I was playing with another drummer, and Rashied, he had his stuff together. Rashied had this multidirectional way of playing and he played mainly a lot with his wrist but it was a lot of the way... how he mixed up the rudiments, and went from his hi hat and the cymbals and the kit. It took a lot of stamina and endurance to play that way and he had worked himself, built up his stamina to just hang in there. I hadn't done that so I was just sort of going for broke, so instead of learning how to pace myself I was just all out. And John wanted that kind of all out and Rashied's kind of thing from the two drums. There were times when I'd just have to stop playing and Rashied had it, he was keeping the motion going. I learned a lot from just sitting next to him and listening to him. Seeing how his energy that he was putting out was really intense but it was under control; when the music needed more intensity he gave that but it wasn't forced. It was just flowing out of him. You know and Rashied definitely could swing. He said he used to play lots of [sings standard swing ride cymbal pattern] when he was coming up but when he came to New York people like Andrew Cyrille and...

Brown: Sunny Murray?

DeJohnette: ...Sunny, and what's the other one...

Brown: Milford Graves?

DeJohnette: ...were looking at another concept of playing the drums; expressing music creativity on the drum set and Rashied... there were other people around who played; horn players and piano players that were doing that. But anyway... I used to take John and Alice and drop them off at the hotel and Alice used to say to John. She would wake up in the morning and John would be sitting on the edge of the bed with his flute in his hand and she'd say to him, "Are you alright?" and he'd say "Yeah, I'm alright. I'm still

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hearing the music." And he said to me because he wanted me to stay with the band. I was still with Charles Lloyd. We were off at that period so I took the gig in between and he said, "I know it sounds rough and raw, " he said, "But it's something about the sound I'm hearing." It was more about sound than individuals. It was about everybody's personality: Pharaoh, Alice, me, Rashied. It was about the sound of all of that and what John would play within that sound. He got to places where he would stop and start beating his chest and making sounds with his voice. People would ask him why. Some people thought he was going crazy and he said, "Well, the sounds I'm hearing are not on the horn!" So he was, they were coming out with the vocals and the vocal choruses. In some ways you could see how John had to leave because he had accomplished so much in a short span of time and he just packed so much into it. Of course, there was a lot more to his music on a spiritual level and also on a, shall we say, geometric level. Because... John read a lot of books. A lot of books on science, geometry, numbers, figures, things like that and I'll show you a book that is a diagram of stuff that he had written. It's in a Yusef Lateef book with scales and things to help a player break out of clichéd patterns. But he shows this and he still can't figure out what it is. But it's got chord sequences in it; maybe related to "Giant Steps" and some other things. Anyway, but that was really a...playing with John in this circumstance every night was really awesome. What I learned from that... I'm still learning from that and from everybody that was there. From Alice who I later played with and Ravi and the rest of the family. That was really a high, high point.

Brown: Was that just a one week gig?

DeJohnette: Yeah, just the one week.

Brown: One week, and did anybody else talk to you in so far as the music or concepts, suggestions, concepts, anything?

DeJohnette: No, we'd just get up and play.

Brown: So no rehearsal, he hired you for the gig...

DeJohnette: Oh no!

Brown: You just went and...

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DeJohnette: Just played.

Brown: How about any discussion or dialogue between you and Rashied about?

DeJohnette: Not really, we just hit it. Because Rashied knew the book and just created the motion. He'd create this multi-direction motion, which was fantastic. Andrew Cyrille knows how to do that too, does that well. I heard him with Cecil Taylor and it's a kind of playing; it's not for everybody. You have to... ..I could sit there and appreciate it. If you don't come at that music with an attitude about what music is and just come with an open... ..you start to hear the validity of it.

Brown: One of the things I'm trying to explore as a drummer is looking at the advent of this type of multi-directional approach to drumming. Of course we mentioned some of the pioneers, Andrew Cyrille, Rashied Ali, Milford Graves. When was the first time you recall hearing somebody with that concept to drumming whereas they're not keeping pulse so much, they're not involved more in time but in texture, sound and sonorities? One of the first documentations that I could find was again Cecil Taylor but with Sunny Murray and Jimmy Lyons at Montmartre in 1962. Did you hear anything before that coming out of Chicago? Was Sun Ra playing, were you playing that kind of texture with Sun Ra?

DeJohnette: Yeah, we did, I was doing that with Roscoe. Roscoe and I would just do that every day... multi-textural, a language. It was like a language. We were speaking with each other.

Brown: Had you heard others doing it and you were, you know reinterpreted it as far as your own conception?

DeJohnette: We'd listened to some of the records, and yeah, when Ornette came out, that was a big jolt to doing what we were, to freeing a person up. Although Ornette's was really very structured but it sounded freer than people gave it credit for...

Brown: Than it actually was because, you know. Me, personally I think it's a misnomer when you say "Free Jazz." All the horns and the basses are playing free with Eric and all of them but Blackwell and Higgins are playing time, pretty much all the way through.

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DeJohnette: Oh yeah.

Brown: So the rhythm hadn't freed up is what I'm trying to say. This is 1960, that's when "Free Jazz" [came out], so I'm just wondering. When do the drummers begin to free up the time?

DeJohnette: Well it happened in Chicago but it just wasn't as documented. I mean, some of the Delmark stuff. Yeah, playing with Muhal, playing with Roscoe, playing with Joseph, I was already doing that in Chicago. And Sun Ra, some of that was happening then. In New York it was more championed by Cecil Taylor and Rashied and Milford. Then those recordings: Ran Blake, Giuseppe Logan, Albert and Don Ayler.

Brown: Right, that would have been Sunny playing with them. How about Dennis Charles? Because he played with Cecil in the late 50's but I can't recall whether or not he was playing...

DeJohnette: You know Dennis, I haven't listened to enough of Dennis to... what I did hear was really great but I'd like if I had the time to go back and listen to some of his work. The other drummer who knocked me out... he might have come later was Paul Motian; in terms of his way of freeing up the rhythm. I mean he could play time really well but you hear in a lot more of his work especially like with Keith and his quartet; you hear Paul kind of has a way of just hitting the drums and playing certain ways. Certain sounds that were just intuitively the right thing to play for the music. The way he played with Bill and then when he played with Keith. Keith offered him with Dewey and Charlie, that to me... I like the way Paul's concept of time and space, and color in the music. Now we'll go back to Milford and I'll bring us back to Don Pullen. So in New York around this time in the mid-60's Billy Taylor who was a real strong advocate for jazz, got these grants for "Jazz Mobile" which for those who don't know is the idea of bringing jazz up in Harlem. Bringing jazz to the people to further establish jazz as America's treasured music and they used to bring flatbed trucks up into Harlem and they'd have concerts up there. I used to go hear Randy Weston play there. And this one night I heard at the time his name was... before he changed his name... anyway, he became Idris Muhammad.

Brown: Oh... right, right!

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DeJohnette: Idris! But his real...

Brown: It escapes me too because we just talked about him with Ahmad.

DeJohnette: But anyway he was playing some straight ahead thing. So next: Don Pullen, Walter Booker on bass and Milford on drums. So everybody's sitting there and I'm sitting there. Don's at the piano tuning up and Booker's tuning up and Milford's just sitting there. They're looking all very reserved. Nobody counts off tempo. All of the sudden Don goes... and Milford has mallets and is like, this... Pullen is elbowing the piano and mallet fluff is flying off of the mallets, and I'm like this...

Brown: [Laughs].

DeJohnette: "Damn!" I mean intense. Intense! I wish I had a recorder to record it. It was amazing. I mean Don was like a totally broken, free,... and Milford! I've never heard anything like that my life. I mean it was totally different and intense! I mean Milford. If you heard Milford play... Milford now is doing this scientific thing with heartbeats and rhythms and stuff. He's in some deep stuff. But Milford was like something else. In a class all by himself with what he did. But that... left a deep, really good impression about that music. I always... there was all these terms: Avante Garde and Free Jazz and all these labels and critics were creating these labels. I always liked music. No matter what it was if it had something that spoke to me I liked it. I never saw music in terms of these compartmentalized concepts. So after that, living down in the village there was a lot of music; so a lot of times I had a chance to play at Slug's and I played a gig with Henry... the bass player, Henry...

Brown: Grimes!

DeJohnette: Right! Yeah! Did a week at Slug's with Henry Grimes, Joe Henderson and McCoy and myself. Actually I had a recording of that. It was actually recorded by a guy named Orville O'Brian who actually was at the time this black entrepreneur. He went around recording with a two-track machine; making live records. Some of them came out on Blue Note like *Night of The Cookers* with Freddie and Lee Morgan. I was there that night that they did that. I was in the house when they did that, it was really great. Pete La Roca, Harold Mabern. So the master two-track disappeared but there's a copy that I have and it's been transferred to a CD. There was lots of great music around Slug's in the "Far

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East" they used to call it. There used to be fights in there periodically, but they had sawdust on the floor and kegs of beer and wine...

Brown: Was that... to create some ambience? The sawdust on the floor?

DeJohnette: Yeah! And they had people playing there: Yusef Lateef, Roy Brooks, Cecil McBee and I forgot the piano player from Detroit... who else played there? Freddie played there with Clifford Jarvis. Another great drummer Clifford Jarvis eventually wound up playing with Sun Ra... and do you know? I'd like to find being the historian. There is a video, a snapshot of a video with Sun Ra in Italy somewhere with Don Cherry, Lester Bowie, John Gilmore, Clifford Jarvis and Philly Joe Jones.

Brown: Philly Joe Jones. Right. Yeah, Lester talked about that gig.

DeJohnette: And it's amazing. Philly Joe just starts playing some stuff and he's waiting for someone to come in and Don starts to play a little bit and there's a dialogue going on and Clifford's just sitting there. John Gilmore loved to play drums, too, so you'd see sometimes John would be playing drums.

Brown: He'd play that big African drum, too, I know that.

DeJohnette: Yeah but he also liked the drumset too. But I'd love to see the whole performance of that. I saw it because I was doing a thing on drum legends. Roy Haynes and me and Louis Bellson were talking about all the different great drummers... and there was Philly Joe Jones in a Sun Ra costume! Being in Italy you know... And Sun Ra's just sitting there just to see what happens. New York was... Slug's was a great place to hang out. I used to see Junior Cook and Blue Mitchell with Chick Corea and Gene... they were part of Horace's band.

Brown: Not Gene Perla?

DeJohnette: No, black bass player...

Brown: Yeah...

DeJohnette: He had a beard. And Al Foster on drums. They had a tune out called "Funji

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Mama," did you ever hear it? It was kind of calypso...

Brown: I think I have it.

DeJohnette: [sings the melody]

Brown: Yeah, Blue Note. I got that. Right.

DeJohnette: And Al played that calypso really cool...

Brown: Oh yeah.

DeJohnette: And Chick was on that... who else played there... I have to talk about the legendary Five Spot! This was in Greenwich Village. The Five Spot was an amazing club in that musicians like Monk, Roy Haynes, Mingus... ..could go in there and play for a month or two months at a time! This was great. We don't have anything like this now but this was a great place to develop a band and take it out on the road or go and record. It was one of the better... that was the best "R & D" club for jazz I think in New York and I was fortunate enough to go down there and see Monk sometimes. See Roy Haynes with Wayne Shorter and a pianist named Albert Dailey who was a phenomenal pianist. And Cecil McBee. It was a nice place to hang out. I got a chance to play at a place down the street from there. A place called The Dom. It was downstairs and the place upstairs used to be called The Balloon Farm which was later called The Electric Circus which was a famous rock spot which comes later but... The Balloon Farm... just to go off on a side note... The Balloon Farm was a dance ballroom, predated The Fillmore in a way. I was up there one night and this band comes in unannounced. Nobody knows who they are and they kind of warm it up; play a little jazz... and then all of the sudden I hear [sings "Sing A Simple Song!"] and it was Sly and they were trying out just going around places; just playing their music unannounced. See what kind of reaction the crowd would give, "Who is that!?" [hums a Sly Stone groove] and so I heard this music before it came out on the record by accident. Sly and The Family Stone...

Brown: Funky.

DeJohnette: But anyway this club downstairs called The Dom. Tony Scott used to play clarinet and it was his gig. I used to play there sometimes and people would sit in. So, a

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couple times I got a chance to play with a couple of really great jazz legends like Arvell Shaw... with Pop's. Charlie Shavers; which was fantastic. He told me some great stories and Jaki Byard! It was amazing playing with Jaki and sometime Jaki would come in and play saxophone because Jackie played tenor saxophone. Such a sweet guy and sort of amazing talent. There was a lot of good music that you got a chance to play with the older guys... I think at that time I was still playing with Charles and I was still freelancing and we did... John had passed, that was '67 I believe...

Brown: July, '67.

DeJohnette: I guess now the "Forest Flower." When did "Forest Flower" come out? The "Live At Monterey."

Brown: Well the discography shows it came out in 66'. I think you played the 66' Monterey Jazz Festival and it must have come out either late 66' or early 67' because it was being played by AM Radio in Los Angeles. When you came through with Charles Lloyd in August of 68' at the Newport Pop Festival in Newport Beach, California that was it. Everyone knew "Forest Flower," and because it was a pop festival: Jefferson Airplane, The Grateful Dead, The Byrds and all them... you guys came on fourth after Blue Cheer which was a white bread imitation of Jimi Hendrix...

DeJohnette: I remember Blue Cheer! Yeah.

Brown: But you were the fourth one and I remember because it was right in late morning/early afternoon when you played "Forest Flower" it just cooled everybody out. So what I wanted to you ask you about that "Forest Flower" because it was recorded at Monterey Jazz Festival and Charles Lloyd recently was interviewed; not for this program, but he talked about that so do you have a recollection of that gig?

DeJohnette: Yeah, I think that Ravi was on that...

Brown: I'm talking about the original one with Charles Lloyd in 66'. With Ron McClure, yourself...

DeJohnette: I know, but who was on that bill?

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Brown: Well, Ravi Shankar was at the Monterey Pop Festival. Did he play the Monterey Jazz Festival as well the same year?

DeJohnette: Maybe not. All I remember is it was a nice, sunny day there and now I do remember about that. I remember the sun was shining and the audience was really grooving and we played that and there was something. That version of it was really special and when the plane flew over...

Brown: The plane, that's it! That's what he talked about.

DeJohnette: That plane flew over and I guess we kind of went with it. It was a magical feeling that day. Everything just sort of fell into place. The drum solo, being out in California in the sun and the vibe. I think that kind of came through on that. I think after we played Monterey we went up to San Francisco and played...

Brown: The Fillmore?

DeJohnette: The El Matador.

Brown: Oh, the El Matador, oh so you played the club. Okay.

DeJohnette: We played the club. I remember it well because Charles left his saxophone in Monterey and Joe Henderson... somebody found it and Joe Henderson lent him a saxophone because Charles had to borrow one to play the first set. Somebody brought his saxophone to him. But yeah, "Forest Flower," that second one was pretty amazing. I guess we played... that was before Russia, right?

Brown: The Monterey gig? Yeah, that was before Russia.

DeJohnette: After that we kept playing New York and the West Coast... ...we kept playing between that time. We were in London around 66'. That's where I met Lydia, my wife now. I met her in London and I guess it was Newport and then Europe and so everybody was there. Gary Burton... it was all during that time just before Eric Burdon and The Animals. We met in London, I was with Charles. Rahsaan Roland Kirk was there, he was a friend. I met Lydia backstage at a concert. It was a famous club called Ronnie Scott's and we... all the bands were there. Archie Shepp was in town with Jimmy

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Garrison... Bob Moses, Larry Coryell and it was a real festive feeling. Subsequently, Lydia and I met and talked and there was a connection there... there was a vibe and next thing you know she was coming over from England to America. We wound up living together and about 40 years later or so we're still together and it's great. We have two daughters also.

Brown: And what are their names?

DeJohnette: Farah and Minya... Minya Erica DeJohnette and Farah DeJohnette. We came back to New York with The Charles Lloyd Quartet and we started going to The Fillmore and the great visionary promoter Bill Graham starts The Fillmore West in The Fillmore District of San Francisco.

Brown: The venue is still there, it's in a different building; it's still there, though. The thing about Bill Graham is he might have Muddy Waters with Jefferson Airplane... he would mix (it) up. He wouldn't book one particular genre.

DeJohnette: That was his gift! He was eclectic. He had these people called Pablo Lights who did these light shows with oil lamps moving around projected on a screen. It was just totally different.

Brown: That's the cover of *Be-in* [*Love-In*].

DeJohnette: Yeah. You had these young kids. Some stoned out of their brains. But you play this music and it was really amazing. The Quartet... ...they liked it! It was educating the audience to different kinds of music. So we came out there and got a chance to hear legendary bands... Cream. We were also double billed with Jefferson Airplane before they became Starship. The Grateful Dead and they had Pig Pen, and Jerry Garcia. You had Janis Joplin, she was with Big Brother and The Holding Company. We did gigs with them. There were some other venues like the Fillmore West...

Brown: The Audubon Ballroom?

DeJohnette: Yeah, the Avalon.

Brown: Right, Avalon. Audubon is in New York. And Winterland.

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DeJohnette: Yeah. So it was great. Janis, I remember speaking with Janis on breaks. She was nice. She would drink booze and hang with the rest of them... she really liked Ma Rainey. When she got up there and sang, she was like a ball of fire. She had this energy that just made your hair stand on edge; she was quite a performer. Let me see, we heard Elvin Bishop, Paul Butterfield Blues Band.

Brown: Coming from Chicago and relocating in the Bay Area.

DeJohnette: Yeah. Then we went down to play in L.A. We used to play at Shelly's Manne-Hole with Charles. Shelly Manne was a beautiful cat. He was really a great, great guy. He loved music and he was a great player too. Did a lot of sessions, movie scores...

Brown: He played with Bird...

DeJohnette: Oh yeah, and he also played on Sonny Rollins' record *Way Out West*. "I'm an Old Cowhand," that's Shelly!

Brown: While we're still collecting our thoughts I want like to ask you about another drummer from St. Louis originally but came to Chicago and ended up playing in the Paul Butterfield Blues Band and that's Phillip Wilson who was part of the whole AACM. Did you know him in Chicago?

DeJohnette: I didn't know Phillip in Chicago. I knew him vaguely in Chicago... ..I didn't know Phillip until he was with The Butterfield Blues band and then we talked about St. Louis... ..he was really great in that blues band and Gene Dinwiddie, another Chicagoan from there. I remember Gene from Chicago, so when Gene was in the band it was really nice. I remember Gene had written this song called "Marching Along" [sings the melody] and I think they might have even had a hit with that one. Some amazing musicians there. Then... I left the Charles Lloyd Quartet.

Brown: What precipitated that, your leaving?

DeJohnette: I wanted to play some other music.

Brown: So I'm looking at your discography, we have: "Dreamweaver," "Forest Flower,"

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“In Europe,” “The Flowering of The Original Charles Lloyd Quartet,” “Love-In,” “Journey Within,” “In The Soviet Union” and “Soundtrack.” Those are all the titles that are listed. I don’t know if they were all released at that time.

DeJohnette: Okay.

Brown: But by 1968 is the last recording you made with Charles. But before we talk about why you left I know I have a recording of Charles Lloyd in 65’ with Tony Williams playing on it.

DeJohnette: Yes, *Of course, Of Course*. A lot of people don’t know about that record with Gabor and Ron. Nice record.

Brown: So was there a drummer in between? Was Tony in the group or was that just a session?

DeJohnette: No Tony was off...

Brown: With Miles. [laughs]

DeJohnette: Yeah he was still with Miles and he was just free. Ron and Tony came and did the record. Nice record.

Brown: So you left Charles?

DeJohnette: So I left Charles in... I think I worked after that with Stan Getz and Bill Evans. I think I worked with Stan first and then Bill, and I left Bill to join Miles.

Brown: Okay.

DeJohnette: I did that one recording with Bill. “Live at Montreux.” Actually the best time I had with Bill was playing... ..it’s a shame we didn’t record Bill at Ronnie Scott’s because we stayed at Ronnie’s for a month and it was nice because I actually got to see... ..Philly Joe was living in London at the time so I got the chance to see Philly Joe quite a bit. Actually Joe sat in and I played some melodica with him and that’s also where I met some future Miles Davis friends. During the day I would go down to Ronnie’s and

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Ronnie's was open. The word went out that I wanted to come play with some of the British musicians, which for them was fantastic because a lot of the American musicians came and didn't want to know anything about the British musicians. So Dave Holland, Jon McLaughlin, Pat Smythe. Another drummer, too, who actually plays with Cecil Taylor was Tony Oxley played drums because I was playing piano. I'd sit in and play piano. Then I'd play some drums, melodica. So we would be there jamming everyday. I really got to know another guy named Gordon Beck who played piano. Eventually I wound up producing an album of him with Dave Holland. It was called *For Evans Sake*, it was dedicated to Bill Evans. So we would play and get into all kinds of mischief and I recorded some of it and I still have some tapes of some of that jamming. The tapes of stuff I have... Dave Holland was playing with a group with Pat Smythe and John Marshall I think on drums and a singer named Elaine Del Mar. They were backing her and actually Bill... they were the opening band and then we went on after them. Miles came in with his new wife Betty Davis, at the time... while the set was going on Miles said, "Hey Jack, tell the bass player he should get a ticket and come to New York, I'm gonna hire him!" So, now Dave didn't believe it because Miles heard Dave backing up a singer but something he heard in Dave... ..and Dave thought I was kidding him! And so when I got back to New York, Tony was leaving to form Lifetime and Tony asked me if I knew any players and I said "Yeah I know this guitarist named John McLaughlin." and he said, "Can you send me a tape?" I sent him a tape and he sent for McLaughlin. And I think Miles heard McLaughlin; he wanted him too but Tony didn't like that so... Lydia and I had moved up on 82nd, between Amsterdam and Columbus and when Dave came he stayed with us. At our house until he got together, got a place. He came and Miles was playing up in Harlem; what's the club called? It's the same club Tony played; opened with the Lifetime band.

Brown: Small's? No, not Small's.

DeJohnette: No.

Brown: I don't think Mikell's was even open then.

DeJohnette: No... you'd know the name. Dave goes and plays with Miles. Tony's controlling the band and it just so happened that Ron Carter was in the house and Miles asked Ron to come up and play, and Ron played some...

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Brown: So Ron had already left the band?

DeJohnette: For Dave it was like... Dave felt under some pressure there and I convinced him, "Come on man! Stick it out!" because he was ready to go back to England and I said, "Oh man you don't want to do that, this is an opportunity, man. Stay here!" Of course the rest is history.

Brown: So had Ron already left the band?

DeJohnette: Yeah Ron had left... Herbie was playing. Then Chick was there. Herbie was leaving and Tony was leaving so one by one each one left. Then when Tony left, they called me to join the band.

Brown: Well the discography reflects that you recorded that one session in I believe September of 68', played "Directions." Do you remember that session?

DeJohnette: That's possible.

Brown: That was your first session with Miles.

DeJohnette: Yeah "Directions." I think that had a couple of keyboard players on it. Two or three keyboard players and Wayne and Dave. Maybe it wasn't. I think it was just the quintet if I'm not mistaken.

Brown: Could we go back and talk about your gig with Stan Getz? How long did that last and who else was in the band?

DeJohnette: The band had Miroslav Vitouš and Stanley Cowell when I joined. Then that changed to... Richie Beirach and Dave Holland played. Also Jane Getz played some piano. I think that's when Miroslav was in the band. I think I stayed in the band maybe a year, I'm not sure. We played some of his Brazilian stuff, "Desafinado," we played some of Dave's tunes, some of my tunes, some of Richie's tunes. It was a good band. And you know Stan was a great, great player. He could hold his own with anybody, played fast. Stan's gift was his sound and his lyrical sense. He played great melodies. He could tell a story. I stayed with him until I guess I left. Then I went with Bill.

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Brown: The discography doesn't reflect any recordings with Stan Getz. Do you know if you actually recorded?

DeJohnette: No, there were no recordings but there are some bootleg recordings of the band. There is recording of us at The Left Bank Jazz Society we recorded.

Brown: Now that I got the discography back up I'm seeing a few dates with Bill Evans; *Live at The Village Vanguard* and also what you said earlier, the *Live at Montreux*.

DeJohnette: The *Live at The Village Vanguard*?

Brown: This one was a later one; let me see when it was released. It was recorded August of...

DeJohnette: Oh it was a bootleg?

Brown: Well it may have been a bootleg but then it was released on Milestone Records. This is New York in August of 68' and for the record let me go ahead and... ..and it's reflecting also that you did a town hall concert with Charles Lloyd in November of 68.'

DeJohnette: Oh yeah!

Brown: And then the next recording in the discography is the Miles Davis session. The "Directions" session and that was actually November not September as I said earlier. And you're correct: Joe Zawinul, Herbie and Chick are all on that so it looks like the precursor to "Bitches Brew." It's also crediting Teo Macero with playing percussion. Do you recall that?

DeJohnette: I don't know, I don't remember that. Maybe, I don't know maybe he was. I thought he was in the control room.

Brown: Maybe he was tapping on something, who knows?

DeJohnette: Maybe he overdubbed. I don't know.

Brown: And then the next entry in here is of course "The DeJohnette Complex" recorded

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in December... ..the day after Christmas in 1968. So how did that come about?

DeJohnette: Well I came about with knowing Orrin Keepnews and knowing his work with the... ..Riverside Recordings. He recorded some great, great recordings of Bill and Johnny Griffin and Wes Montgomery...

Brown: And Monk...

DeJohnette: Monk, yeah. So when he had his label I talked to him about doing my own record and he said to me, "Well, think about what you want to do and you get it together. Come to me and do it." I'll say one of my mentors who I really had a lot of fun with when I came to New York and was really great was Roy Haynes. So Roy Haynes and I used to hang out. Still stay in touch with each other a lot. I used to call him "Papa Daddy." So I wrote this piece for him. I played the melodica so I decided I'd like to do a melodica/drum date. I'd like to get two bass players; Eddie Gomez and Miroslav Vituous. Get Stanley Cowell on the piano and Benny Maupin on the saxophone and have Roy Haynes on drums also when I played melodica and Roy was happy to do that. He came in and played on it that day. It was different. It was different kind of date. I wrote the music; most of the music except that Stanley Cowell had a piece called "Equipoise" and Miroslav wrote a piece, "Mirror Image" and that was my first date. Orrin believed in me when no one else was willing to take the chance. That was my first record date, *The DeJohnette Complex* and I started really getting more into writing more as a composer for my music.

Brown: We're going to run out of tape here quickly but I just wanted to ask. So when you did the recording with Miles in November of 68' were you officially a member of the band at that point?

DeJohnette: Yeah, I think so.

Brown: Because as we continue when we resume, you end up going on tour in Europe with him in the beginning of 69'...

HOOR 4

Brown: Today is November 11th, 2011, and this is day two of the Smithsonian Oral

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History Interview with NEA Jazz Master Jack DeJohnette. Now in his other studio, his recording studio! So Jack, when we left off yesterday we were talking about you joining the Miles Davis group. So, hopefully we can talk about some of that experience, because obviously that's one the ones that really got you into the public, as everybody else who played with Miles launches their career into the public domain. Do you want to talk about the very first sessions that you were on? I think that's where we left off. We were talking about the "Directions" session, but perhaps we should about whatever you want to talk about with Miles, and the relationship you had with the other members of the band and touring and recording. Whatever.

DeJohnette: Yeah. The time I spent was maybe three years, two or three years. It was kind of like a blur in a way. I think playing with Miles, with Dave Holland, Chick Corea and Wayne was a very exciting period. We always couldn't wait to get on the bandstand to see what kind of mischief we could get into. In the studios... I get asked this question, "What was it like in the studio with Miles?" Especially during the period when he was doing *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*. Miles was in a very highly creative period where he wanted to utilize the studio in the same way that the Rock musicians utilized the studios. They would stay in the studios for months just trying to find a groove. But Miles wanted to document the process as it was happening and so he got Teo [Macero, record producer] to put the tape on, just keep it rolling, because you never know in the process. You capture these moments, capture the feeling of the music as it's going. The *Bitches Brew* sessions, for instance... we'd get a call to come to the studio, I think it was on 52nd Street, the old Columbia Studios, the old converted church. Big room, beautiful room. It was a great room because Monk had recorded in there and Count Basie, Duke Ellington. So you'd come in and you'd come to the studio, and there'd be maybe Don Alias or Lenny White in the studio. There'd be Chick Corea and Herbie. Dave and Harvey Brooks, electric bassist who lived up here in Woodstock for quite some time. He had a band called The Fabulous Rhinestones and I think now Harvey lives in Israel now with his other half.

Miles had some sketches and bass patterns. He'd ask me, "play a groove, play this," and he'd count off a tempo and if that wasn't it he'd say, "No, that's not it!" and he'd say to try something else. I'd start something and if it was okay he wouldn't say anything and it would continue, then he'd cue each instrument in and get something going. When it would start percolating, then Miles would then play a solo over that and then let it roll, let it roll until he felt it had been exhausted. Then we would go on to something else. There

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would also be like Benny Maupin and Wayne. It was a flowing, organic session that Teo later edited and spliced together the best parts to sort of give it kind of a storyline, for lack of a better word. Miles had a penchant whenever he recorded, he recorded tempos, things that were slow because when he played these same tunes live they were always much faster. The studio versions were more relaxed. They have a searching quality about them. We played some of those pieces: “Directions” or “Miss Mabry” and “It’s About Time,” they would be much faster. So as we’d tour, we’d play some clubs. We toured a lot in Europe, and we played Shelly’s Manne-Hole. The music would be different every night, every set. We’d figure out what kind of mischief we could get into. Now it’s interesting because Chick Corea... these particular musicians that Miles had had: Red Garland and Paul Chambers, Philly Joe [Jones], then Jimmy Cobb and Wynton [Kelly], then Herbie, Tony and Ron. These were musicians who were thinking musicians. Miles depended upon the creativity of the musicians to keep the music changing all the time; keep him interested, because Miles had a short attention span. Like Ahmad, they both had that. That’s why their music was always changing, to keep themselves interested. That’s why I always liked to have musicians that could change the music up and keep stimulating it. That is a kind of improvisation that really relied on trust. Trust from us who were the sidemen, and trust from Miles to know what to play over whatever it was we were playing, or to play certain notes, he’d play certain notes as if to say, “Let’s see what they do with this, let’s see what Chick will do with that.” Now Chick actually was a trumpet player, so Chick one night picked up Miles’ trumpet. We were playing in Brooklyn at the Blue Coronet and on a break he picked up Miles’ trumpet and played a Dizzy Gillespie thing (sings solo from “Shaw ‘Nuff”). And Miles came in and said, “Gimme that!” (laughs).

Brown: What you sang is Dizzy’s solo from “Shaw ‘Nuff.” Because I transcribed it, right.

DeJohnette: So Chick played it.

Brown: Ooh, that’s a killer too! That’s a killer.

DeJohnette: I think Chick’s father was a trumpet player. So Chick played trumpet.

Brown: I know he played drums, too. I know Chick plays drums, too.

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DeJohnette: He plays drums too. And actually Pat Metheny was a trumpet player.

Brown: Really?

DeJohnette: If you listen to him play his synth guitar he kind of phrases like a trumpet, because Pat's brother Mike Metheny plays trumpet...

It's amazing, Miles that would sit there and listen to us when he wasn't on stage and of course Chick, Dave and I... Chick and Dave would go to a lot of frenetic places. Then, when Miles came back, everything would galvanize, come back to a center. Miles would focus everything; the energy would go then to Miles. The grooves would come back and Miles would play over the tunes. But Miles was pretty free in what he allowed us to do behind him and without him. . . I was with Miles moving into the electric period and he started using the electric piano, the electric bass and acoustic bass.

Brown: And electric guitar as well.

DeJohnette: Yeah, with McLaughlin on occasion. And I think he did some stuff with George Benson...

Brown: George Benson, Joe Beck on *Miles in The Sky* he was already starting to...

DeJohnette: I think there's a few bootlegs of the band of the band when we were in Europe. There's one with Miles where out of the blue he starts to play "Milestones" but he plays it like [sings the melody to "Milestones" at a moderate tempo] you should just check it out. Those who research this and hear this, check it out. I forgot the name of it, but it's at [Juan Pins] in France, near Antibes, France. And Miles plays this really, really hip version, just (at a) moderate tempo and it's just great what he plays on it! Especially in the end where we just keep playing that figure over and over again. Fortunately, some of this stuff has been documented with that Quintet, which was known as, I think one of the articles that was written about us was "The Lost Quintet" because there weren't that many official records put out of that group as there were with the group with Tony, Ron and Herbie. But now with our new electronic gadgets everybody is recording. But anyway, after Chick and Dave left the band, Keith joined. Actually, before they left Keith joined the band. Wayne left and was replaced briefly by... Steve Grossman. I think he was on one of the Fillmore releases.

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Brown: Yeah, and *Live Evil*.

DeJohnette: Fillmore West or Fillmore East? I think Fillmore West.

Brown: I think Fillmore East. I don't remember on *Live Evil* because all those... they got kind of split up.

DeJohnette: They got all mixed up, yeah.

Brown: So do you know why Chick and Dave left? I know that Chick and Dave ended up forming Circle.

DeJohnette: Yeah, they wanted to do some things and they left. I think Anthony Braxton joined that group for a while.

Brown: Right, I saw them as a quartet.

DeJohnette: Then Michael Henderson came into the band because Miles really wanted to go into more of an electric funk direction. So Keith joined the band and he was playing Farfisa organ when Chick was in the group. We have documentation of that in the Isle of Wight with that band, which is a great forty-five minutes of music. I'm glad that was done and documented. After that Michael Henderson joined the band and then Miles then started to do... I think that led us up to "Live Evil" which was recorded in Georgetown, Washington, D.C. at The Cellar Door. Actually John McLaughlin joined us on a Saturday night. That was actually put out as the first *Live Evil* and fortunately I think they put out three nights of that because we did four nights there. We were sent these four nights and all of us listened to that and went "Oh. That's pretty amazing!" Each night you can hear the development of the music. Each night was different which documents what I was saying, different ways of playing. At that time, I was playing a Hollywood set of drums named Meazzi. It was an Italian company. They used to make a floor tom-tom like a tympani, which when you pressed a pedal down the drum would go up. You couldn't go below but you could go up. So I was playing with the front head off the drum and just a strip on the batter head because then the bass drum projected, it had all this air instead of cutting a hole in the it like people do, stuffing things in it. It had a tone but really projected really loud.

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That's one of my favorite recordings of the electric period of Miles, *Live Evil*, because the band is just going all out. It's like... there's a term, "grunge" music. Because Keith, the way he played the Fender Rhodes and the Farfisa was just awesome. There was this funky sound, grungy sound, dirty kind of sound. Like Larry Young's organ with Lifetime. It was a very good blend of improvisation based over grooves that changed all the time, except the "What I Say" which I liked because it was the only time Miles actually sang a rhythm to me. He was saying "Okay, I want you to play the biggest beat!" [drums on knees and floor]. That was it.

Brown: Miles actually tapped that out for you just like that?

DeJohnette: Yeah, he was doing it with his foot. And the bass drum was going [taps out some rhythms] and that was it. So, I stayed close to that during the whole thing so it kept the momentum. The piece just kept climbing and when I took my solo I just kept building off of that figure. That's one of my favorite ones that... I like playing rock but creative rock. I was glad that was documented. I really had fun doing that.

Brown: Isn't Airto on that?

DeJohnette: Yeah, Airto is on that.

Brown: So how did he get into the band?

DeJohnette: Well, Miles always liked percussion and Airto had done things with Cannonball... his name was around. Airto was a naturally organic player. He just knew what sounds... he never got in the way. He was always creating stuff. A lot of stuff was going on behind Miles all the time with Keith and all that... it was busier music than some of the earlier music that had more space. It was busier but it was interesting at the same time. It had those elements, which is not always easy to do when you got a lot of elements going on at the same time. This is why a lot of people who liked Miles' *Kind Of Blue* and "So What" and things like that were disappointed. But Miles was interested in building a younger audience and he wasn't looking back. He was moving forward. Miles was always... some people, critics say he sold out. Miles was always a melodic player, he was also very rhythmic and (an) astute harmonic player, but he was always very mindful

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of melodies and sound, and also was always playing pop tunes. He was always a pop tune player, as well as originals. They forget that.

Brown: If we could go back. That's one of the reasons why I asked you how did Miles actually communicate that pattern to you. You said in *Bitches Brew* Miles would come in with some sketches. Now, how did he communicate those sketches? Were they written or did he sing them?

DeJohnette: Yeah. Some of them were written. He had some scales, he also had melodies. One of the tunes... ..on a later record, "Guinevere." I think it was a Crosby, Stills and Nash song.

Brown: Guinevere, yeah!

DeJohnette: I think he might have had Wayne write a three-part harmony arrangement of that, so there were some written things and some bass ostinatos, but they were sketches. They weren't whole pieces. For instance, "It's About Time" [sings the melody] that was one sketch. Then it opens up in a B section the bass opens up [sings the bass line] so you got these two sections. A section, back to the B section, and that melody... when Miles passed away, we'll get to that later. I wrote a piece for him called "Miles."

Brown: You brought up the bootlegs or the tapes that were recorded in Europe. Of course one of my favorites is from '69 and it's from Rome. It wasn't a bootleg, but it was issued out of Italy. It's called the Gold Collection; a two CD set. It was of the Tony band, the Tony quintet. But then there were two cuts that had you. But let's talk about when Miles... ..other than the pieces that he played that you actually recorded. Some of the pieces that I saw on these bootlegs included like "Masqualero"; which is a Wayne Shorter piece from the *Sorcerer* album. When you did a piece like this that's not really organic, it a set tune, how did that... ..did you already know that piece?

DeJohnette: Oh yeah, we had been playing all of those pieces. When we were touring we were doing stuff from *Bitches Brew* and then sometimes we would play "Masqualero," "Directions," "It's About Time," "Miss Mabry." We'd play some things that were on... ..*Filles De Kilimanjaro*. Because there were some things, the 5/4, the rock funky thing in 5/4. We used to play that. That's when I first joined him. That's when "Miss Mabry" was out and Tony had left so he was still playing some of those things.

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Let's see.

Brown: I can tell you some of the ones that came out of this Rome concert other than the ones you actually recorded on. There are things like "I Fall In Love Too Easily" so we still had some of those pieces in there. "Round Midnight" I don't know if you're familiar with this recent release of the *Miles: Live In Europe '67*. It's a three CD set with a DVD. Also "Agitation" but...

DeJohnette: Yeah, I don't have a copy of that. I got to get that.

Brown: It's amazing.

DeJohnette: I have to get it. Did they send it to me already? They might have sent it to me. I don't know I have to check that out, because we're going through business, legal stuff about that.

Brown: So this will be forthcoming I'm sure, because this is...

DeJohnette: Maybe it's not out yet, is it?

Brown: Not the one with you, but the one with Tony from '67 but I'm sure this is going to be the next one. Because, there is a whole bunch out of Rome, out of France. And if I scroll down I'm sure I'll find that "Milestones" that you mentioned too.

DeJohnette: Probably.

Brown: So let's go back to the *Bitches Brew*, you have three drummers: yourself, Lenny White and Don Alias.

DeJohnette: You're talking about the sessions?

Brown: Yeah, back to the sessions. So having three drummers. How did you negotiate that?

DeJohnette: Also, Billy Hart was on some of those.

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Brown: On *Bitches Brew*? Oh, I know he was on the *On The Corner* stuff and that was one of the...

DeJohnette: Well, they took like *Jack Johnson* and *On The Corner*, since I was on *Jack Johnson*. Well, I was on there by default because they took from sessions from *Bitches Brew* and put them on the *Jack Johnson* record because I was saying, "I didn't, I wasn't there, Billy Cobham was on that." And *On The Corner* again there were some sessions from an earlier period that were put together on *On The Corner*.

But we just talked to each other about who was going to play what role or we'd just play and listen and make it work. Alias, Don Alias was a great musical constituent of mine. Don played drums too, so Don knew how to play the congas in such a way like they swung. He played with Tony and he played with Elvin and he worked with me. So he had a way, he knew how to play with drum sets, drummers. He was a team player and could play the most amazing grooves. It was a lot of fun. There weren't too many clashes, hardly. Miles would kind of let us work it out. There is one piece, "Miles Runs The Voodoo Down" where that's Don Alias on the drum kit because I was trying to find a groove and Don says "Hey, let me try something!" and I said, "Come on, sit down!" So you hear Don play this [sings drum groove] and he's playing the pocket and I'm just doing some coloring on that. So, Don came up with that groove and Miles went with it.

Brown: What about Lenny? What was the interplay with you and Lenny?

DeJohnette: Well, Lenny wasn't necessarily on that one. Different days, different times, Lenny was on the different sessions. Like I said before. If we'd play we tried to play something that complimented, we'd listen to each other and not try to drown the others out. We tried to work as a team. That's how that worked.

Brown: So do you remember what year or what precipitated your leaving Miles?

DeJohnette: I think it was '70. Because Ndugu Leon Chanler went to Europe with Miles and the band had Don Alias and Keith and Gary Bartz. When they came back from the summer, Miles called me. They had a few more gigs. Did New York City, maybe one or two other gigs and then I left. I just wanted a change of scenery. I wanted to play a little freer. Miles was moving into a more specific thing that he wanted from the drums. Not as much freedom to elaborate. He was going into the groove, but he liked the way I

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played grooves.

Brown: If we could just return briefly to The Isle of Wight Festival because I've seen the documentary of the Isle of Wight Festival. It's great, but Sly Stone was also on that gig, do you remember seeing him?

DeJohnette: Yeah, I didn't see him there. The day we were there it was Joni Mitchell. Hendrix and Janis Joplin were there but (I) didn't get a chance to see them. They flew us in on a helicopter. We played, and they took us out on a helicopter because there were so many people there. We did get a chance to hear Joni Mitchell and that was nice, and then we played after that. I know if you see that "Isle of Wight" Miles was really great. 600,000 people I believe. To look out on that audience and this is what he wanted. He wanted to reach a lot of people and you could see... he waves at a little girl and you see him just looking out at all those people. So I think he was really happy to have done that, made an appearance there.

Brown: So, if we follow the chronology. If you leave Miles in '70 of course there are many other projects that you get pulled in to do. In November you do *Straight Life* so you're starting to work with the CTI folks.

DeJohnette: Yeah that's Creed Taylor... a lot of the Verve records were done at Rudy Van Gelder's. The labels that use Rudy Van Gelder's, there was Prestige, Impulse and Blue Note, of course. They all used Rudy and CTI used Rudy. It was his own studio. That studio was built... I happened to notice because I'm was a big... Frank Lloyd Wright, architectural designer, I like his work. I noticed his place reminded me of Frank Lloyd Wright and I said, "This reminds me of Frank Lloyd Wright." He said, "Oh yeah, it was one of his apprentices that built this house for me." He got excited that I took note of that, because it's all concrete cinderblock on the walls and a concrete floor. But it's got a paint on it that has some kind of acoustic treatment in it that does something with the sound. So, it's a natural reverb but it cancels, it's not a radical sound. It was great to record at Rudy's studio; he worked fast. He knew who was coming in the session; he'd have the mics all set up to bring the drums in, and he'd mic (them) and off you'd go. Rudy wanted to serve the music, so he got everything ready so you could come in and just record. You'd do a session in a couple of days. Sometimes he mixed, sometimes it'd be direct two-track balanced. Rudy had big ears. I got the chance to do things with *Straight Life* and *First Light* with the stable of musicians that Creed had there it was: Freddie Hubbard,

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Grover Washington, Jr., George Benson...

Brown: ...Stanley Turrentine!

DeJohnette: Joe Farrell, Little Esther [Phillips], Hank Crawford. We used to take CTI over to Europe. Actually, we went to Europe when they were having the Olympics and it was a tragic time there...

Brown: 72'.

DeJohnette: ...because it was when all those Israelis got killed and it was that week we were over doing touring that that happened. It was great doing a lot of those dates. Ron Carter; of course Ron did some dates there. It was a lot of fun. I was kind of the house drummer there in a way; I did a lot of sessions. Actually, I did some sessions with Chet Baker, one with Chet Baker and one with Paul Desmond, I believe. It was nice because Creed had the whole concept of the records and nice covers and promotions, promotional tours to promote the records. I think it did pretty well. Freddie did really well with *Straight Life* and it was *First Light* I believe was another one.

Brown: Now did Creed have some say... did he influence who the people would be on a session or was that the leaders choice?

DeJohnette: I don't know, maybe both. A little bit of both, because I think Creed did Wes Montgomery as well I think, but that was on another label. I don't know if it was Verve or not. Creed was a trumpet player, so he really liked Freddie. It was a nice atmosphere, got paid decent and tours were great. Travel was all the rage. It was great, had a good time, working with all these characters. Playing with Stanley and sometimes we'd do things with Milt Jackson because Milt did some things.

Brown: That's right the *Sunflower* album, but that's Billy Cobham on that one.

DeJohnette: But sometimes Milt would be on some of the concerts. We did the Hollywood Bowl, which we have some recordings of; St. Louis, Detroit. So it was nice to... one of those actually when Ron couldn't make it Ray Brown subbed for Ron, which was fantastic for me! I got a chance to play with this master, I mean Ray... 'til his dying day was just so youthful; so full of energy, such a creative guy. He was a producer too,

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you know. Produced some records with Linda Ronstadt. He was wide open. He wasn't locked into any particular way, so I was really happy I got a chance to play with Ray.

Brown: Well, let's talk about... obviously your work as a sideman is highly valued but let's talk about you as a leader and can you talk about how you got the idea for forming Compost?

DeJohette: Well okay, and the term "leader." I wasn't quite ready to be a "leader" yet when that happened. Friends of ours: Jack Gregg, Bob Moses, Harold Vick and Juma Santos. There's two Juma Santos' by the way. This was the Juma Santos whose name was Riley. His real last name was Riley, but gave his name, Juma Santos. There's two Juma Santos': the Juma Santos here who played with Hendrix and that's not the same one. This is another Juma Santos... So I got this idea... Bob Moses and I were good friends and Bob was a composer, highly prolific composer. He wrote poetry and he played vibes and we liked each others' drumming. So we thought the idea of having a cooperative band... also Harold Vick on saxophone... would be a great idea.

The way it happened was I'd sent my brother-in-law, Rodney Herman, a tape of some stuff I was working on. It was groove-based. He was living in London at the time. He worked and he had a business of his own with high-end audio. So this producer and engineer who recorded Yes heard some of this and was interested. Played it for Brian Lane who was manager of the band Yes. So it's an interesting story. Yes was signed to Atlantic Records and their contract was coming up, so record companies were courting Brian Lane to see if they could get Yes. They had just come out with this record that had a hit tune on it called, "Roundabout." And they had a great drummer, Bill Bruford, who was one of the few drummers that played an open snare, a jazz-type snare drum because Bill was more eclectic. So as it happened, Brian Lane was able to get Columbia interested in signing Compost, dropping a carrot out in front of Columbia, that they might consider coming to Columbia. So we got flown over to London and we were writing these songs together. Some of them were co-led, some were written by each one of us. Jack Gregg wrote some songs and I wrote some songs and I also. . . enters the aspect of me singing; writing and singing lyrics. Writing sort of... I don't know what we called what we did, crossover jazz/rock. It was definitely jazz influenced, but it grooved. So Moses would play drums, and I would play at the time a clavinet with a wah-wah pedal. Our first record was something called *Take Off Your Body*, which Bob Moses wrote. I did all the vocals and overdubs and things like that; it was pretty different. Brian Lane came in to

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hear this music. He thought we were a typical Rock N' Roll band. It was little more sophisticated than he expected. Nonetheless, I got quite a nice deal with Columbia to do 4 records. We split the contract five ways instead of it just being me, and I decided I wanted to make it a co-op band. At that time we had... our wives were involved in it. Bob Moses' wife at the time was Theresa Del Pozo and my wife, Lydia and Jack Gregg's wife. So they formed something called, "Ms. Management" because the Women's Movement was happening, and they were representing us. So long story short: we come out with the *Take Off Your Body* record, and we did a few gigs. We did some gigs in New York. The first big gig we really did was in New York, on 14th street... The Academy, or something like that? I'm not sure, but it was down near a square, one of the squares. We opened up for Yes, and they were number one on the charts. We opened up and surprisingly the audience really loved what we were doing, and so I'll remember that night pretty well. A couple of things happened, one was that Lee Morgan was shot and killed in Slug's that night.

Brown: That night that you were...

DeJohnette: Yeah... ..just before we went on we got the news. So, that was very upsetting. We played... we could have had a hit record. Yes was agreeable to us going out and being an opening band for them. The problem in those days was the opening band was paid \$700 and if you're record company didn't sponsor you... you didn't get a sponsor to go on on these tours... we didn't have the money to pay for the travel and hotels and all that. We couldn't do it off of \$700 and we really didn't have a manager who was connected. Our wives were doing the business stuff... daily stuff we were doing, helping us make decisions with that. But we just couldn't... It was too much, we couldn't do it. So needless to say, that record didn't do too well, but it got rereleased by a small independent label through Sony called Wounded Bird records. So, both those records: *Take Off Your Body* and *Life Is Round*. We did another record. We lasted to two records with Columbia.

Brown: Even though you had a four record deal?

DeJohnette: Yeah. We did one more record, and actually there was an instrumental that I wrote called "Festival" that CBS wanted to push as a single, but again we had no money to go out and tour. So at that point I said "Okay I'm gonna go sink or swim with jazz." They let us out of the contract, and I went back to deciding to be a bandleader and I think

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my first band had John Abercrombie... I had been working with a group with John and Mick Goodrick; master guitarist and educator who teaches at Berklee. I had the two guitars and a bassist named Clint Houston. So I called on John. John had been working with Chico Hamilton, and so John played spacy guitar and could go a lot of places I wanted to go. (He) had a sense of humor. So, I think that first bass player was named Peter Warren at the time. I was looking for a saxophone player and I think that Alex Foster was the saxophone player. I think Alex had been playing with Chico as well. So I think we'll check that out and make sure that's accurate. I heard Alex, and Alex was playing alto then, and clarinet. So I hired Alex, and we had a band and we started rehearsing. At that time I was doing some open-ended music. I guess Orrin Keepnews at that time had moved over to Fantasy, and they took over his Milestone label. So the first record that I did on Prestige was called, *The Cosmic Chicken*. We were out in California; we were actually working at Keystone Korner. We were doing gigs there. While we were there we recorded, *The Cosmic Chicken*. *The Cosmic Chicken* was kind of... I followed Miles' lead in making that... They say, "having the tape roll," while we played a "Cosmic Chicken" was sort of a groove... the tape just captured what was happening, the first take. We did a couple of versions but usually what came out was pretty organic. [Brown holds up his LP of *Cosmic Chicken*]. Yeah, I remember that. It was my idea for that cover too, that was pretty funny. We played . . . the Keystone Korner and actually that's when I first met Bobby McFerrin. Bobby was living out there at the time and he came and he asked if he could sit in. He sat in with the band and we were playing our arrangements and he just fit in like he'd always been there. Lydia and I couldn't get over it, "this guy just walked up and sounded like he'd always been with us!" and the rest is history. We can talk about that later. So, the band was called Directions. That group stayed together for quite some time. Peter Warren actually would turn up later in another musical entity, but Peter was with us for a while. We did some touring with that group and then I think I did the next record for Prestige, which was recorded in my house, which was called *Sorcery*. And that was done half in the house and half in Bearsville Studios. That had Benny Maupin on bass clarinet, tenor, voice and Dave Holland, and John Abercrombie, and Mick Goodrick. Recorded in my living room on a Tascam 4-track recorder, which was up in the loft. You see the photo on the back and everyone looked quite relaxed. It was actually when, must have been around '72 because my daughter Minya was going to be born shortly after that; Lydia was pregnant. That was a very freewheeling record. We had some things called a "Right Time." Some things we talked about. There was a sculptor friend of mine named Mike Fellerman who made a sculpture that was used on the recording. When I went into the studio, I also played some saxophone on this record.

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Brown: C Melody.

DeJohnette: Yeah. I did something called “The Reverend King Suite” which was actually written by John Coltrane, on our album called *Cosmic Music* with Alice and Rashied, Pharaoh Sanders. So I played organ on this and we were using things like... what were those things you spun around and made noises? You remember those things? They were like a rubber tube and they used to go...

Brown: I still use them.

DeJohnette: I used that and played a little saxophone. Michael Fellerman who was a sculptor also played some trombone. We also did “Four Levels Of Joy,” some things with Dave Holland. Something called, “Epilogue,” which actually wound up being used on Erykah Badu’s “Kiss Me On My Neck” which is... that’s something else. But anyway, this was a fun record to do in my experimental years. It was fun doing that in that time, and recording at home of course was nice.

Brown: I have the LPs here. They were recorded in in March and May of 1974.

DeJohnette: ‘74! Sorry, OK.

Brown: Lydia’s photo, aerial view of you guys performing upstairs in the living room.

DeJohnette: Yeah.

Brown: I just want to go back and just a couple things I want to talk about, you’re (philosophy) about “multi-directions,” which impacts what you base the name of your group on, but also let’s briefly go back to Compost because I had the album and I remember there was a definition of “compost” on the back, and it said, “earthy.” So who chose the name?

DeJohnette: We talked about Compost as... things came from compost. Good things came from that. It was kind of funky. We thought, “Compost, it’s kind of what this band it is.” It’s kind of a potpourri of mixes of things: Jazz, rock, some soul and some free-form things. We kind of all agreed that Compost felt nice. It’s a funny name, but we need

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compost to grow vegetables and things. A lot of stuff that ferments and changes is good for the soil, so that's how we decided what came out of this mix was some good compost music.

HOOR 5

Brown: ...Just wanted to return for the chronology about the second recording date that is crediting you as a leader called, *Have You Heard?* recorded in Tokyo. Is that accurate?

DeJohnette: Yes, it was. How that came about was the Japanese promoter **Koinuma (?)** used to have what they called... It was one of those "drum" things which featured me, Mel Lewis, Roy Haynes and his Hip Ensemble, and a Japanese drummer named George **Ozutka (?)**, who kind of played a little like Roy, but was a really nice drummer. While I was there, Benny Maupin was also in Roy's Hip Ensemble, and Bill Wood on bass in Roy's band. So, what would happen is we were doing this tour and each of us would do a drum solo or we would take some member of Roy's band and do something. While I was there, Gary Peacock was over there, living there at the time. The Japanese were doing all these things. You could make a record and Pioneer had a label, but they also made audio equipment, so instead of money I got equipment, Hi-Fi's, and speakers, and turntables, and all of that stuff. We kind of did an exchange. So, the pianist on that was called Hideo Ichikawa. At that time the Japanese were influenced by the black culture. The "Mod Look" and the big Afros. They were perming their hair! So you'd see Japanese with these permed haircuts, and Keith Jarrett's hair at that time was big, and Keith was a really big influence, and Hideo was influenced by Keith quite a bit. He had this thick head of hair. I recorded it there and then I brought it back and played it for Orrin Keepnews, who liked it and it was licensed and leased to Milestone. It came out as *Have You Heard?* It was great to play with Gary and Benny. I wrote some of these pieces over there, and there's actually one piece, "Brown, Warm and Wintry" that I overdubbed electric piano on that.

Brown: Which piece was that?

DeJohnette: "Brown, Warm and Wintry," I think.

Brown: Well, they have four titles: "Have You Heard?" "For Jane."

DeJohnette: Oh no! It was, "For Jane," I'm sorry!

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Brown: And then, “Neophilia,” which is definitely Benny’s piece and, “Papa-Daddy,” which is yours.

DeJohnette: OK, so that was “For Jane” I overdubbed. I knew there was a piece that I overdubbed electric piano on.

Brown: And before we return to following your ensemble, Directions, I wanted to also just comment on a couple recordings that weren’t under your name but again were very influential. The date with Alice Coltrane, *Universal Consciousness*. How did that come about?

DeJohnette: Well, I think she called me to come out to the house in Queens.

Brown: Is that the same house that...

DeJohnette: The historic thing?

Brown: Yeah. They tried to get the historical landmark.

DeJohnette: Yeah, they had a studio in the house so I came out and played on a few tracks. I think Cecil McBee was on it.

Brown: It’s showing Jimmy Garrison.

DeJohnette: Jimmy, Was it Jimmy? OK.

Brown: And a string quartet, violins, strings. Leroy Jenkins.

DeJohnette: Which was... Did Ornette do the strings or did she write the strings?

Brown: It’s not crediting any of the arrangement, I just noticed that Leroy Jenkins is in the string section.

DeJohnette: Yeah, I remember that.

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Brown: Now, I can mention this in so far as the chronology. Presumably your first date with ECM, *Ruta and Daitya*.

DeJohnette: *Ruta and Daitya*.

Brown: OK, so we can bring that up now as far as the chronology because that recording was made in Los Angeles, May of 1971, according to this discography, The Lords Discography. If you want to discuss that, or we can save that and discuss your tenure with ECM, or your relationship with ECM, and then return back to your “Directions” group.

DeJohnette: Yeah.

Brown: Let’s go with the Directions group, because the ECM could be a whole other episode.

DeJohnette: Yeah.

Brown: You purposely entitled the group Directions rather than “The Jack DeJohnette Ensemble” or whatever. Let’s talk about the philosophy behind that.

DeJohnette: Well, “Directions” because my music is pretty eclectic and it’s not particularly one thing. It moved around a lot. So, “Directions” sort of gave me a license to be eclectic in what I did for the first one. Are we going to come back to *Ruta and Daitya*? Because that (album) precedes this.

Brown: Oh yeah, if you want to go chronologically we can. Let’s do that, the duet with Keith Jarrett.

DeJohnette: OK, well that came about during my tenure with Miles when Keith was in the band. I had a friend of mine, Norman Johnson, whose other friend owned a studio, Poppy Studios, in California, Los Angeles. He gave us three hours of studio time during the day, so we got the electric keyboards brought into the studio, and a nice Steinway Grand. They had some drums in the studio, so I just brought my cymbals. Keith and I had been doing sometimes, on some of the gigs... During the daytime we’d get together and go and improvise some. So, he gave us this time so I said, “Keith! Come on, let’s go in the studio and let’s see what we get!” so we got this three hours and Keith sent it to

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Manfred Eicher, the producer/director of the world renowned label ECM based in Munich, Germany. Manfred is a producer that produced for classical records. He himself sang in choirs and also played bass in music in different types of settings, free form music and he was familiar with a lot of classical stuff, he honed his recording techniques recording classical music. He had a broad pallet taste for music, but he had an aesthetic for recording music like a movie director. The sessions... He always calls them, still calls them, "productions." We sent the tape to Manfred, he liked it and he subsequently put it out as *Ruta and Daitya*.

Brown: Which means what?

DeJohnette: Well, it was a name in East Indian folklore of two mythical legend islands in India somewhere. There's a little more to it then I can remember but their names (were) Ruta and Daitya. So, after that somehow I met Manfred and was asked to do recording because Manfred was interested in recording artists who had played with Miles, and he knew my work with CTI and other things. So, I had my group and we had a tour, and think we recorded after the tour. I wrote the music for the recording, which had Alex [Foster]... Which originally was a quartet and I added Warren Bernhardt, who I know from Chicago. Another Chicagoan, who was very talented and came to New York before I did. He did well and worked with Paul Winter; good friend of Bill Evans, really close with him. Great composer, he plays classical piano. He worked with Steps Ahead. Warren was around and we actually had never gotten the chance to play together, so I asked him to come and play with the group. He flew over for the session and later he started to tour with the band. I wrote these pieces... I started exploring myself as a composer. Writing for the musicians in the way of writing for the actual players. The way Duke would write for people, for their personalities. So, I wrote the music with them in mind. There are some funny compositions on there. On some, my youngest daughter Minya has put herself here. I wrote a piece called, "Flying Spirits," I think it was in some odd-meter. I can't remember now. It was an odd number of bars, one bar of seven, a bar of six. Yeah, that was it. So, there was "Flying Spirits" and "Pansori Visions" was sort of a play on Far East music. John detuned his guitar and we did this improvisation. "Fantastic" was just a vamp, a groove thing which we all kind of co-wrote together. Then, "The Vikings Are Coming."

Brown: Which you played tenor saxophone on.

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DeJohnette: Well, C Melody.

Brown: Oh, so they mis-credited. It's credited as tenor sax.

DeJohnette: It's a C Melody Saxophone.

Brown: OK.

DeJohnette: Yeah, because it is a Tenor C Melody Saxophone. I mean it is a tenor saxophone but in the C Melody family. There's "Struttin'" another co-led kind of romp, improvisation. Then, "Morning Star," a beautiful thing, a piece by Warren and then "Malibu Reggae." Now, "Malibu Reggae" reminded me of... You know the Beach Boys and the blondes? They had a television show or something. I don't know, it just reminded me of a beachcomber, bright teeth, and I ended up (getting) a reggae out of it. As you can see it's very playful.

Brown: I like it. I actually have it recorded on a CD now. It's funny; it's got a lot of humorous spirit in it. So, were you influenced by reggae, had you been listening to Reggae, Bob Marley, et al?

DeJohnette: Oh yeah I loved Bob Marley, and Toots and The Maytals. *The Harder They Come*, Jimmy Cliff. I was a big fan. I loved reggae music. That was my tribute to reggae music in 1976.

Brown: ...So this is your second project for ECM?

DeJohnette: Yeah.

Brown: Manfred was presumably quite happy because you then became... As you were house drummer for CTI, you're now house drummer for ECM.

DeJohnette: Yeah, I did a lot of recordings.

Brown: So, you formed a personal relationship with Manfred Eicher?

DeJohnette: Yeah, still to this day we have a great relationship.

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Brown: So, the group is Directions, the album is titled *Untitled* and then the next... We have a New Directions coming up. This one is in '78... So what happened with "Directions" and then "New Directions?"

DeJohnette: Well, Mike left and Alex left. So, I always wanted to play with Lester [Bowie] and we actually started playing together or Lester called me to do something with him and Arthur Blythe and Claudine Amina Myers in New York. So, I really enjoyed that and I asked Lester, "Hey man, it's an unlikely cast of characters." Abercrombie. Eddie Gomez, who I'd worked with, done some session work with, and also then worked with Bill Evans, and we had a nice rapport together. So, I asked Eddie if he wanted to play with us and it was actually a great combination of personalities. So, we went in the studio and recorded "New Directions" and we were actually lucky enough to do two recordings. One studio and one live one. That was one of my favorite groups. People still come up to say, "Yeah, we liked that group!" The last time we actually got together we actually played in Virginia, University of Virginia. I have a video of that. I also have video of Max Roach giving a clinic at that same place. But that group was great, we had a great time touring, we played New York, we played a few places in the states. We toured extensively in Europe with that group. I wrote some nice music for that group and we got into... The personalities created that sound in that band. There was something really special about that group. I'm really glad that I formed that group. I'm really glad that we were able to experience making music together for the time we did.

Brown: When we talked about your days in Chicago, you talked about Lester and them coming up from St. Louis. Did you actually work or play with Lester back in Chicago?

DeJohnette: No.

Brown: But you knew him?

DeJohnette: I had heard of him, but I didn't actually play with him until New York.

Brown: What was the context for playing with him in New York?

DeJohnette: That's the one I was just telling you about.

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Brown: The “New Directions”?

DeJohnette: No, before that. I said, “Claudine Amina Myers and Arthur Blythe.”

Brown: Oh yes. that’s correct. Right, I’m sorry.

DeJohnette: That was before he recorded, even though he joined New Directions.

Brown: OK, I guess I might have been thrown because when I was looking at your biography, it said that you had a long-standing relationship with Bowie that originated back in Chicago. It says here... This is in your biography on your website, it says, “The New Directions Band featured two musicians who would have long time associations with DeJohnette: John Abercrombie and Lester Bowie. A friend from Chicago days, Bowie played intermittently with DeJohnette until the end of his life.” So, I was just clearing that up. ‘A friend from Chicago days, but not actually playing together until you got to New York?’

DeJohnette: Yeah.

Brown: OK, I just wanted to clear that up. So that group lasts a while and the next project I’m aware of is the *Special Edition*. But am I missing something there?

DeJohnette: The *Special Edition* group was another turning point for me as a composer. The *Special Edition* group was inspired by... Arthur Blythe—Lester had told me about—and David Murray were the “new lions” at the time. Enters Peter Warren again back into the picture as a bassist I recorded in New York. The engineer was Tony May for that recording. I wrote some music for it, and also augmented the arrangements that I wrote by playing something called an electric melodica. I played the melodica during my years in Chicago. The melodica is a wind blown keyboard instrument that you hold in your hand and use a tube. I used to play it like a horn; it was nice because you could do things on it that you couldn’t do on a piano, bend notes, and I could phrase more like a horn on it. So I wrote pieces like...

Brown: I can read them down, “One For Eric”, “Zoot Suite”, and then “Journey To The Twyn Planet.”

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DeJohnette: Now, “Zoot Suite” was written and inspired actually to be dedicated to Duke Ellington. It’s written in some odd-time meters, but it has an A section and B section and C section. So, it’s ABCA with a riff against a long melody line played by the tenor saxophone. It has a bridge that’s a slow, contrapuntal harmonic, like triads moving up chromatically with bass lines moving in opposite ways, creating this tension. I was playing one of the parts on the melodica and we had four-part harmony because I had the bass bowing parts, and then that section set up the bass line. At any rate, the “Zoot Suite” was inspired by a show called “Zoot Suit” that was going on in New York at the time. It was kind of like if you could see people dancing, see people in the Zoot Suits. Think about Cab Calloway and the hat and the long pants and long jackets, but a more modern day version of it. So David and Arthur really were well suited to each other. They complimented each other in their styles very much. I also did a version of John Coltrane’s “India” starting on piano and switching to drums, which gave it another kind of color and flavor. Because that’s a tune that not too many people recorded of Coltrane’s. So that was one reason I took it. “Journey To The Twyn Planet” was a composition that was inspired by a dream I had. I dreamed that this planet was in such a mess and that somehow my family... We looked up and there was a Twyn planet like the earth that we could see, and we could bi-locate to it, and the vibe there was totally different. It wasn’t about exploiting everything, it was another level of consciousness. So, we bi-located and wound up on the other planet looking back at this one. “Journey To The Twyn Planet” was... I took it and slowed it down more, because you had this sort of cumulating, slow building sounds that build up to a frenzy, and then there is this explosion, and everybody’s running, running around. So, that’s more or less for me the transition, our bi-location moving through whatever it was... Wormholes or whatever you want to call it, and then this quiet section is where we’ve arrived, and there is tranquility, and there is peace. So, that’s kind of what was happening there. .

Brown: There are two other tracks on this project. The first one I’ll mention is, “Central Park West,” again Coltrane. For me it is one of my favorite versions because when you’re playing melodica and the whole band... There’s no drums and it’s very transparent and very haunting. For me it captures a spirit that reminds me of ‘Trane.

DeJohnette: Yeah, that was a nice arrangement. I enjoyed that. I love that tune too. Beautiful song.

Brown: Oh yeah. Then the other, actually the opening selection, is “One For Eric”

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presumably for Eric Dolphy.

DeJohnette: Yeah, I still play it today in my band, The Jack DeJohnette Group.

Brown: You start it slower now! I saw a video where you start slow, and then go back to the original tempo.

DeJohnette: Yeah. It's more like a stripper kind of sounding way, but somehow for presentation reasons I did that, just to give it another flavor. But Eric was one of my favorite musicians.

Brown: Did you get a chance to play with him?

DeJohnette: No, unfortunately I didn't. I got a chance to see him though, in Chicago when he came through with Coltrane at the club McKee Fitcher's, where I sat in. I got a chance to see Eric play live. It was something. So I'm glad I got a chance to see that.

Brown: Then this group, "Special Edition" goes through various evolutions as well because when David and Black Arthur Blythe leave then Chico Freeman and John Purcell come in. So, continually evolving but maintaining your vision for an ensemble sound, continuing to write for these groups. Do you want to talk about that evolution and what that leads to at this point?

DeJohnette: Yeah... The change of personnel. Peter Warren leaves, and he was replaced by Rufus Reid. For a while we had Chico, Purcell and Murray I believe.

Brown: So you had a three (horn) frontline then?

DeJohnette: Yeah... Then I added Howard Johnson.

Brown: I remember that group.

DeJohnette: When Rufus joined it was Howard, Rufus, John Purcell and David Murray. I wrote for that group using some electric drum machines and synthesizers. I did something called, "The New Orleans Strut," which was really nice and I recorded it again on an album with... It was "Pretty Boy" Purdie's record. He and I both played drums on

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it. Junior Mance is on piano. We'd have to research it. I have a copy of it upstairs.

Brown: Was it under his name?

DeJohnette: Yeah, it was Bernard's album. We both played drums on it, there are some horn players on it. We play some trades... For me... "Pretty Boy" Purdie is bad, man! He's a good reader, he can play with big bands, I've seen him play with orchestras and he reads really well. He was doing some CTI sessions and I came in one day. I had to pick up something and he was actually... I saw him reading the chart with an orchestra. But Purdie... Just talking about drummers, is definitely the groove master. I was playing with one of my bands in California, at Catalina in LA, and he came in one night to hear the band and after we finished I said, "Bernard! Please man, play me one of your grooves! Please!" Man, he came and he sat down, and he started... He went [sings a drumbeat] and even the way he moves... It was so killin' man! I was on the floor, "Yes Master!" and he was laughing. I mean, you didn't need to hear nothing else, forget about it! "Yeah Bernard!" [laughs].

Brown: I'll try to find that in the discography, "The Hitmaker!"

DeJohnette: "The Hitmaker," yes sir!

Brown: OK, I'm going to just digress because we're in 1980. Was this 1980 with this Bernard Purdie project that you did?

DeJohnette: I'm not sure.

Brown: We'll look it up. Since we're in the 80's, I want to talk about a project that bears that as the title *80/81*. The Pat Metheny Quintet with Dewey Redman, Michael Brecker, Metheny, Charlie Haden and yourself. Was this the first project that you did with Pat and how did this come about?

DeJohnette: Well, Pat and I had been playing together. The recorded project is the first time we'd recorded.

Brown: This is also for ECM.

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DeJohnette: Yeah, ECM because Pat had started out on ECM. So, this was a really interesting line-up, of Charlie and the contrasting styles of Michael Brecker and Dewey Redman. We actually did some dates in Europe to promote the record and man... The tours on that were really some fantastic playing from everybody, but just hearing the styles of Dewey and Michael, and (they) both admired each other. Dewey was complaining, “Man, I wish I had your technique!” and Michael would say, “I wish I had your phrasing, your lyricism!” Dewey just played great ideas. Then Charlie... It was a great combination band. Pat wrote all the pieces and he’s a great writer, composer and producer so the concerts were just amazing. Really highly creative, everybody got along great. I’m glad we had a chance to actually perform this music live and develop it. That was a special occasion.

Brown: Truly tragic that both of those frontline members, Dewey Redman and Michael Brecker are now gone.

DeJohnette: Yeah, but great that they were here. I’m celebrating that!

Brown: We keep the glass half full then. OK, the next major project if I could digress from your endeavors as a leader, Jaco Pastorius’ *Word Of Mouth* project. That was obviously quite an influential project. There’s a lot of footage on it (and) it got a lot of publicity, would you like to talk about that project?

DeJohnette: Well, it was a lot of all-star people on that record. Jaco wrote some nice things on it, nice compositions. It flowed organically from what I remember and Jaco was conducting it. He was in pretty good control of what... He knew what he wanted. He had that one piece... It reminded me of something like Joe would have written for Weather Report. It has that kind of vibe to it, that one that goes [sings the melody]. Do you know that piece?

Brown: Is it “Crisis”?

DeJohnette: It has a steel pan player.

Brown: Othello [Molineaux]?

DeJohnette: Is that what the name is? I don’t remember the titles.

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Brown: The one that's listed here is "Crisis" but again, I'm not going to rely on the...

DeJohnette: It was fun doing that. I had a good time on that.

Brown: Next in the discography is *Tin Can Alley*, Special Edition with Purcell, and Chico, and Peter, and yourself. Seems like you're branching out, playing organ. Organ on this project as well. Vocals.

DeJohnette: [Laughs] Yeah that recording was... There's a piece on that that I really like called "Pastel Rhapsody," where I overdubbed the piano and play introductions. I like writing beautiful melodies and when I feel the right vibe I like to play them. The organ idea, the "Gri Gri Man," that was a suggestion by Manfred. Manfred was great. He liked spontaneous improvisations that... Something fresh came out of them. He encouraged those kinds of things. The great thing about Manfred was (that) he liked free improvisation but free improvisation with focus that didn't sound random. He said, "Yo man, why don't you play some chords and overdub some drums with that?" That's kind of how that piece came. I just sort of played some sounds. I guess the word would be ubiquitous sounds, to get a motion kind of feeling. "Gri Gri Man" I put some congas on top of it. I think we then did a piece which was called, "I Know" and that was kind of a blues, a spontaneous thing that came up, and I just started singing for the round. Manfred loved that, because it came out spontaneously.

Brown: So, the "Gri Gri Man" was you!

DeJohnette: I guess so, yeah.

Brown: Is it your title?

DeJohnette: Yeah, it was my title.

Brown: And you're the one working the magic.

DeJohnette: Yeah, It came up because you had the congas in there and the drums and the magic. That works, that resonates.

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Brown: One more project if I may and that's a project with Von Freeman.

DeJohnette: Oh, *Fathers and Sons*.

Brown: Right, I bring this up only because Von Freeman also received the NEA Jazz Master, and we're trying to capture his oral history as well but he's been ill.

DeJohnette: Oh, really?

Brown: We're hoping that he's going to recover and be OK. But that relationship must have been formed when you were in Chicago.

DeJohnette: Yeah, it was and it was formed again when I came back to Chicago and played Joe Segal's Jazz Showcase. I had a band that was made up of Larry Gray on bass, a very fantastic bassist who plays with Ramsey. Larry Gray, the legendary Jodie Christian on piano, and Ira Sullivan. I did a week with Von Freeman with my quintet, which I have some documents of. That was great, playing with Von on a nightly basis. He had Ira and Jodie. It was fantastic. Anyway, the *Fathers And Sons* idea was for Columbia Records because of Wynton and Ellis on the other side. So, it was this half record there that was done. So it was great to play with...

Brown: ...Kenny Barron, Chico and Von, and Cecil McBee on bass. I just wanted to bring that up again because it goes back to the Chicago connection.

DeJohnette: Was Wallace Roney on that?

Brown: He wasn't on the date. I don't recall hearing a trumpet in that group.

DeJohnette: So that was another date.

Brown: Speaking of saxophonists who rarely left Chicago, Fred Anderson.

DeJohnette: Oh yeah! I knew Fred. Fred Anderson and Billy Brimfield. Both of those guys... I think I heard them both. Billy I played with a little bit. Is Billy still around?

Brown: I don't know, but Fred passed recently.

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DeJohnette: Yeah, because he had The Velvet Lounge.

Brown: I used to go there.

DeJohnette: Is that still going?

Brown: I don't know since he died. I remember the last time I saw him, with Leonard Brown by the way, was about four or five years ago and he was getting ready to move... I don't know. I know he had moved in it and established, but I don't know if it's going to this day without him.

DeJohnette: OK, (it was) always a pleasure to play with Von, you never knew what he was going to play. He was a beautiful ballad player like Gene Ammons, and that he could play ballads. He could play as lyrical as you want, and go as out as you want to go. He's one of those very special legends and I'm really happy to have the association... To play with him and glad to share this NEA award along with him.

Brown: Now I'm going to mention this one, because I'm not familiar with these but this is a series called *The Creative Music Studio* or at least that's the title of the *Woodstock Jazz Festival 1, Festival 2, Festival 3*. Recorded on September 19th, 1981 in Woodstock, New York. Released on Douglas Music. I've not seen it or heard so...

DeJohnette: I was involved with The Creative Music Studio. The Creative Music Studio is something that was created by Karl Berger. He was from Germany and Karl and his wife Ingrid Sertso... They formed The Creative Music Studio. Karl has a long history of being an innovator vibist and composer. He has this way of teaching rhythm called Gamela Taki. Teaching people their rhythms [sings an example].

Brown: It sounds almost like Indian and counting Tal and...

DeJohnette: Yeah, it's very interesting. I was involved with a lot of people... First Karl had a small place and then it kind of legendarily grew, and people started coming to it, and they moved the facility to a lodge in the area here. It was better set up so that you could have students come for workshops and classes. In that period we got a chance to meet a lot of world renowned musicians, Don Cherry, Trilok Gurtu, the percussionist

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from India. Aiyb Dieng, the West African percussionist. We had Cecil Taylor come up and do something. I met Colin Walcott. Dave Holland was teaching there. We all gave classes and things there. They were having financial problems and Lydia along with some other people, helped put on a benefit concert to raise money for Creative Music Studio in Woodstock. Chick came to help out and we put on a concert. Abercrombie was there. Lee Konitz, Anthony Braxton. I think Pat?

Brown: Pat is on here, Miroslav Vitous.

DeJohnette: This was recorded so somehow Karl got releases from everybody to put this benefit concert out. Miroslav Vitous is on it. Abercrombie.

Brown: Although he's not credited, the only guitarist is Pat Metheny.

DeJohnette: Oh! OK, maybe they didn't use that track. Anyway, that's where that came from. It was for a good cause. That's where that came from.

Brown: So, we had been talking off mic with Lydia and you about your relocating from New York, going to New Jersey and then coming up here. How long have you been up here? When did you first move up here to the Woodstock area?

DeJohnette: Well it had to have been in the early 70's, because Minya our daughter was born up here around that period. We've been up here over thirty-five, maybe almost forty years.

Brown: Is this the original place that you had once you moved up here?

DeJohnette: No, we rented a place while this place was being built. We rented a place in Mt. Tremper.

Brown: So, you had the entire house built?

DeJohnette: Yeah, it was built from scratch. We bought the land, and we had the house built.

Brown: Did you provide the architectural plans?

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DeJohnette: Well, loosely we did. It's a simple house.

Brown: With the idea of having a studio in the basement? A recording studio, I should say.

DeJohnette: No just a place for me to do what I needed to do. We liked the mountains. We looked around at places. We looked at houses and we decided that it would be nice to have our house built. That way when we go away and come back our vibe would be in it to welcome us when we come back. That's turned out to be true.

Brown: I'm going to return to your recordings and projects as a leader. *Inflation Blues*, Special Edition. This one has new personnel. Baikida Carroll on trumpet, Chico Freeman, John Purcell, so this is when you had again a three horn frontline and then again Rufus Reid on bass. The recording I know you mention that Howard Johnson had played tuba, so the band is in flux, but this recording. . . *Inflation Blues* recorded in New York, September, 1982 for ECM. "Starburst," "Ebony," "The Islands," "Inflation Blues," "Slowdown." Anything about this one? Because after talking about this we're going to go to the Standards because in the chronology that's when the Standards project started up with Keith.

DeJohnette: Right, then I think we come back to Special Edition later.

Brown: Oh sure! I'm following the chronology of the discography.

DeJohnette: I'd originally written... "Inflation Blues" was recorded with Compost originally if you look on the titles.

Brown: Well, I can. Was it for *Life Is Round*, the second?

DeJohnette: No, I think it was on *Take Off Your Body*, I think.

Brown: Was that all in one session, those two albums? The discography doesn't give recording dates. It actually says "1971/1972." They don't even have any dates. I can't even nail down the exact year, so I'm not sure.

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DeJohnette: We'll check when we take a break.

Brown: But it's something you had written during the Compost era? That would put it over ten years earlier.

DeJohnette: I recorded it a couple of times, and I actually changed the name of it but we'll get to that later. That comes up in the chronology. It's a reggae kind of piece. I arranged the horns for it, like ska kind of arrangements.

Brown: Ska tempo?

DeJohnette: But I had the horns doing [sings a ska horn line]. There's something on there called "Ebony", right?

Brown: Mm-hmm.

DeJohnette: That one was a good piece, which I played piano (on), again this is where I overdubbed piano and then drums because I felt it would add something to the piece. This piece actually, "Ebony," Ahmad recorded, piece of mine that he recorded on one of his records.

Brown: I hope you're getting some royalties for that!

DeJohnette: Yeah, but he really did a nice version of it.

Brown: Then if we could just wrap up with Special Edition, I'm showing the *Bratislava Jazz Festival of 1983*. This one had Marty Ehrlich, John Purcell, Howard Johnson, Rufus Reid and yourself and it's just one cut. "Tenor Madness" recorded in Czechoslovakia October 1983.

DeJohnette: Really?

Brown: [Laughs].

DeJohnette: Now I remember when Marty Ehrlich was with me... "Tenor Madness"? Was Frank Foster on that? Because there was a jam session we played at a festival and I

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think Frank Foster was playing too.

Brown: Well it's entirely possible.

DeJohnette: It's just one tune?

Brown: That's the only one that's credited here. Like you said it was a jam session. Were you in the rhythm section for the entire jam session?

DeJohnette: No, we just played a few numbers. But who knows?

Brown: So, we're going to go ahead and take a break.

HOOR 6

Brown: Please talk about the *Zebra* project.

DeJohnette: OK, are we in the chronological...?

Brown: No, I'll come back to the Special Edition.

DeJohnette: OK, I was commissioned to do a soundtrack through an associate producer named Kenny Inaoka in Japan with this filmmaker and photographer Tadayuki Naitoh. He was an award winning, well-known photographer in Japan, but he's an artistic photographer. He went off to Africa and he got really turned on by the patterns of zebras. So he spent a long time there filming zebras. Shooting stills and video footage of them. He wanted a soundtrack for this video. It was a forty-minute video. He showed me the photos of the video, and I immediately started writing the music before I even saw the video. He sent the video later. I wrote the music for it, and they wanted Lester to solo on it, which I thought was a good idea. So some of the photos... I just got into the vibe of Africa. Using a drum machine, I didn't play actually any acoustic drums at all. I used a program, the drum machine. I played an analog synthesizer.

Brown: What type of drum machine did you use?

DeJohnette: It was a famous analog one... I'm not sure. It had some funky analog

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sounds in it. So I programmed the rhythms in it, African rhythms and then I played synth over the top. Then Lester came in and blew over the top of some of these melodies that I did. Using the synth and the drum machine I made some 6/8 patterns and some Pygmy-type melodies. You'd probably appreciate that. You'd like that a lot.

Brown: Had you been listening to the Pygmies?

DeJohnette: Yeah, I'd been listening to the...

Brown: UNESCO had a whole bunch.

DeJohnette: ...Yeah. UNESCO and some of the other field recordings of that stuff. They were surprised when they got over to record it. I had already written half the music for it. They were very surprised. We recorded it up here in Grock Hill Studios. We did it in about two days. The engineer was a friend, musician and engineer, Tom Mark. We recorded it and I was really happy about it. I actually have a video of that; me and Lester actually performing it live on Ben Sidran's show. It's since gone but basically I gave the tunes African names like "Ntoro," "Kpledzo," things like that. Found out the names; what they meant. It's a forty-minute video so the video never took off. When I was with MCA we licensed it to MCA and they put it out. I actually have the video with the soundtrack but I haven't been able to get it shown anywhere because I don't know people's attention span. It's the kind of thing that you could put on your computer and watch it and move around; do things, come back and watch these beautiful shots of zebras and patterns and you begin to see what he sees in them. Really nice.

Brown: Is this something that is available online? Can you purchase the video?

DeJohnette: You could probably get it on Amazon. I think so. MCA...

Brown: Now that you bring up MCA. So you have an established relationship. Let me kill two birds with one stone. Talk about MCA and you mentioned the Special Edition project *Irresistible Forces*. Was that the first project for MCA?

DeJohnette: Yeah.

Brown: This one we mentioned earlier: Greg Osby, Gary Thomas, Mick Goodrick,

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Lonnie Plaxico and yourself, and Nana Vasconcelos. They weren't able to give the date. They have "1986?" but you would know if you remember.

DeJohnette: No I'd have to get the actual record, which I have here. We'll clear that up.

Brown: So perhaps talk about how you formed the relationship with MCA.

DeJohnette: That was through Ricky Schultz who actually had a label called Zebra Records and this was at a time when independent labels were developing talent that the majors would scout the next talent from the independent labels. So Ricky then got hooked up with MCA, and he was a good fan of mine and we did a deal with MCA. By that time, Rufus Reid had left the band. Mick Goodrick was still in it. Greg Osby, who came to the band, who had a good sense of musicians who would fit in the band. He told me about Gary Thomas. Brought Gary into the band and Nana. I liked the way Nana played percussion and sang so he was a special guest. I wrote compositions for that and as usual I like to write tunes. I have a penchant for writing songs for musicians who I felt were very important and had a profound influence on my musical outlook. So, I wrote a piece called, "Herbie's Hand Cocked."

Brown: ...And then "Silver Hollow." That's the name of your street.

DeJohnette: Yeah. Then Greg wrote a piece on there. Then we did "Preludio Pra Nana" which was a piece I wrote for Nana. We also did a small version of Milton's "Ponta De Areia".

Brown: There's a piece entitled "Milton." Is that an homage?

DeJohnette: Yeah, I wrote that for Milton Nascimento.

Brown: Subsequent to this, there are other recordings of Special Edition, other incarnations of the group later in the decade of the 80's. We can jump to those, or we can talk about the formation and the beginning of The Standards Trio and how did that come about.

DeJohnette: Well, actually before the Standards band came together, Keith and I were asked by Gary Peacock to come do his record for ECM called, *Tales of Another* so we

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came and we played. Gary wrote all the pieces. Nice compositions. After that Manfred thought it might be a good idea if maybe we formed a trio. We came into New York and had some dinner, and we talked about maybe having a group together that would use standards as a vehicle rather than just another trio with everybody writing originals, and using the standards as vehicles for improvisation in a piano trio format (with) bass and drums. So we did a week at The Village Vanguard, which came out really nice. Then we went in the studio and did enough material, some standards and free improvisational material that a couple albums came out, *Standards* and then, *Changes* and that started the trio. The idea was, “Well, we’ll keep doing it as long as it feels good and when it doesn’t then we’ll know it’s time to give it up.” And here we are almost thirty years later and it keeps getting better.

Brown: I want to return to your projects. I’ll bring up at this point *Audio-Visualscapes*, another iteration... Actually the same group, Same personnel. Greg Osby, Gary Thomas, Mick Goodrick, Lonnie Plaxico and yourself. This one is from 1988, again on MCA. I’m just trying to figure out from going into the 90’s... Here’s one with Sonny Rollins. 1989 recording on Milestone with Sonny.

DeJohnette: Yeah, that was a great record. *Real Time*.

Brown: A lot of projects with so many folks. Here’s one that I was not aware of called *Parallel Realities*. It’s yourself, Herbie Hancock, Pat Matheny. It’s released on MCA, it’s under your name.

DeJohnette: Yeah that was a big record! We toured that band worldwide when we added Dave Holland.

Brown: Right and then next to that shows, *Live At The Mellon Jazz Festival* in Philly in 1990. This one’s on “Jazz Door” so...

DeJohnette: Well “Jazz Door” is a bootleg, that’s why. What they did was... It was done on a laserdisc and somebody just took the audio off of his stereo. It was all mixed and they put it out as a bootleg. A double-cd. We never got a penny for that. That was recorded, they didn’t even say it was from the Mellon Festival because you wouldn’t say where it was recorded from if you’re bootlegging. So it was recorded in Philadelphia. But at any rate, I had written these sequences, and I asked Pat if he would do the record with

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me and Herbie. Pat at the time was using something call the Synclavier, which would sample at a high sample rate of 98hz. It had all these channels and Pat used to carry this whole thing around in the travel cases and take a tech to work on it. I wrote these sequences on my sequencer and they were transferred into the Synclavier. This is an interesting record because I didn't use a bass player on it, the bass parts were then played in. I just wanted the three of us, Herbie and Pat (and myself) and be able to do what we wanted to do with these tunes. Which were... I would say accessible compositions that I'd written with the exception of some that Pat had written. The title tune, "Parallel Realities," and a fast tempo tune. You got the titles there?

Brown: No, I don't.

DeJohnette: OK, we'll get them later. So that came about and Pat was gracious enough to lend his production team. We put these sequences in; we recorded up at a place called "Dreamland" up there in [inaudible] and it was great. It really flowed really nice. Herbie came and played the music really well. The bass parts were repetitive parts which I felt I didn't want to call somebody like Ron or Dave in just to play the same positions over again, but what I wanted was something just basic from the bass. For touring, yeah, we needed Dave. More input in that area, but for the recording there were some concerns as to why I didn't use a bass player. I played the bass in myself in a sequencer so we played along with it. But that's a really nice album. I like some of the compositions I wrote for it. "Jack In" I wrote that because a lot of times I was considered a "fringe writer." Some of my music was not necessarily easy listening... This piece was really accessible. It had changes in it. I wrote it as "Jack In," something that's inside. Then I wrote the reggae piece in 9/8, but I couldn't come up with a melody so Pat came up with a melody and also added some more changes to the bridge. Then he added a couple tunes, "Parallel Realities" used some pre-recorded sample things and we played along with it. We took this on tour. We played The States, Canada, Europe, Japan and Hong Kong. Six to nine weeks . . . I have copies of tapes of the Montreux Jazz Festival. It was a great combination, the four of us. We had compositions from everybody along with my compositions. Did a lot of promotion for that record.

Brown: As we move into the 90's I'm looking at another recording of The Special Edition, but this one is not on MCA. It's *Earthwalk*, special distribution of Blue Note.

DeJohnette: I went to EMI and I came out on the Blue Note Label. It was EMI Japan but

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Blue Note here; they were associated. So I recorded... My producer was from Japan. I recorded it here, but my finance, everything came from Japan. But it was released, licensed to Blue Note here.

Brown: So at that point you had parted company with MCA?

DeJohnette: Yeah.

Brown: OK. And then on this one, *Earthwalk*, Michael Cain joins the group on keyboards.

DeJohnette: Yeah. Michael brought a very personal, already original voice to the band, originality and ability to color with synthesizers. A highly creative aesthetic that really was a great asset to the band, along with the others. I wrote a composition, "Wake Up and Dream," was a composition I recorded for the first Special Edition on MCA, *Irresistible Forces*. I think it had another name, but I renamed it "Wake Up and Dream" because I wrote some more melodies to it. I also explored some Native American stuff with a piece called "Earthwalk" which used a vocalist. A lady named Joan Henry of African/Native American descent who was well versed in Native American languages and dances and things like that. She did some sounds... lion sounds, wolf sounds and things like that on the record.

Brown: There are two other tunes, "Lydia" presumably for Lydia your wife and then one you asked me to reference later, "Monk's Plum".

DeJohnette: This was a composition that is a musical sketch... You could almost see Monk with this composition. It was like a whole suite piece. It was very long. It had three or four sections. Because it was so lengthy, the solo parts on it were open-ended. I didn't lay any sketches out for that. We would just come back to the last section of the piece. "Monk's Plum," I'm actually playing that with my band, my current group The Jack DeJohnette Group.

Brown: There's another title on here that kind of presages the formation of actual company that goes by this name, *Golden Beams*. We can talk about the formation of the company but obviously that title has some significance. So, into the 90's I'm looking at a couple of soundtrack projects. One including a collaboration again with Metheny for PBS

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for a play called, *Lemon Sky*, then a soundtrack for a documentary called, *City Farmers*. Then finally another one called, *Talking Drummers* but if we could talk about those projects...

DeJohnette: *Lemon Sky* was a PBS special that had Kevin Bacon, Kyra Sedgwick. Very interesting play; you can look it up and check it out. Pat did the music and I came in to Boston and we watched the film and I did some playing on that. I have to say that I actually did do another soundtrack maybe in the late 60's... A soundtrack written by Herbie Hancock called *Blow Up*.

Brown: That's correct. It is in the discography. Go ahead, do you want to talk about that project?

DeJohnette: I'd just come back from tour and Herbie wanted me to play on this soundtrack for *Blow Up* and we didn't see any of the movie (before we made) the tracks. It's funny enough that when Antonio(?) did the movie all the music Herbie had written... He didn't use most of it because he thought that the music took away from the drama, the impact of what the play was. Herbie understood that, why he did that. But the soundtrack was great music. I'd like to find that again. Joe Henderson's on it, Ron... I think Jimmy Smith is on some of it. Back to...

Brown: ...we were talking about *Lemon Sky* and then there was one called *City Farmers*.

DeJohnette: *City Farmers* was from a friend who was a documentarian... We'll have to get her name.

Brown: Meryl Joseph.

DeJohnette: Oh yes! Meryl Joseph. She'd been exploring city gardens in cities, in Manhattan these city gardens in vacant lots. They'd cleaned up... They'd gotten grants to clean up. The city brought in these big trucks and dumpsters to clean up vacant lots and tear down old buildings. They sent shovels and gardening tools and soil and they built these city gardens and it was great! I did the soundtrack for that and it was a shame... Mayor Giuliani got rid of them to put up more property. It was a shame. It really brought the people together, ex-cons, people coming together, kids learning where the food comes from. It was a great program. *City Farmers/City Gardens* is still going on, but it was a

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shame that he wanted to sell real estate.

Brown: I'd mentioned *Talking Drummers*, a video production with Don Alias.

DeJohnette: Yeah. That was a project that came about. Don and I had such a rapport together that we went in the studio and produced some music. Some duo stuff that he and I did. Some with me playing keyboard and him with drums and both of us playing hand percussion, me playing drum set and him playing the Batas, and then ending up with the Candomble Orisha, Ochosi. We all sang that and did three part harmony on it. He's playing the Bata, overdubbed all three parts. So, I still haven't put the *Talking Drummers* out, but the music we done for that, because of the economic times ... Trying to figure out some way to present that, maybe in a digital format. We'll have to see as time goes on. Don is a great spirit and great musician. He's no longer with us but I was really glad to have had the opportunity to experience playing music with him. We also played together on Herbie's *New Standards*, that was a great recording which featured Michael Brecker, John Scofield, Dave Holland, myself and Don Alias.

Brown: I'm going to ask you to discuss *Music For The Fifth World* because this seems to be a project that seems to be near and dear to your heart. We talked off-mic about how you are of Native American descent. I believe you said Seminole and Crow Indians from your parents. Maybe talk about the inspiration and this project, *Music For The Fifth World*.

DeJohnette: Well, Lydia and I were interested the Native mindset. The music, and the philosophy, and the spiritual leanings of it. There were some Native American pow-wows and events that were going on up in our area and we went to one one weekend. We were at this B and B and it was across from a lake. The next day we'd gone to one of the events and spent the night. We were laying on these lounge chairs looking up at the sky. We looked up at the sky and I said to Lydia, "Lydia, do you see what I see?" she said, "Yeah." It was a cloud formed in the formation of a wolf that was smiling and had a feather in its ear. If ever there was a sign... Nobody else saw it. Both of us saw this and we said, "Oh, OK." Then we left and we went... There was another Indian festival going on on 209. We stopped there and we met this couple Denis Yerry and Joan Henry who were later involved in this *Music For The Fifth World* project. They knew a Native American elder named Grandma Twylah Nitch who was up at the Cattaraugus Reservation up near Buffalo. They knew Grandma Twy and they told us about her. So,

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we went up there to visit Grandma Twy, and when she saw us she said that they were having the first ever Elders' Peace Conference. The indigenous elders were coming from all around. The requirements were that they had to come, and tell a story and not bring any anger, and they had to tell a joke. We were there, and she was amazing, Grandma Twy. Grandma Twy was a jazz drummer apparently. She was a little thing, about four feet something. She played drums so good when she was kid that she played with...[Woody Herman?] It was one of those bandleaders during that period wanted her to go on the road with the band. Her parents were a little bit concerned. This little young thing in a bus full of guys. So, she didn't go. Her grandfather was Red Jacket, a famous Native American Elder. She came up and she looked at Lydia and I and she said, "You're wolves." We came back later and brought out daughters Farah and Minya with us and we got initiated into The Wolf Clan up there. She said, "You're all Wolves." The Wolf Clan insignia is a wolf with a feather in his (ear) that smiles. So, you know, talk about synchronicity, right? So, (*Music For*) *The Fifth World* came about as you know the Native people believe that everything has a spirit and a life force. The wind speaks and the rocks speak... So this was called, "Other Counsel Fires Were Here Before Us" as told by The Stone Person Gyak (?). It's almost like a creation story. It tells the Native version of the different worlds... The fourth world was greed and separation. The fifth world was love and integration, basically. So I wrote music. I wanted (to) explore Native American roots and the rock n' roll roots, rock and electric music aspects of the music . . . So, we talked about then being initiated as wolves in The Wolf Clan, so this recording was important to me in the sense that this record was kind of a family affair. It had my oldest daughter Farah sang on it. We got Will Calhoun's sister, Ethel sang on it. I sang on it, singing these chants. The "Fifth World Chant" is in 5/4 and 4/4. It was interesting that Grandma Twy... When they had the Peace Elders (concert)... When you had it, the ceremonial drum had to keep the heartbeat (sings and plays heartbeat rhythm). Lydia and I were sleeping in a tent outside and in the morning sometime, the beat changed. It was like 5/4. It was a different rhythm . . . The next morning, we said, "Grandma! Somebody changed the beat, the heartbeat changed!" and it was Gram, she had snuck out of the bedroom and gone over to the lodge and was beating the drums. She was a character . . . he was inspiration for that. Denis and Joan Henry. Joan translated the Fifth World lyrics from Grandma Twy and Gyak into Cherokee or Jolokia (?) language. There were a lot of deep rehearsals going on for the vocal parts that went on and also the group Living Colour which had Vernon Reid and Will Calhoun and...

Brown: The singer was Corey Glover.

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DeJohnette: Yeah, Corey. The bassist was... We'll get that.

Brown: Did he play on this? Was he on this project?

DeJohnette: No. The bassist was somebody...

Brown: Because you had Lonnie playing bass on this project.

DeJohnette: Well Lonnie was on bass but we had two guitarists and two drummers. Will Calhoun... We were big Living Colour fans so I had this idea to have two guitars and two drums on this. Will and I... I went up to Will's and we rehearsed. I played keyboard with him. We'd come up with how we would play the "Fifth World" and he worked out his part that worked with mine. It was great, it was so much fun. Joan Henry worked with the vocals, the singing. We also had a big ceremonial drum that's upstairs and we'd also beat on that in 5/4 on the record.

Brown: Was anybody actually dancing?

DeJohnette: No, we were doing chants. We had a big drum duo/battle with me and Will going at it at the end. Did you ever hear that? You'd love it.

Brown: No. I don't even know the label.

DeJohnette: We had that and then Joanie did some sort of round chants. Then I wrote something called "Two Guitar Chant/Dohiyi," which Joanie wrote some lyrics to for that. Which we co-wrote together. I wrote the arrangements and the melody and she wrote the chant on it. There was someone else singing in on it named Robert...

Brown: Rosario.

DeJohnette: Robert Rosario. So we had a great crew. Michael Cain is also on that and did a really fantastic job playing keyboards and piano.

Brown: So this must have been a very extended project. You're talking about rehearsals...

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DeJohnette: It was quite a project and then comes the subject of Miles. Miles had actually passed away in that period . . . and I immediately wrote this piece for Miles called “Miles,” which featured two drums. Two drums can really work good when they’re working in synch, especially to groove. James Brown did it. B.B. King uses two drummers. Will and I really locked together. The groove was killer so we did that, and then I wrote something called “Darkness To Light.” This was my electric writing. Another loss of that period was Jim Pepper, a Native American jazz saxophonist and vocalist. He had been in Austria playing with Mal Waldron and was dying of cancer. So he came back home, and I was going to have him play on this piece, but he passed away in that week. “Witchi-Tai-To,” did a version of “Witchi-Tai-To” with a ceremonial drum. That had a great significance. Then I did something called “Aboriginal Dream Time” which was in something like 13/11...

Brown: 13/11?

DeJohnette: Will playing in 13 and I’m playing in 7 against what he’s doing. The only thing I regret about that was I didn’t get a didgeridoo on it. I wish I had done that. So, *Music For The Fifth World*... that turned out to be... Mr. Naito loved it but the record companies did not know what to do with this. I couldn’t follow it up with touring because Living Colour was hot, John Scofield... Everyone was working so I couldn’t really support it but it’s a great document. I made that record for a lot of reasons.

Brown: In the interest of time I’m going to try to jump ahead so we can talk about the last decade, because the level of prolific output that you have in the last ten years is just staggering. Let’s get to the 2000’s with you and the Alligator Blues Band. We could inject a little levity here.

DeJohnette: Well, I was out on tour and Lydia calls me. She said, “Paul Schafer called and wants to know if you want to be in this movie ‘Blues Brothers 2000’ at the Battle of The Blues Bands as the Alligator Blues Band.” I said “Well, who’s in it?” She says, “Well, in the singers you have Koko Taylor, Gary U.S. Bonds, Isaac Hayes and Lou Rawls. The guitarists were Bo Diddley, Jimmy Ray Vaughan, Eric Clapton. Charlie Musselwhite I think was on harmonica. The saxophone section had Clarence Clemons on tenor, Grover Washington Jr. on baritone sax, Joshua Redman on tenor, and Jon Faddis on trumpet. For the keyboards we had Billy Preston, we had Dr. John and we had Stevie

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Winwood who was playing organ and I think Willie Weeks was on bass. B.B. King of course, is on the guitar. It was Rock n' Roll Hall Of Fame legends! John Landis wanted to do this for John Belushi. We also had Joe Morton, who was one of the new Blues Brother, John Goodman and Dan Aykroyd. It was filmed up in Canada, in Toronto. When everybody found out who was in this band they said, "Oh, yeah, I'm there!" It was a lot fun. Erykah Badu was in it, it was (an) all-star musical, rock 'n' roll. I was really glad to be a part of that.

Brown: Moving on into the new century. You start to get significant and prestigious recognition for your work. In 2004 you received two Grammy nominations for two different projects, *The Out-Of-Towners* with Keith Jarrett and Gary Peacock, essentially The Standards Trio, and then *Ivey Divey* with Don Byron and Jason Moran. Any comments about those before I move on to what happened in the next year?

DeJohnette: Those were great records. *Ivey Divey* was very interesting. It was inspired by a record that was done by Lester Young, Nat King Cole and Buddy Rich. No bass. Just the trio, and *Ivy Divey*, was kind of inspired by that. There was no bass... There's bass on it, Lonnie Plaxico plays bass on some tracks, but basically it was just the three of us. Jason Moran, and me and Don on clarinet and saxophone. Jason deliberately didn't listen to the original record. He just came in fresh and it really had a nice concept to it. I love playing with Jason; he is so much fun to play with. I was playing some "four on the floor," things like that. We played a couple of live gigs. That was a really special record to do something like that without bass and pull it off was fantastic. Don's a great composer and improviser, I was really glad to be a part of that.

Brown: Well, you referenced "four on the floor," so being cognizant of the historical evolution of jazz drumming... Which is not something new because I'm looking back at *The Cosmic Chicken*, where you did a selection called, "Last Chance Stomp," where you did an abridged history of jazz drumming.

DeJohnette: It was interesting because I changed the sound as I changed eras.

Brown: You show the stylistic evolution but also show (that) the recording quality/fidelity evolves, too. I just say that to underscore the fact that you know the history of the drum set and when you say "four on the floor" that definitely signals that. As we move ahead in 2005 you launch three projects. The Latin Project, The Jack

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DeJohnette Quartet and then the Beyond Trio, so if you want to talk about them...

DeJohnette: The Latin Project was influenced in part by Don Byron's *Music For Six Musicians*. He had a group and he wrote some Latin/Afro-Cuban music, which utilized congas and Latin percussion, and I was intrigued by that. My agent at the time Alison Lourke(?)... I got the opportunity to play at The Montreal Jazz Festival and be an artist-in-residence which gives you a chance to pick from the musicians who are on the festival and play three nights at a concert. I had this idea to utilize Don and do some of that *Music for Six Musicians*. But the players, I wanted to augment it and use Edsel Gomez who was with him, and I had Luisito Quintero and Giovanni Hidalgo, the master congero to the mix. And Jerome Harris, also has been associated with many different projects through the years. We rehearsed and we played with that group in Montreal. I also did a duo with Bobby McFerrin at the time. Did a duo with Foday Musa Suso; we'll get into that later... A trio with Herbie and Dave Holland. I wasn't able to get the organ trio, which came later with Larry Goldings and John Scofield... As a result of having that Latin project a lot of the APAP producers and presenters were there and heard that group and got excited. As a result, we got some Arts Council concerts the following year. I got a chance to take this Latin Project around. (I) never put it out, but I have some slamming documents of that group. Now, what came to be The Trio Beyond... I was always fascinated with Tony Williams' Lifetime band. That band was light-years ahead of a lot of organ trios, with Larry Young and John McLaughlin. I really wanted to pay tribute to Tony, but we also didn't want to just be a cover band of what Tony did. But taking and adding our stamp to some of the things he did, and also to do some other artists too, like Joe Henderson, Larry Young and Miles to the mix. When I was in California, I went to see Larry Goldings and it turned out that actually before Tony died, he was thinking about putting together, reforming a Lifetime type of project. He called Larry and asked him about that. They thought it was a great idea. I went out to Larry and played some with him and it was great. Then Larry came to New York, and we came together, and went into the studio, recorded some stuff. Then we got a gig at Yoshi's out in California. We played for a week there and then I recorded that and sent it to Manfred Eicher who was so excited about it he wanted to put it out right then. I said, "No, don't put it out yet. Let's wait. Let's let the band tour a little bit more and get seasoned." What happened was we toured Europe and John's sound engineer... we'll get back to that. We recorded at our last gig, which was in London, England at the Royal Festival Hall and we had a great two-track mix... We sent it to Manfred and Manfred liked it and put it out as a two-track master. We did some enhancing to it. We subsequently did... We still do gigs every now

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and then. It's great chemistry, the three of us. I gave a copy to Colleen Williams, Tony's wife. She really liked it.

HOUR 7

Brown: You mentioned the *Oneness* project.

DeJohnette: This was done on ECM. My association with Michael Cain was a highly creative one, and after Special Edition disbanded I had this group together. Actually before the *Oneness* group formed there was a record we did that had the bamboo flutist and clarinet player... It should be in the records. It was with Mike Cain and...

Brown: About what year would that have been? Because I'm showing one that I hadn't discussed, *Dancing With Nature Spirits*.

DeJohnette: Yeah, that's it! What was the...?

Brown: That was in '95.

DeJohnette: Yeah, but the personnel?

Brown: It's not showing the personnel, but I can find it if you want. We'd better go on, I'm having technical problems here.

DeJohnette: Why? Is the Wi-Fi not working?

Brown: There's a glitch in the discography... No, the Wi-Fi's fine. It's a CD-ROM discography.

DeJohnette: OK, we'll come back to that, correct that up.

Brown: There's another possibility, I can look it up on your site too. I'm sure it's on there, I've got your discography here. Yes? No? You don't think so?

DeJohnette: Yeah, I got to get his name right. He's well known... Played Indian flute music.

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Brown: Did he play saxophone as well?

DeJohnette: Mainly the bamboo flutes but he plays clarinet and soprano. But he's really recognized by Indian musicians as one of the best non-Indian flute players. So, we did *Dancing With Nature Spirits* and some co-written things by Mike Cain and myself. Then we did *Oeness*, formed the Oeness group which had Don Alias, Jerome Harris on guitar and bass, and myself on the drums. So we recorded an album called *Oeness*. That utilized Don Alias, and there we have another version of "Jack In" which didn't use the bass actually. Jerome played guitar, and we had Don on it, and Mike Cain. Everybody played just beautifully.

Brown: If we could return back to *Dancing With Nature Spirits*. Steve Gorn?

DeJohnette: Steve Gorn! He played the flutes, soprano and clarinet. OK, so we can move on with that. Actually the *Oeness* group, we actually toured Europe and did some really nice concerts there.

Brown: You said that was a short-lived project.

DeJohnette: Yeah, but we actually toured as a group and performed and worked some in America too.

Brown: Well, as long as we've broken with the timeline/chronology... I want to return to this one called *Extra Special Edition*, 1994.

DeJohnette: OK.

Brown: I think this is the last if not the penultimate release that reflects the Special Edition. *Extra Special Edition*... What are we saying here?

DeJohnette: Extra Special Edition was extra because another friend of mine who played percussion named Paul Grassi was on a few tracks, and Bobby McFerrin came in and sang on a few tracks. A lot of that was open-ended improvisation that was co-written by us all. Bobby just came in and we went for it and I came up with the titles. There were a few things like "Rituals Of Spring" is on that. "Seventh D." That's a piece that appears

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on that record (title).

Brown: “Seventh D.”

DeJohnette: It’s an altered blues. Then some few things, “Speaking In Tongues,” a few things like that. That was more or less an experimental situation. Also, Greg Osby had gone from the band and Marvin Sewell was on guitar, (a) very wonderful guitarist who has done a lot of good things on his own and with Cassandra Wilson, great composer and a very different, unusual talent, gifted composer and player.

Brown: Perhaps we can try to return to the timeline. I’m trying to get in some of your projects, particularly the ones that seem to be conceptually expansive as far as your output, “Music From The Heart Of The Masters,” 2005.

DeJohnette: Well, we need to start from having my own record label.

Brown: Oh! We can back up and go to the formation of Golden Beam.

DeJohnette: Where did that come from... I had so many projects and I have loads and loads of archival tapes. My business partner and wife Lydia said, “Maybe you should have your own label.” Which at the time I naively didn’t know what that meant! Bless her. She went into this, having a label, because I’m more the artist, and she’s more pragmatic, “Who’s going to run this? Who’s going to operate this?” Got into, “If we’re going to have this label I don’t want to do all the work,” so we looked around for young people who could do that. She found a couple of people who were young and getting into that, Jane Chung and **Doug Yoyle (?)**... They helped us launch the label. My younger daughter Minya, also was very instrumental in helping me build a website and keeping that going for me. Without them, without Lydia and Minya, I wouldn’t... We wouldn’t have had a label. Lydia said, “You’ve got all these different ideas; you need to have a place to put them out.” There were projects that we thought labels might not be interested in, so we felt... The first recording was *Music In The Key Of Om*, which was a meditation CD for relaxation and meditation and healing work. Actually, I made it for Lydia in her energy work. People started coming around and saying, “Oh, what’s that?” and, “This is really nice and relaxing!” The idea was: I’d heard a lot of recordings that were supposed to be for meditation and soothing, and a lot of it was musicians just noodling and playing a lot of notes... It wasn’t relaxing at all from what I thought. So I went into a meditative

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state and got into a zone, and did this music with the synthesizer and a resonating bell which I designed in co-partnership with the Sabian Cymbal Company. My son-in-law Ben Surman would produce this, *Music In The Key Of Om*. It subsequently got nominated for a Grammy and also my daughter Farah actually posed for the cover of that. That helped really give it a feel as to what the music was. So, after that I'd been listening to Foday Musa Suso, who is from Gambia living in the States, living in Chicago. He'd been doing various things, had his own group The Mandingo Griot Society and did things with Pharaoh Saunders. Still to this day (he) plays on and off with Phillip Glass, and he writes and composes music, soundtracks and things. I heard him first on an album of Herbie Hancock's called, *The Village*, done in 1974? It is when the Olympics were going on. I'm not sure the exact date but I loved this record. Herbie and him did a duet record. Herbie was just getting into electric keyboards. Foday was playing in London with Phillip Glass and Lydia and I went to hear him. I came backstage and said, "Hey man, I know one your songs called, 'Moonlight'" and I sang it to him and said, "I really like your music. Maybe we could do something together." So he said, "Yeah, OK." I'll come to New York and stay with Phillip, maybe I can come up and we can get together." So he came one January around 2004 or '05, and he came up to the house and spent four days up here. We spent two days getting the music together, and then I called Scott Petito, an engineer friend of mine, musician friend of mine, to come over to my studio and we recorded what came out to be *Hearts Of The Masters* here in my studio. Later we did some touring and I added Jerome Harris on the bass. We still have an association to this day.

Brown: I don't recall if you mentioned this, but *Music In The Key Of Om* received a Grammy nomination.

DeJohnette: Oh, yeah.

Brown: By this time you had become an artist for Sabian Cymbals, so it was through that you were able to develop these... Are you starting to develop instruments with them?

DeJohnette: I had been with Sabian for quite a while.

Brown: Had you been developing this line of tuned percussion for them?

DeJohnette: It was my idea to do it. They helped me bring it to realization. Resonating bells. They look like bowls really but they're bells. They're tuned to A440.

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Brown: Are they any different than the Tibet Bells or the Prayer Bells they use in Japan, too?

DeJohnette: They're sort of detuned. These are actually tuned with an electronic tuner and I was at the factory. I wanted something that would sustain, long sustain, and Nort Hargrove the metallurgist there at the time... We had a great rapport making and working on cymbals. They also make crotales and cup chimes, so this was in that realm. It's like a bit of alchemy. One of the things we discovered about the bells is the pitch got lower the smaller the lip got. As opposed to what you would think; the pitch got higher the bigger the lip. I use them when it calls for to play different scales on. I have thirteen, I had them made up of thirteen, the chromatic scale from middle C to C an octave above. They're pretty heavy just carrying them around. I had a stand on which you could stack them up, or I use them piggybacked on my cymbals using some extra felts. The bell really has something very special about it especially if you use a very soft marimba mallet. It gets a very warm and healing sound, meditative sound, so I use that on the bell.

Brown: So the two albums again, *Hearts Of The Masters* and *Music In The Key Of Om*. Those were simultaneously released in April of 2005 according to your biography. As I mentioned before the *Music In The Key Of Om* received the Grammy nomination in Best New Age album category rather than jazz, so you're branching completely out of the genre of jazz and being recognized for your work.

DeJohnette: Yeah, which was a surprise!

Brown: Well, not too surprising because we're going to see that they keep their eye on you and you ultimately... Well we won't expose the surprise. So, here's something that I wasn't aware of, and again, later this year, very prolific year, 2005, you release *Hybrids*.

DeJohnette: That's a project involved with my son-in-law Ben Surman, who is actually the son of the great English saxophonist/composer and also was involved in electronics too, John Surman. Ben is married to my daughter Minya and he's also a musician and also a fine sound engineer, also does a lot of remixing, and plays electronic wind instruments as well. He's just a wonderful human being and great artist. He took some of the recordings that we had done and remixed them, and remixed them in a way that I've never heard anybody... The level, the way he mixes is just on a level that's fantastic. Pat

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Metheny listened to it and really, really loved it. It's really artistic, very thoughtful, very rhythmic. He likes drums so he hears rhythmically, very rhythmically astute. He remixed these and we even had some videos from some of the remixes. It's brilliant what he did.

Brown: It's called *The Ripple Effect*?

DeJohnette: *The Ripple Effect*.

Brown: And that's the name of the ensemble?

DeJohnette: The people that were on there... Foday didn't tour with us, but Marlui Miranda and Jerome joined us, Ben and myself and John. We toured and did some dates in Europe. We had a great time playing the music live using my electronic hand percussion unit called the Roland HPD-15 Handsonic Percussion Module which has a four track sequencer on it but also enables you to... it has 800 percussion sounds in it: tablas to talking drums. You guys won't want to leave if I show you it.

Brown: I'm going to have to go get one.

DeJohnette: Let's move on.

Brown: Let's move on with the Golden Beams catalogue, because the level of productivity is astounding. February you release *The Elephant Sleeps But Still Remembers*.

DeJohnette: "The Elephant Sleeps But Still Remembers" is one of my favorites of the projects that I did with Bill Frisell. While I was touring in 2000 with Keith Jarrett out in the Northwest, we played in Seattle, Washington, John Gilbreath...

Brown: The Earshot Jazz Festival. . .

DeJohnette: Yeah, he presents that. The Keith Jarrett Trio played in Seattle, and I had a few days off. John set up a concert with Bill and I. And, as I do, I document everything on the latest technologies going, this one being DAT tapes. It was recorded, and it was a really good concert. We improvised a lot of things and I played some piano on it. We played "After The Rain" and some improvised things. The tape sat around in the archives

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and one day I put it on and listened to it and I thought, “Well, there’s something here.” So I called Bill. I said, “Bill, would you mind? I’ll send this to you, I think that we’ve, this concert, there’s something going on in there and I think I’d like to put it out on my label if you’d be agreeable to that.” So I sent it to him and Bill was agreeable with it; he liked it. I said, “Listen, do you mind? I want to bring Ben Surman in on this to enhance it.” So Ben took it and added some ambient sounds to it. Rounded it out with some bass levels here and there. Extra sounds. Really rounded the performance out. It’s a great way of showing how you can enhance something that was done as a live performance and go in the studio and really tell a story with further production on it. I was very happy with Ben’s additions to that.

Brown: I’m looking at your discography on your website and it has *The Ripple Effect* release date as 2009. Your biography says October 2005 was the release date for *Hybrids*.

DeJohnette: We’ll have to look at the actual CD and get that corrected.

Brown: OK, then we’ll do that. Then there was a *Golden Beams Collected Volume 1* which (was) released (in) 2001...

DeJohnette: That’s really a compilation.

Brown: Then your relationship with ECM... In 2006 you release, *Saudades* a live recording of Lifetime And Beyond. So that was when you released that trio.

DeJohnette: Yeah.

Brown: That also received a Grammy nomination. So, your projects are receiving notice regardless of the genre whether it’s new age or jazz. That speaks to your versatility and perhaps to the integrity of your work that you can crossover to another field and still receive some recognition. I don’t know if you’re going to tour doing that but...

DeJohnette: Doing what?

Brown: Touring as a new age artist as opposed to a jazz artist.

DeJohnette: I don’t think so. I may make some more relaxation recordings, but I don’t

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know about touring. If somebody out there makes me an offer I can't refuse. [Laughs]

Brown: Then there's a listing of several other projects. We could return to the Golden Beams catalogue...

DeJohnette: We'd have to go into *Music We Are*.

Brown: And then of course, *Peace Time*. *Peace Time* was 2009. Now, *Music We Are* was recorded when? Because you're showing on your discography the release date is 2011, but then there's a clip on your website...

DeJohnette: It must be 2010.

Brown: That's what I thought. We just want to make sure the record's straight if this is your website. But let's talk about *Peace Time* because this is the one that garnered you the Grammy and that's still in the New Age.

DeJohnette: *Peace Time*. I again brought in Ben for that to enhance that. That used a flute sound and some sort of a sequenced piano pattern that Ben brought in and out, also some didgeridoo and other ambient sounds are on it. That actually (came about) through (an) association Lydia has with a woman, Jeanette... I'll get the name. Was at one time a nurse at Kingston Hospital. The idea came up of collaborating. Her husband Chris is a musician (and) also did some relaxation music and there was a photographer in the area... I'll come back down and get the names right, get it straight with Lydia so I'll record it right. The point is that we hooked up with this Alaskan photographer and put the music to his still shots, which sort of rolled and moved. The music is being played in hospitals. *Peace Time* and Chris' music also, along with this video for people who are maybe going to have an operation or whatever. In the room they can have headphones and listen to this music to soothe them. It's also being used... played in the hospital for the staff to keep some kind of tranquility and gives them a vibe. So I'm really happy when people use this music in that context.

Brown: For healing.

DeJohnette: Yeah. To get a Grammy was also an extra treat for that. Ben and I both received Grammys for that, so that was greatly appreciated.

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Brown: Was this a Golden Beams project that was distributed by eMusic?

DeJohnette: No it was by Koch, which is now eMusic. It was Koch, now it's E-1.

Brown: E-1, that's right. Well, let's go ahead and discuss *Music We Are*. On your website you have a clip of the group working on this... You've got John Patitucci talking, you've got Danilo Perez.

DeJohnette: Yeah. Actually that's a two-disc package. It has two discs in it. One is the music and one is the video that we had shot by **Arav Osiri (?)**, and it documents our feelings about each other, and about the music, and how it all came together. I did Danilo's first album as a leader while doing a recording with a Chinese guitarist named Eugene Pao, which had John Patitucci on it. I suggested to John that he and Danilo would really work well together, and that actually turns out to be the case, as they're part of Wayne Shorter's quartet. I wanted to play with them, and I had this idea I wanted to do something with Jerome Harris, also a really accomplished guitarist as well as electric bassist and acoustic bass guitarist. I formed a quartet and I also had Jerome play some banjo, because I was interested in writing some Middle Eastern music also. What happened was we toured Europe with the quartet, and then after that we wanted to do something as a trio so I suggested we go in and record. This became a co-led project; it morphed into that. We went in, and in two days or three days we produced, and then came back and mixed it. It came out really great and it represented our approach to the music and also has me playing melodica on it utilizing overdubbing. Patitucci overdubs the bass guitar. I really feel really great that we actually documented how we felt and how we approached the music. Subsequently, after that we played a sold-out week in New York at The Blue Note and then we did the Puerto Rican Jazz Festival and we haven't done anything since. But that's still a great record and we're planning now through E1. Now distributing for Golden Beams. We are going to do a push for that recording along with... the future, a new recording that's coming out on Golden Beams and E1.

Brown: No, please talk about it now. We're talking about your projects.

DeJohnette: Well, this was a project through the encouragement and suggestion of my wife Lydia, through the associations that we have with Chuck Mitchell, who is a great

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friend and supporter of my music and things that I did. Chuck's been involved in television, and with projects, which involve Herbie Hancock. We spoke to Chuck as the economy and our country and around the world is changing, and as things are getting a little tighter... We considered maybe not doing this, having a record label. Stuff like that. Lydia said, "Let's call Chuck and see if he has some suggestions," and so we called. Chuck came up and had some ideas. I have to interject, getting the NEA award was important, and also next year 2012 being the year I celebrate my 70th birthday on the planet. These things were interesting to Chuck and he just sort of said, "We can't really afford to do another recording." The *Music We Are* was quite a financial investment. Lydia was talking about, "You should do something special to celebrate your 70th year." Herbie and Chick were already doing that; celebrating on some of their performances. I'm doing that with Chick this year. So, he suggested, "Look, we'll support you doing a record; a special record. What do you want to do that comprises your history? One request though; you have to play some piano on it." So I'd been thinking about people I'd want to play with. The people that I had in mind to do this project were: Esperanza Spalding, Lionel Loueke, Jason Moran, the exciting trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, my percussion buddy, sort of "right hand, left hand" guy, Luisito Quintero on percussion. I wanted producer Bob Sadin to produce it. I'd worked with Bob before and done some things with him, Sting's record. He had great ears and so I suggested that. We had a meeting and I talked about the fact that I wanted to use these people and also eventually a great horn player, composer Tim Ries came in and played saxophones on the recording. We felt it needed another voice. Bob and I thought that and he came in and did a fantastic job. Tim also is a great jazz composer and arranger, and also plays with The Rolling Stones. He's really well versed; plays exotic flutes and world music kind of things. That was the personnel and we just finished recording. We're doing the mastering and mixing.

Brown: Which is one of the reasons that we got the phone call that you had a day.

DeJohnette: Yeah. The idea behind the recording was that it would be groove oriented, a lot of grooves and melodies. Celebrating the voice and percussion, and of course my writing. As it turned out I wrote some nice pieces. New compositions for it, and also brought in some compositions that I had recorded before. I wrote a piece for Luisito called "Luisito Serena Salto." It means "cool salsa" and Esperanza... Bob Sadin got Esperanza to do some improvising on this track, which was really amazing. Great feeling, great quality in her voice. Ambrose plays some great trumpet on it. I wrote this composition for the band where the band meets Mardi Gras and New Orleans by way of

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another partner who helped write this music for this piece. I wrote this funk thing in 7/4 and I called Bruce Hornsby and I played a couple things I was writing and I said, “You want to write some lyrics to this?” and he said, “Yeah.” He wrote some lyrics and when he finished the title became “The Dirty Ground,” so that was a bonus. That’s an area that when you hear it’s pretty good. Then Bobby McFerrin. I had Bobby McFerrin come to sing a composition called “Oneness” that I wrote. I wrote a piece called “Indigo Dreamscapes” and then another piece called “New Muse” and then there’s a piece... A sort of rhythmic, trance kind of piece and it’s the title of the recording. It’s called “Sound Travels.” I played quite a bit piano on it: overdubbing, some solos and trio with Bobby and Luisito and solo piano. I used the bell on it. It’s very exciting. I’m very excited about that.

Brown: So, you’re hoping to tour with this project in 2012?

DeJohnette: Yes, next year, and also touring with my own group, the Jack DeJohnette group, which features Rudresh Mahanthappa on alto saxophone, George Colligan on the electronic keyboard and acoustic piano and pocket trumpet. He also is a drummer. George is a good drummer. Dave Fiuczynski on double-neck guitar, and Jerome Harris on vocals and electric bass guitar and acoustic bass guitar.

Brown: Now this group is featured on your current release. The *Live At Yoshi’s*.

DeJohnette: That’s the digital release.

Brown: Only as a digital download? OK.

DeJohnette: Hopefully in the future if things go well I’ll record an album for Golden Beams and El with the group. We hope to be touring some of the festivals with both bands so Lydia’s been my business advisor. She’s amazing. She’s great. Our new assistant, Joan has been really very helpful. We’re looking to a pretty exciting next year.

Brown: Well, the year is going to really be launched when you receive the NEA Jazz Masters Award at the ceremony.

DeJohnette: We’ll also be doing on the 8th of January one night with my group at the Blue Note. It will also be augmented by Tim Ries and Luisito. We may do a couple of

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pieces from the new record.

Brown: So it will be a seven-piece ensemble then?

DeJohnette: Yeah.

Brown: That'll be a heavy budget with both those groups on the bill when you tour!

DeJohnette: Well, yeah. It's just a little something. I couldn't do a whole thing, maybe just a little tease.

Brown: When one looks at your career, you've received perhaps every possible award, recognition for your artistry in all the trade magazines, *Downbeat* and everything. Your records have garnered critical acclaim, but the NEA Jazz Master is a particularly unique award. How did you feel when you received that?

DeJohnette: Well it took me awhile for it to register, to believe I'd gotten it. Particularly the fact that it's the last year it will be given out because of our financial atmosphere that we're in right now. I really feel honored and it's a really good feeling to be recognized for my passion, for what I love to do in life. It's a great feeling at this time in my life to be recognized as someone who's contributed something to the music, to jazz, and beyond.

Brown: Definitely that! This may be a difficult question, but in retrospect of having been performing, composing, pretty much everything in this genre we call jazz, how would you characterize what your contribution is? If you can or perhaps let's just talk about your art form of drumming, how you shaped that. Now when I look at... Because I came up listening to you. You were the first jazz drummer I ever saw play live. I saw that you had successfully synthesized and then transformed the stylistic expressions of Tony Williams and Elvin Jones. You yourself have said that that's what you've done or that's what characterizes your percussive approach to the drum set. You've also talked about how you think as a pianist, you think of the drum set as a piano and your legs as two more arms. I've seen that quoted as well. When I look at the history of jazz drumming, since your advent on the jazz scene at least through recordings you've basically influence pretty much everybody. We say there's Pre-Charlie Parker and Post-Charlie Parker, there's Pre-Elvin and Post-Elvin and I can say the same thing about Jack DeJohnette.

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There's drumming before Jack DeJohnette and there's drumming after Jack DeJohnette. Your style... I mean you've got two other drummers in this room, and we've all been influenced by you. Is there anything that you haven't done yet on drums that you have either conceptualized, or any other vision of the drum set?

DeJohnette: Well, it's just to be able to play my ideas better. I'd say the drum department is in great shape. There are so many great drummers out there right now. Nasheet Waits, Cindy Blackman just to name a few. Roy Haynes' grandson Marcus Gilmore. I just try and come up with something different but that can communicate. The music I play dictates what I'm going to play, and I don't know what I'm going to play. That's the mystery that keeps my going. I want to discover something new, and different, and play something I've never played before. My intuitiveness will guide me to that. My contribution is to keep something, the idea of making music--no matter what it is--organic, alive and spontaneous, and exciting, and joyful, and healing. Music is more than just entertainment. I think we here in the West... Music is not as front and foremost as it is in indigenous societies. Particularly when I went to Africa and noticed how well the drums were respected, because they are utilized and integrated into everyday life. When people play music they play it anytime. In here, when we play music you go to a concert, you go to a club, and you play music at a certain time. I'll take a quote from a story that Yo Yo Ma... He went to Africa, to Mali. He was really fascinated by the Kora and wanted to play over there. He was supposed to give a concert at 7:00 and people laughed and said, "Well, I hope people will come because people don't play by the clock. We're going to have a healing ceremony." "When?" "Now, or later." You know, the sense of time and space... Here we listen to the music in headphones. You can listen to it that way anytime you want to, but to make music, the whole process when we go hear music (is) tied into commerce and to making a living. It's just interesting how music is integrated or sometimes not integrated in our lives. At any rate, I think we are like shamans when we play music. I like to be where the intention is, "OK, I'm playing this music. This music besides reaching people and trying to have an affect on them, has an effect on the environment, on the consciousness of the planet." We can move to better places of understanding and a place of enlightenment. I'd like that to be my contribution to the music. I'm happy that I've been an influence but I'd like to also more than that, be an inspiration to people to find their own voices and tell their stories. Build on top of the many masters that have come before that aren't with us.

Brown: Well, Jack DeJohnette, I have to say that you don't have to worry about having

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been an influence for positive forces and influence for good. I want to say personally and I can speak for Ken in this regard as well, you have been a very positive influence in our lives. You've set a standard of not only artistic integrity but also personal integrity. People that we talk to always speak so highly of you, about you, that you are so giving. We just feel just these past two days... We feel truly blessed to have been able to spend this time, for you to tell your story, to share your views, your wisdom, your heart, your soul for the historical record. So, on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution and the NEA I just want to say our heartfelt gratitude to you, Jack DeJohnette.

DeJohnette: Well thank you very much. It was a pleasure talking with you too. Really enjoyed it.

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