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TOOTS THIELEMANS
NEA Jazz Master (2009)

Interviewee: Toots Thielemans (April 29, 1922 -)
Interviewer: Anthony Brown with recording engineer Ken Kimery
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Brown: Today is August 31, 2011. My name is Anthony Brown, and I am conducting the Smithsonian Institution Oral History with NEA Jazz Master, harmonica virtuoso, guitarist and whistler, Toots Thielemans. Hello...

Thielemans: Yes, my real name is Jean.

Brown: Jean.

Thielemans: And in Belgium... I was born in Belgium. Jean-Baptiste Frédéric Isidor. Four first names. And then Thielemans.

Brown: That's funny.

Thielemans: And in French-speaking Belgium, they will pronounce it Thielemans. But I was born April 29, 1922.

Brown: That's Duke Ellington's birthday, as well.

Thielemans: Yes.

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Brown: All right.

Thielemans: Yes, same day.

Brown: Yeah, same day. Just a few years later. [laughs]

Thielemans: [laughs] Oh, Duke. Okay.

Brown: Where in Belgium? What city?

Thielemans: In Brussels.

Brown: That's the capitol.

Thielemans: In a popular neighborhood of Brussels called Les Marolles. There was... I don't know, I wouldn't know which neighborhood to equivalent in New York. Would that be Lower East Side? Or whatever... popular. And my folks, my father and mother, were operating, so to speak, a little beer café—no alcohol but beer, and different beers—in this café on High Street, Rue Haute, on the Marolles. And then the little café was called the Kop Knuff [?]*—the Little Step Down. That's Flemish. And that's it. [laughs]*

Brown: And your parents' names.

Thielemans: My father was Bernard Thielemans, and my mother was Egmas [?] [unintelligible]. Don't try to spell it. [laughs] She was from Antwerp. My father was from Brussels. And there were some roots from Walloon, from the mine work. This province in Wallonia, and my uncles were mine workers. So there's a total scope, total mixture of Belgian, Flemish, Walloon French, and Brussels. That's so I'm three linguist to start.

Brown: So Flemish, French, and English or...

Thielemans: No, not yet.

Brown: French and...

Thielemans: But later on, when I start to travel. But in school, in those days when you went to école moyenne, they called it. It takes twelve years. You have six years elementary and then six years secondary, right? And my direction was mathematics and languages. So at age... after twelve years of school, I could speak... We had good English teachers, good German. So the four languages were French, Flemish, English, and German. So when I was sixteen, I could write business letters in English and in German. And of course, by then, the movies, you know... James Cagney and all those. So I learned English, you know, real quick.

Brown: Could you talk about your parents? What were their jobs or occupations?

Thielemans: Occupation? They tried to operate that café, and my mother, you know, we had a sister was born, too. She's still alive—Mariette.

Brown: Younger sister?

Thielemans: Younger sister. Six, seven years. She was born in '29, and I was born in '22. And now we Skype, you know. We have a ball. [laughs] And so, and they were just... there was enough work to do with operating that little Kop Knuff [?]. [laughs]

Brown: Okay.

Thielemans: Thank you, Anthony.

Brown: Oh, Toots, it's a pleasure. Let's talk a little bit about your childhood. Maybe your neighborhood. Was there music in the neighborhood? Were there kinds of entertainment? Circus?

Thielemans: Yes.

Brown: Anything to captivate your imagination.

Thielemans: Well, there was a popular neighborhood in those days, and this neighborhood has changed considerably. But this is when I was three years old. Little Jean. Jean, that's me playing the accordion. And in Brussels, I could show it to you. We still have the accordion. And on that, when I was three years old, my mother took me to the movie to see a film of Ramón Novarro. That was the big love symbol. But that song Ramóna... [plays tune on harmonica and sings] "Ramóna." And then when I came home from the movie, I was... So I scared everybody. This little kid...

Brown: [laughs]

Thielemans: And then my father being a Socialist, you know... militant fighting. They were still fighting for the fifty-hour week, you know. Really progressive. I mean, there were no progressing. [laughs] And uh, so I played this was in then... [singing] "C'est la vie [ta finale?]." [plays tune] You know, the Socialist things. And here there's some popular Brussels with lyrics—unprintable lyrics. [laughs]

Brown: So why did you play accordion?

Thielemans: I didn't know why. I forget. Oh. Thanks for the question. Uh... I was sitting in, you call it, my crib or what it was. And every Sunday in the café, the [Kop Knuff?], there was an accordion player. And he put his hat on the floor, and he was playing, you know. And I was

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imitating his motions with the accordion, but I took it... I did it with a shoebox. You know, they still have those cardboard shoeboxes, right? And that was the... that, I guess, my father... And one of the [unintelligible], they call him—one of the customers of the [Kop Knuff?—said... Can I say it in Flemish?

Brown: Yes.

Thielemans: Typical Brussels dialect. [unintelligible; in Flemish] “It looks like this little one wants to play the accordion.” And then my father... first the cardboard. This is the second one. After I got good on the first cardboard, this is a graduation. [laughs]

Brown: So this picture you were how old?

Thielemans: How old am I? You can judge. I don’t know. Three, four? I don’t know.

Brown: [laughs] So you learned how to walk, talk, and then play accordion?

Thielemans: Yeah. I guess so. [laughs]

Brown: That’s amazing. So in school, was there music in the schools?

Thielemans: No.

Brown: Were you encouraged to be... No?

Thielemans: No. We had one hour a week solfeggio, you know. But no, the music was forgotten, you know. I was a good student in a weak class. [laughs] I was the most, if not first, you know. And my... later on when I was fifteen, I had to make decisions where I am going to go in the university. And mathematics was the choice. But music started to take over, of course. We had all the phonographs, you know, where you put the needle and you have two place with that needle. And then you have to wind up the phonograph again. And that’s much later. Oh, my God. My first Louis Armstrong record. We were living in a suburb of Brussels, of course. And around about 100 yards walk from where... that was during the German occupation already, you know, 1940. And this lady said, in the record store—78s, of course. No CD or no digital. And this lady said, “Jean,” lets me in. No [inaudible]. [laughs] [in French] “Jean, tu doit acheter ce disque.” “You must buy this record.” “C’est Louis Armstrong avec les Mills Brothers.” That’s French speaking, you know. Louis Armstrong and the Mills Brothers. And we played that, and we still have that wind-up phonograph, you know. And I remember, Louis Armstrong’s trumpet exploded so clear on the loudspeaker on the phonograph. And that was... And then when I was about twelve, thirteen, fourteen, we lived in Brussels but... and near where we lived, there was a cinema, movie houses, right? And every Wednesday or Thursday—I’ve forgotten now—for one franc... I don’t know how much that would be today. One Belgian franc... six, seventy years ago, we could go matinee movies—all the American—James Cagney, you know, of those eras. And one of the movies showed, in one of the movies there was a scene where one of the prisoners was waiting for his turn to go and be in electric chair. [laughs] And he was playing the harmonic. [singing] I said, “Hey, that’s nice. I’m gonna buy one.” [laughs]

That's how it started. No, a real simple one yet, you know. This is a chromatic one, not the diatonic. And that's it. And that started to... And after I was, of course, contaminated by Louis Armstrong, you know, I started to listen. That was still before liberation, you know. That was... the Germans were occupying and they were not encouraging music by colored people or Jewish people, you know. Benny Goodman, for instance. But we had, anyway, we had friends who had... There's always been a subculture or underground group of musicians or jazz fans in Belgium. Even in Germany, I'm sure there was under Hitler. And so I bought the Django Reinhardt. No, the musicians started to say, they started to hear me show musicianship with this, you know. And then they said, "Jean, throw that toy away, you know. Get a real instrument." Sure, you know, okay, here I am. And on a bet... So, to show you everything that happened to me happened to me. I never looked for trying to get anything or submit. "No, sir, I can do that if you want." No, no. So I had a friend during the War occupation, whose uncle sold liquor in the black market. And he has... Gilbert. He's still alive, I hope, in California. And he received money for his uncle, had a lot of money, and every week he bought an instrument until he found out, of course, it takes... He had two lessons on the drums and he [inaudible], you know. And that was his week for guitar. [laughs] Believe it or not, Gilbert. And we were already friends. We fooled around with the harmonicas—a little group and [stuff?]. And I was in bed. I had pneumonia. I was really in bad shape. But Gilbert came to visit me at where we lived in my parents, and with a guitar under his arm. And I asked, I said, "What you doing with this guitar?" "Ah, I'm disgusted. I came from the teacher, and I..." [laughs] But you know, the beautiful part of this... he tried to play the Fats Waller song. [singing] "Hold tight, hold..." On one string, you know. "Hold tight, hold tight fododo-de-yacka saki. Want some seafood." You know this?

Brown: Mm-hmm.

Thielemans: Well, that's... We all knew that, you know. All the little jazz fans that we were. We knew that and we knew Boogie Woogie or whatever was... But [unintelligible] Fats Waller. And then I said, "Gilbert..." I had already notions of solfeggio but not so much. "I can play that song on one string on your guitar in five minutes." And I took... And that's a typical blues phrase. [plays phrase, then sings] "Fododo-de-yacka saki. Want some seafood...mama. Shrimpers and rice, they're really nice..." You know, that's Fats Waller. And I said, "Gilbert, je sais jouer song en dix minutes." [inaudible] And I was sick in bed. And he gave me the guitar. He said, "Eh..." He was... So that was how I became a guitar player. [laughs] So it was all planned, right? [laughs] And then, then I started to buy the Django Reinhardt records. We still found [inaudible], you know. And there were still other records, you know. We got every... We had access to every record that could come from the States, for instance, before liberation. As long as the Germans occupied Belgium, we lost all possibility to get records from America, for instance, you know. So, but there was a lot. There was a lot of the Jimmie Lunceford. [singing] "Four or five times..." And all those songs. [singing] "And the flat foot floogie with a floy..." [laughs] All those songs we... And that was the... I mean, my... almost you can start to call it maybe my soul contamination. [laughs] Yes, [alchemy?].

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Brown: Oh, that's great. Well, you say contamination. It sounds more like celebration. It made you happy this music, yes?

Thielemans: Yes, but I call... lately, I've been calling jazz a virus. And when the room is occupied... the spectators, the people who come to listen to see a [inaudible] concert, you will be contaminated yourself if you are here. If you were not, your contamination makes you a jazz fan. Something like that.

Brown: Uh-huh.

Thielemans: And it's true.

Brown: Yeah. But it's a positive contamination, yes? [laughs]

Thielemans: Yeah. It's a good virus. [laughs] It's positive but it's a good one. [laughs]

Brown: Uh-huh. So were you able to get into music groups where you were playing jazz?

Thielemans: During the War, you know, a little bit. And then I became... quickly I became a good guitar player. Studying from those records of Django. Django was a fantastic... The records of Django Reinhardt were fantastic. Well, I never got that velocity, you know. He was... But uh... see, the harmonica, as fantastic as it is, you can only play one note. [plays scales on harmonica] And with the guitar you can play chords. And then I started to study harmony, you know. You could know... you'd follow a C major. C7 goes usually to F. That sort of thing. And then the guitar, of course... I had put... in the meantime, I gave up my... I flopped, flunked at the university... royally. [laughs] No, but it was... And my bad, poor health, you know. So I became a decent guitar player, I guess. And I learned a lot. And after the liberation, you know, the one record I was totally... I saw the guitar players of my generation in Europe outside of the States were Django-influenced very muchly. And but, I wanted more than... Django's music is a branch of jazz, so to speak, but the three of jazz's mainstream... not to call it mainstream, but the African American music—Ellington and Armstrong, Count Basie and all that, you know. And... [laughs] So... Oh, after liberation, I played even during the German offensive in the Ardennes, you know, where we were almost divided, you know, the... it was lucky that the American troops and Allied troops were able to keep the Germans where they should be. [laughs] And so I was playing in some café, jazz, with the guitar, and there was one cold winter where I played the guitar with my gloves. [laughs] And we received all and was hanging out in the GI clubs and the officer clubs in American troops. And we found what the American troops received was the hit kits, that was songs. [singing] "I walk alone." All the songs of the War, you know. [singing] "I wish I knew..." And so I learned all those songs, you know, and we played them for the soldiers who came for, on their permission. You know, they had two, three days off and they went to Brussels to... [laughs] to live a little bit, you know. And that's how I started to play, you know, with a pianist and bass and the drum and me. No harmonica. Nobody wanted to hear that, you know. [laughs]

Brown: So Toots, when you say you were ill, what disease did you have?

Thielemans: Asthma and pneumonia. And I still have to be careful for asthma. In my life, I went through the total scope of asthma puffs and even... oh, that's a beautiful anecdote. Even when I came to the States the first time. That was in '47, with my uncle, the brother of my father. And we went... There was a club—The Embers. I wound up playing there with the George Shearing Quartet. And I went to listen. I knew all the records. I was up on all my bebop. And in the Embers restaurant, jazz place, there was the trio with Red Norvo, the vibraphonist, with Tal Farlow, fantastic guitar player that was [interested in me?]. And Charlie Mingus played bass with that trio.

Brown: Right.

Thielemans: And I went there, and I went in the dressing room, met the guy, and I took something out of my pocket. They was passing a cigarette. And I... and that smelled just like marijuana. And all the guys were, “Hey, man, [unintelligible], too, you know [what I mean?]?” [laughs] That's a beautiful anecdote. And then they... the medicine graduated, so to speak, from a cigarette to a puff first [for one of those?]. And now they have absolutely perfect for my kind of asthma. My kind of asthma. [laughs] So that's another good... You'll have to clip a lot.

Brown: Yeah, it's okay. Let's go back before you made your first trip to America. So the occupation ended. So you flunked out of the university. So you really are now going...

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: Not going to be a mathematician. You're going to be a musician. Is this what's in your mind?

Thielemans: Yes. Yes. And I'm... I played but we [inaudible]. I have to do [inaudible] for quite a few years. Play the melody for the people who want to dance so whatever, you know. And but I listened to all the records. I was totally acquainted, you know, the Dizzy Gillespie records and Charlie Parker, you know. I'm talking now about '45, 6, 7.

Brown: Right.

Thielemans: And we had friends, sailors, who went back and forth between America, and we bought all of the records. One bass Hit, the big orchestra with Dizzy. And the big orchestra and the small orchestra. And all the Charlie Parker. And there was... that bebop, you know, explosion was something... I expected many of the musicians of my generation were waiting for something like that to happen in jazz. And that was one of the first hurdles, really. The evolution of jazz started with, [you'd say?], King Oliver and Louie Armstrong and then the people like Eddie Lang, Joe Venuti, [inaudible] and [inaudible]. And the swing bands. And then there was that hurdle—bebop, you know. And many of the guys who could play perfect swing

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music were not able, and I was fortunate. I guess I had... I was right away a bebopper, you know. I mean, I was... I can say I was. And then I kept studying, and I finally got my... I played for the Belgian Jazz Club, Jazz Federation as a trio when we went to Paris for the jazz festival.

Brown: What year?

Thielemans: That was 1949.

Brown: Oh, that's when Charlie Parker was there. And Miles Davis.

Thielemans: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

Brown: With Tadd Dameron.

Thielemans: And as it was, I had made... I came to the States in '47 with my uncle, and I met Hank Jones and those guys at 52nd Street. That was the Three Deuces. And every week there was an all-star group but with the same guys. One week was J.J. Johnson, the leader. One week was Howard McGee, a fine trumpet player. And we went there. Now it's getting long. I have to talk about maybe, I was in Miami with my uncle for his vacation. I went with him to Miami.

Brown: This is still in 1947? That same trip?

Thielemans: Yeah, yeah. Thank you. And in Miami, that was the period of the Nat King Cole popularity. [singing] "Straighten up and fly right." [unintelligible], you know. And in every restaurant, there was a trio—bass, piano, and guitar. And one of the guys sang. [laughs] You know, all of them are singing. And I went to one of those restaurants, and I became, you know, when a musician meets a musician, after two minutes, after the first word, you know—oh, this guy knows his stuff. I'll stay here and talk to him. You know? And I became friends with the guitar player. "Yeah, I play the guitar myself but I prefer blah blah." And I said, "And I play that." "Oh yeah?" You know? And I sat in with the band. And who was in that restaurant that night was Bill Gottlieb. That's the photographer. And he, you know, he was the photographer of the music, you know. And he said, "Hey, you're good, man. What's happening?" Well, I have to go... I'm here with my uncle, but I have to go back via New York, where I can get on the boat in New York to go to Genoa and to play with the Belgian guys at the Nice Jazz Festival. "Well, if you come to New York, call me. I'll take you to the Street." [That would be?] [inaudible] at 52nd Street, of course. And then he took me to the Street, and there was just Hank Jones, for instance, and all those guys—Percy Heath, Jimmie Heath, probably, and J.J. Something like that. And he said, "What do you want to play [inaudible]?" So Bill Gottlieb goes to the guy. "Hey guy, guys, I've got a great guy here from Belgium." "Boo, Belgium. Where's that?" You know? "And he plays the harmonica." "Boo!" No, I'm making it... But it was... the feeling was about like that. They didn't expect. And Hank, [inaudible] Hank. I knew of Hank. I had his records. Yeah, we knew. I had all the records. He was before '47, you know. And uh, "Oh, Mr. Jones." "What do you want to play?" And then, it was, I can't get started. And the second and the third or fourth bar was a chromatic sequence that if you could master that, that opened the door for bebop, you were an acceptable bebopper. That's it. [plays harmonica] And now.

[plays a few more bars] But I play it a little better now, I hope. [laughs] But the whole band, “Wow.” No, this was like chromatic, minor 7, 7th, B minor 7th, E7, then B-flat, you know. And that was a fantastic exercise besides. And I [inaudible]. And “Hey, hey.” And I stayed two days. I sat at the piano and I had my guitar, too. “I’ll bring it tomorrow.” [laughs] There was Three Deuces. And then... [laughs] “This is beautiful. Thank you.” And one of those nights... You know, I was there two nights. The other group was Lennie Tristano. I sat in with them. [I?] didn’t move from the piano. I had a high stool, a bar stool, so to speak. And they just came by—Billy Shaw. And Billy Shaw was, you know, the salesman of... the representative to be respected. The representative of bebop—Charlie Parker and [later on?] Miles, and [inaudible]. And, “Where are you from?” You know? In typical Hollywood, you know. “Where are you from?” “I’m from Brussels.” “Oh, I know. That’s in Copenhagen.” [laughs] I swear to you. It’s just... “Send me records.” Just say, “Yes. Yes, sir.” “I’ll make you the Belgian king of bebop.” That really shocked me. I remember... I swear. Why would I lie sixty years later? [laughs] And uh, that’s happened.

Brown: So...

Thielemans: That was the... oh, I got some sort of a door, a little toe in the jazz door in New York.

Brown: Well, it sounds like you made quite a splash ‘cause... [laughs]

Thielemans: Yeah, with this, you know. I was showing that I was totally up-to-date in my.... If you can play that [fluid?] and with musical sense, those three, two bars... [plays harmonica] Half a step, [inaudible] half a step. [plays one bar] But that’s just the main notes used, but then you can... [plays a couple more bars] You know, all that you can do.

Brown: You’re playing more than one note at a time now. [laughs]

Thielemans: Well, they go so fast it sounds like that. [laughs]

Brown: What month were you there? So it was 1947 and you’re in New York. You’re at the Three Deuces. Do you remember at least the season? Was it spring, summer, fall, winter?

Thielemans: It must, must have been... because... excuse me... the festival in Nice, where I had to join the Belgian delegation... [laughs] And that was... it must have been something like February or something.

Brown: So in the winter, you were in New York.

Thielemans: Yeah.

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Brown: Not autumn in New York. You're winter in New York.

Thielemans: Maybe. But I didn't... there was no snow that I remember.

Brown: Okay, okay. So you have expansive harmonic knowledge by the time you're playing bebop.

Thielemans: Yes.

Brown: Is this all self-taught, or did you have somebody help you, or was this like musicians...?

Thielemans: No, the... Well, I learned on the spot, you know, and whenever I'd see another [good reader?]. And the records were enough for me. If you can play all the bebop runs, you know, and apply them. Not just play, be a clone. That's what I always try to, even now, especially now.

Brown: And had you played or seen any American musicians before you came to America? Did they come to Brussels or to Belgium?

Thielemans: Not yet. But there was one... Good question. Redmond.

Brown: Don Redman? No.

Thielemans: Big orchestra.

Brown: Yeah, Don Redman. He was...

Thielemans: Don Redman.

Brown: Yeah. He used to be...

Thielemans: And in that orchestra, there was Don Byas. We became good friends through [unintelligible]. I still remember the way he played the melody. Don Byas. Peanuts Holland was the trumpet [player?]. He stayed in Denmark. Many of the guys... a couple of the guys... and Billy Taylor was the young pianist. And of course, always he was very hospitable to me when I came to the States in '51.

Brown: So winter of '47, your first trip to America. You go back. You join up with your Belgian delegation to perform in Nice.

Thielemans: In Nice, yeah.

Brown: And...

Thielemans: There was just... We weren't that [unintelligible] as a group. [laughs] But there were good musicians. There was a saxophonist—Bobby Jaspar, and he played... he wound up playing. He came here and played a lot.

Brown: Oh, yeah.

Thielemans: In his fifties. Oh, I have an anecdote.

Brown: Go ahead.

Thielemans: May I?

Brown: Sure. [laughs]

Thielemans: Because Bobby Jaspar, the saxophone player, very talented, played with J.J. Johnson in the '50s—'54 or 5, around there. And I was with Shearing, and we played the same circuit, you know. And outside of Detroit, there's a town, a factory, car factory—River Rouge. Do they still exist? [inaudible]

Brown: Probably not. [laughs]

Thielemans: No, the thing is, a town where they only make cars, you know. I mean, they make a lot of cars. And in that River Rouge, there was a jazz club—The Rouge Lounge, or something. And we played there. [laughs] We checked in with George, you know, and I brought my guitar and my amplifier, and we do a sound check. And then I go to the men's room. I'll tell you. And I go pee, and I say, in French, "Toots [inaudible]." Toots has a big dick. [laughs] And I say that in French in River Rouge. How do they know? [laughs] First of all, it's not true. [laughs] But that's the sense of humor from Bobby Jaspar. He played there the week before with J.J. Johnson, you know. Toots... [laughs] See, those kind of anecdotes, they make a lot of sense and they're connected to the music, you know. [laughs]

Brown: Who else was in the Belgian, your group? Bobby Jasper, yourself.

Thielemans: And a good vibraphone player. He died. Uh... [Savie Larlamans?]. And he was really Hampton, a little more articulate harmonically. But he was a showman and a combination Fats Waller and Lionel Hampton, you know.

Brown: Whoo. [laughs]

Thielemans: But he had this place he played a lot in Paris, but he never really came to the States. Then that was [inaudible]. Oh, and Jacques [Belzer?], the alto player who played a lot later on with Chet Baker.

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Brown: So two saxophone, vibes, and guitar, harmonica?

Thielemans: There was a pianist, I forgot. No, not so, not so easy to remember. [laughs]

Brown: But bass or drums? No?

Thielemans: Yeah, there was a bass.

Brown: So it was a pretty big group.

Thielemans: Yeah, it was a quintet, you know, but...

Brown: Okay.

Thielemans: We didn't really break it up. [laughs] And that's when Louie Armstrong... I did that was... I didn't go over to shake hands. That happened later.

Brown: Oh, okay.

Thielemans: When I was with Shearing. [laughs]

Brown: So, but in '49, you went to the Paris Jazz Festival. And like I said...

Thielemans: In '49.

Brown: And like I said, they had a lot of Americans there.

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: Bird and Miles.

Thielemans: Oh. I remember when Miles was there with Kenny Clark, [I think?].

Brown: Tadd Dameron. Pierre Michelot.

Thielemans: No, he didn't [unintelligible/overlapping].

Brown: Yeah, well...

Thielemans: But he had Miles, anyway. His sound, you know... I wasn't, of course [unintelligible/overlapping voices].

Brown: And they had James Moody. Miles and James Moody and Tadd Dameron.

Thielemans: [overlapping voices] Oh, yeah. Yeah, and...

Brown: And Kenny Clark.

Thielemans: [unintelligible] Kenny Dorham.

Brown: Mm-hmm. And Max.

Thielemans: And Max, yeah. Yeah, you're right, my friend. It happens so often that you get involved in interviews, where the guy who asks the questions don't know what you're talking about or has no reference to the subject, you know. And then, you spoil me. You're gonna make it hard for all... [laughs] ...who follow me, interviewers. No. No, this is just a person appreciates [inaudible], you know. But where were we?

Brown: Talking about the...

Thielemans: Oh, the Paris festival.

Brown: Yeah. This is a big festival.

Thielemans: But then, in those days, there still was the War. In French, I would say, "La guerre [in French]." "The war of the ancient, the old jazz and the newer jazz." The old jazz was sort of pioneer defended by politically... not politically, but it sounded like a political opposition. [Parnacier?]. [in French] [unintelligible] [Parnacier?]. It was [inaudible] or you might could say Armstrong. Armstrong was almost too modern for him, you know. [inaudible] just about. It was more to [unintelligible], you know those things? I respect that. But then there was the newer word—[in French]—the right of poet. I never... I shook hands with him once but I never... I never was enough in Paris to meet him. Anyway, so that's it. You were on a good question.

Brown: Well, yeah, because...

Thielemans: In, in Paris, I didn't... I shook hands and... We were blown away because the harmonica, you know. It was years. They still call it the miscellaneous instrument. But then they didn't. That's a piece of, you know what, you know. And so they booed me. Then in the second, I had... and they laughed, also, because when I speak French, I had... then, they'd be a little less now maybe... but a typical Belgian accent. And the French liked to make fun of the Belgian accent, also. But you know... But when I played the guitar, I was accepted.

Brown: Can we go... talk about this, about the unacceptance of Belgian culture and French. What is the history of that?

Thielemans: No, it's not culture. It's...

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Brown: Just that language?

Thielemans: That's just the language.

Brown: Okay.

Thielemans: No. There is... Belgian who tried to speak French [inaudible]. There's a lot of Belgian literature, you know, and literary people accept it. No, that was typical. The slang of Brussels that they... of Belgian, also. No, that has nothing to do with music.

Brown: Okay. But it was just a language...

Thielemans: Yeah, just a joke.

Brown: And maybe the French, they want everything exactly like French? No? [laughs]

Thielemans: No. It was not that.

Brown: Okay.

Thielemans: No. It was [dual?]. If a French guy played modern jazz, he was also getting booed. [laughs] You know what I mean? Yeah, it was not just because Belgian.

Brown: Okay. But for me, or for you...

Thielemans: For a long time after that, many, very few white stars like Stan Getz and that period, and even a little before with Shearing, with George Shearing, we never asked to play in France. You know there was still a [unintelligible]. Jazz could only be played by an African American in there. Now it's, of course, [there?], but still, to me, it is the source of why goose-bumps and is still... But I learned a lot from Bill Evans [inaudible].

Brown: Sure. But...

Thielemans: But that's... we changed...

Brown: No, I, yeah. But for me, you know, because that festival had Miles Davis with his group. It had Charlie Parker. And these were all the big stars of bebop. So...

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: I was just wondering, for you to...

Thielemans: [unintelligible]. But that's... this guy [Parnacier?], he stayed there. He was... But he still made a little noise, if I remember. But I met Bird then, and he had heard that little record. I had made the record that I sent, then wound up on the phonograph of Billy Shaw. You

know, I told you about Billy Shaw. And that were my harmonies, my own Stardust with [in a garage?], four strings, in Belgian, you know? Or you had... and some friends and, okay. And I recorded a few things with the guitar and that got to the phonograph, eventually, of Benny Goodman. That's how I got the job with Benny.

Brown: So 1950 seems to be an important year for your career. You started working with...

Thielemans: With... '50, yeah. '49 was Paris, right? And '50 was my European tour with Benny Goodman.

Brown: So how did that come about?

Thielemans: That was with Roy Eldridge and Zoot Sims and Dick Hyman, a good pianist. And Ed Shaughnessy, the drummer who played a lot for the Johnny Carson Show. And an English bass player, Charlie [Short?]. And I played and Benny Goodman was in love with that Stardust, too, because that's when he heard. And we have a recording of that Stardust in the [Lausanne?], when we played with Benny Goodman in Europe. And no... we were playing... I could play it for you on my iPad or uPad or [inaudible]. [laughs]

Brown: Maybe after we take a break, we can set it up. Sure.

Thielemans: Yeah, yeah, okay. That's an example of how I played in 1950, the harmonica, with Benny Goodman rhythm section.

Brown: Now this recording that you sent to Billy Shaw, that you recorded when you were in Belgian with the strings, what year was that recorded? So after...

Thielemans: '47.

Brown: Before... When you...

Thielemans: It must have been before.

Brown: So it was before '47.

Thielemans: Because Benny Goodman had tried to get the working permit for me here, and it was much harder than... I don't know. It's still hard now to, for somebody to come and work in the States. We had to be, we had to have a sponsor, affidavit. And you know who wound up being my affidavit? Muriel Zuckerman, the secretary of Benny Goodman, who befriended my wife then. And they became good friends, and I needed somebody, and she offered. That was beautiful, because signing an affidavit is accepting to see the person who be guaranteed for, could not become a charge to the United States. So if I had been doing something wrong or

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owing money or losing money, she would have had to see that I got back to Belgium. And which I didn't. [laughs] I was, I worked [inaudible]. But I made it, of course. [laughs]

Brown: So that was your first time... a long contract with American musicians, yes?

Thielemans: Yes, I was with Benny Goodman. It was a six weeks tour, I think. We played a lot in Italy. We played a lot in Rome. We were staying in Rome and working around it, you know. And in Belgium, two, three dates. In France and in Sweden, Scandinavia, you know.

Brown: And this experience working with the American musicians, did it...

Thielemans: Oh, that was...

Brown: ...change your sound or change your concepts or...?

Thielemans: Yes and no. I learned a lot harmonically from Dick Hyman. He was already, he had already played on the Street, you know. He was up to all that was needed for the Street, for the bebop on the Street. And I learned a lot from him.

Brown: How about Roy Eldridge's sound? I mean, my gosh. [laughs]

Thielemans: I know, I knew him from in the jazz, you know.

Brown: Right, right. [laughs]

Thielemans: In the jazz, you know, [inaudible]. I was with Artie Shaw, if you remember.

Brown: Right. Sure, sure.

Thielemans: Oh, yeah. That sound. And he wanted to jam all the time. After each engagement, he mostly wanted to meet ladies after the concert, you know. Say we play in a town in Oslo, for instance. After the concert, he goes to the jazz club or something. He wanted to socialize, also. [laughs] And jam. Of course.

Brown: Uh-huh. Did you go with him? [laughs]

Thielemans: Okay, [inaudible/overlapping]. [laughs] I remember. And Zuck was nice, too. We were playing, I remember, in Oslo. It was the date, 29th of April.

Brown: Your birthday.

Thielemans: 1950, I guess, right? Yeah. And it was cold. We played in a football stadium—Bislet Stadium. That's the name of the stadium, like Yankee Stadium. And it was so cold that we played... I had gloves on to play the guitar, you know. And Benny Goodman, he played it, you know, and when he was through with his solo, he did that or that. And Roy Eldridge was on one side, and Zoot on the other side between him, you know. And so that day in Norway, he had

given all the solo spots without thinking maybe. [scatting] And he'd do like that and then, "Okay, Roy, take it," you know. He didn't say anything but... So Zoot had been... his saxophone hanging. [laughs] You know. Of course you stand up. Nice white suit, yeah. [laughs] And he was waiting for... and that's the first time I saw an American, a musician. And after about one hour. It's cold. Benny makes a change, a motion towards Zoot. And I remember Zoot and played [inaudible], you know. Benny thinks [inaudible]. And it's one of his phrases was... [scatting] A little Lester Young-ish, you know. [scatting] [laughs] I'm exaggerating. But it was... that's my first [inaudible]. That was when I said jazz is just the thing you push and you can do it. And you have to be able to do it, you know.

Brown: Okay, we'll take a break right there. We're gonna change--

Thielemans: And in theater, Louis Armstrong came to [unintelligible] [laughs] and listen to us.

Brown: So you got to meet him and this is when he called you a...

Thielemans: [Bop Chops?].

Brown: Bop Chops. [laughs]

Thielemans: [And sure I went Mr.] [inaudible] [to present Myers?]. "How ya doin' Bop Chops?" Yeah, that's... Well, that's [stammers]. You cannot erase those memories, you know. And Charlie Parker. That was before. I played with Charlie Parker at the Earl Theater in the Dinah Washington. That was the queen of the blues—Dinah Washington. And also featuring, you know, Charlie Parker All-Stars with Miles and Bags. Me and Beryl Booker was the pianist. She was good. She was the accompanist for Dinah and Jimmy Cobb, who was more than any accompanist who worked for Dinah. [laughs]

Brown: Okay. [laughs] So that...

Thielemans: That's in '50. That was my first job in the States.

Brown: Was with George Shearing.

Thielemans: And then the day... No, with Charlie Parker.

Brown: Oh, the Charlie Parker All-Stars...

Thielemans: Uh-huh. Yes.

Brown: ...was your first gig in the States.

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Thielemans: Yes.

Brown: First job.

Thielemans: And then after that, George Shearing came to listen to me, and he sat backstage at the movie, you know. I met him then... Oh, but I have to tell you what happened.

Brown: Go ahead.

Thielemans: How I met George Shearing.

Brown: Okay. Please, go ahead.

Thielemans: Should we do that?

Brown: Sure.

Thielemans: You got the chronology...

Brown: Your chronology is fine. It's the Toots' version. Go ahead.

Thielemans: So then... I moved a little bit. Shall I come forward? Is it okay for you [inaudible]?

Male: Uh, yeah. There's some reflection in the sunglass. Maybe we should put it... try to put it down a little bit. Like this?

Thielemans: Okay. That's okay with me.

Male: No. It's still there.

Male: It's still there?

Male: Yeah.

Male: There's a good reason for it. Struggling.

Male: Yeah, we'll have to hold it all the time. [laughs]

Male: It should be [inaudible].

Male: [inaudible].

Brown: Do you need your glasses? [laughs]

Thielemans: No. Shall I move? [inaudible].

Male: I think... I'm quite sure if you move a little bit to your left side, it will be better.

Male: Yeah, are we gonna move it [a bit?]?

Male: Yeah. From us, we can't see the eyes. We got the reflection. It's better.

Brown: Yeah. If he leans forward I can see that there's no glare.

Male: See if it's okay for you.

Male: For me, [inaudible/overlapping voices].

Brown: Okay. So...

Thielemans: [inaudible].

Brown: [laughs] Well, you were going to share with us about meeting George Shearing or maybe the audition or wherever you want to take it. Backstage at the theatre or...? [laughs]

Thielemans: No, not [inaudible]. The way I met George Shearing is another beautiful example in, that was the beginning of when I was in the States, you know, my residence. And to get known, there was a couple of bars or hangouts for musicians. One, I've forgotten, in [Joe Harbor?], Jim and Andy's, and something. There was... at one bar, I have a beer, and Tony Scott, the clarinet player, came in and see me sitting there. "Hey, how ya doin', man. You play the guitar, too, don't ya?" "Yeah." He had heard me. Then some Mondays you can get a job at Birdland for \$10. Every Monday, you know, you can get one, and then wait 'til the next third. [laughs] And he had seen me on one of those Mondays playing the harmonica. And, "But you play the guitar, too, don't you?" Tony. "Yeah." "Yeah, come with me." He pulls me and he takes me to Carnegie Hall backstage. George Shearing and Billy Eckstein were doing a double-bill concert, and he said, "I want you to meet George Shearing." Tony. "Yeah?" "Well, his guitar player has to go to the Army, and George will be looking for a guitar player. You play guitar, don't you?" That's Tony, you know, fantastic. And yeah. And he takes me up to George Shearing's dressing room. And "George, I got the man for you." [inaudible] George. [laughs] Like a [blind?] guy Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles. And "Yeah, George, just listen to this." And I had my harmonica. "What are you gonna play for George?" I said, "Body and Soul." That was my number then. And George had, there was a piano in the dressing room. And George said after My Body and Soul, "If you can [inaudible] the guitar book, you've got the job."

Brown: Wow.

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Thielemans: That was George Shearing's answer. And then I went to audition. In those days, in Philadelphia there was a club called The Rendezvous, jazz club, where George was playing. And then somehow I went and I had... I was not the Shearing expert. But I learned a lot very quick. [singing] Some [tambourine?] [inaudible]. Okay. You know, there was no written music. [laughs] He's a blind fellow, you know. And that's it. That's what happened. That's how I got the job with Shearing. That was...

Brown: But he...

Thielemans: That was right after Charlie Parker at the Earl Theater. The Dinah Washington Show, the Charlie Parker All-Stars at the Earle Theater. A-E-R-L-E. That's the equivalent of the Apollo but in Philadelphia.

Brown: In Philly, mm-hmm. So Chuck Wayne was the original guitarist. So he's the one who went in...

Thielemans: No. [inaudible/overlapping voices]

Brown: No? It was before?

Thielemans: Dick Garcia. G-A-R-C-I-A. I wonder if he's still alive.

Brown: And so, who else was in the George Shearing group? How large was it?

Thielemans: Uh... George, of course. Billy Hart for drums. Fantastic drummer. [inaudible]. It feels good, he said, with [Lang?] there.

Brown: And what's his name? Billy...

Thielemans: Bill [inaudible]. Billy Hart.

Brown: Not...

Thielemans: H-A-R-T. [Billy?] didn't make a name for himself [inaudible].

Brown: So it's a different... must be a different Billy Hart than the one that...

Thielemans: Oh, not the one [inaudible/overlapping voices].

Brown: Yeah, yeah.

Thielemans: Billy Hart [inaudible]...

Brown: This one, much earlier.

Thielemans: ...Billy Hart.

Brown: Yeah. Okay. And who else? So drums, piano, yourself on guitar and harmonica. Bass player, maybe? No?

Thielemans: Al McKibbon [inaudible].

Brown: Oh, Al McKibbon.

Thielemans: Al McKibbon [inaudible].

Brown: Oh, so before John Levy took... No, yeah... the other way.

Thielemans: No, that was [wasn't?] John Levy anymore.

Brown: Yeah, right. So Al McKibbon.

Thielemans: [inaudible/overlapping voices] be Al McKibbon that [date?]. Yeah.

Brown: Took his place. Right.

Thielemans: And [inaudible]. Vibraphone was Joe Roland for a while and then Cal Tjader...

Brown: Cal Tjader.

Thielemans: ...came later.

Brown: So it was a quintet.

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: Uh-huh. And did...

Thielemans: Then later on, George added the conga drum. Armando Perazza. There is some fantastic [inaudible] from that [inaudible]. But I don't know. I'm so crazy [about?] these anecdotes are so precious to me, you know.

Brown: Well, I know Armando 'cause he's in the Bay area. I live in San Francisco. So please, talk about Armando.

Thielemans: Is he still, he still alive?

Brown: He's still... Yeah, he's still alive.

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Thielemans: Oh, I have a phone number for him. I'll call him. Okay. Not now. [laughs]

Brown: Okay. [laughs] Okay. So, so this was a major gig 'cause George is touring all over.

Thielemans: [inaudible/overlapping voices]

Brown: And he's recording, he's big.

Thielemans: That was the number one jazz group in the polls, and he had... There was a great job and not so easy for a family life, either. You travel all the time.

Brown: So...

Thielemans: And then I met [inaudible] Tony Scott, I told you, you know. He was very... he was a typical Chamber of Commerce or welcome committee—one man welcome committee. For, like, in those days Al Foster, who played first saxophone and arranger for Count Basie. He also came to New York, and we had [inaudible/overlapping voices].

Brown: Maybe Frank Foster, not Al Foster? Uh, Frank Foster.

Thielemans: Frank Foster.

Brown: Frank Foster, right.

Thielemans: What did I say?

Brown: Al Foster.

Thielemans: No, no, [inaudible/overlapping voices].

Brown: He's the drummer, right. So Frank Foster, right.

Thielemans: Frank. Yeah. And I remember, yeah. He had a loft somewhere in the Village. Tony Scott and... that's it. [laughs]

Brown: So George was touring not only in the States but internationally, as well?

Thielemans: No.

Brown: No?

Thielemans: Mostly... just about anything but Europe. No Europe. No England, either. I don't know why. It was maybe... maybe his music was not called... was not hard jazz enough. I don't know why. But he got top billing in this country, of course. And it was a steady employment. But you know, I wonder... you know, I learned a lot but after a while the best job

becomes just a job, you know, and I wasn't... I wanted... of course I appreciated. That was the best job with what I had to offer in this country. I couldn't read, I couldn't... The best... nah. As a... The way to make a living in those days was to be in the studios, and they played no jazz at all, you know. So it was, for me it was the best jazz job. And I stayed there.

Brown: So was there any circumstance or experience that made you decide to leave George Shearing?

Thielemans: No, we broke up. He was ready for some fresh air. No, no, it's... And then he had people like Joe Bass, where he went into... And he had... no, I mean... He just died, you know. I learned a lot. At one time, I remember in San Francisco, we had bought... I wanted to learn harmony and to give a name, to be able to give a name to what I was playing. [laughs] Not just that but there was a treatise of harmony. Percy Goetschius. G-O-E-T-S-C-H-I-U-S. Goetschius, Percy. An English musicologist and called... the book was called Materials Used in Musical Composition. And I borrowed that book and I tell George about it, and he, or whatever it is, he bought the same book in Braille. So we were, you know, comparing classical, elementary classical, you know. That's maybe something to think, talk about maybe. And there was... You were... okay. You're after anecdotes too, right? And I'm your fella. [laughs]

We were, we did often those Birdland [old tours?], all-star tours on the bus. One night [then tours?] with the whole Basie band with sometimes Billie Holiday and... with the band and the Shearing Quintet, then sometimes Miles Davis Quintet and Lester Young and Stan Getz. And there's a beautiful anecdote, too. We'd step... See, Lester was known to... he had... what he liked were people. He called people, and he had a bottle of Gordon gin. [There were some?] nice people. And [laughs]... and then whiskey maybe, two bottles, two people, you know. And he had bought a beautiful leather, probably custom-made shoulder bag for these two people. [laughs] And to step, you see... He said, you know... He said [inaudible], "You know I get messages from them people," meaning that, you know... because his knees were... sometimes he walked like that a little bit of time, Lester. We'd go out of respect, you know. "But baby, I'm strictly legit." [laughs] That's one of Lester's quotes. And then, we step... you see, all those guys have to step on the bus. And Lester misses the step to get on the bus, you know, the first step is rather high. And his back fell on the floor. And that liquid started to... And he said, "Oh, my people." [laughs] I was there. That I heard. "Oh, my people." Yeah, that's, that's Lester.

Also, another beautiful, in my case, something I submit to you, you know, if you use it or not. That's up to you. But we were doing those tours with... Shearing was closing the first half, and Count Basie and sometimes Lester Young [inaudible] as a guest. And Stan Getz himself sometimes. And but, the people are there and we're here, and the piano, vibes, me, bass, and drums. That's Shearing. And I was on the left side. It's [inaudible]. And Lester Young, when he checked, when we arrived, he didn't say anywhere, say Philadelphia or Arkansas. He would sit, because the drummer, Sonny Payne—that was the era of Sonny Payne. He had the drums practically in a plastic case, right. And that was just perfect for Lester. And always on the same

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place, you know. One day, Philadelphia here. Okay, Arkansas here. And Lester Young, during the first set, he would come and sit on that drum case. It was comfortable in sitting there. And here, after the first set, I always passed in front of him. I said, “Hi, Lester. Good evening, Lester.” “Good evening.” Okay. And, you say you play the same number. I played Body and Soul every night, and some nights you play well. Some nights... But that one night that I remember which town it was, I played a great Body and Soul. And I pass in front of Lester. “Hi, Lester, how are you doin’ today?” “I’m okay. “Hey,” he says, “Lady Thielemans was burning today.” He had heard that I played. I mean, he felt a little, you know. He felt something that I had been good that night or better than other nights. He said, “Hey, Lady Thielemans was playing tonight.” That’s Lester. That’s good enough for me. [laughs]

Brown: That’s the best compliment you can get, being called Lady by [Frez?]. [laughs]

Thielemans: Yeah. And in those days, that’s... that was [the start?] of the bus and story, because [Lou Levy?], the owner of [Berlin?], you know, or operator of [inaudible], I don’t know. He was taking care of the music that was also [unintelligible]. [laughs] Smoke material. [laughs] [inaudible]. Let’s move to another chapter.

Brown: Well, let’s talk about what made your name among the others as having written a standard—Bluesette. Can you talk about writing Bluesette?

Thielemans: Oh, that’s way after. My tenure with George Shearing finished in ’58 or ’59. And I composed Bluesette. Bluesette hit me, so to speak, in 1962 in Brussels.

Brown: ’62, okay.

Thielemans: When I was sharing a dressing room with Stéphane Grappelli.

Brown: Okay. That’s good. So we want to correct the record, because it is listed as ’61 in this entry, so ’62 is when you wrote it.

Thielemans: ’62 was in Brussels. At a concert.

Brown: And you...

Thielemans: In the university in Brussels. And I played with Belgian musicians there [inaudible]. And there was a lot of French, French musicians of that era. And I may have told you that I studied a little bit. I tried to become a mathematics teacher. And I was just... that was in the big room concert possibility of the Brussels University, and our dressing room... my dressing room, which I shared with Stéphane Grappelli, was precisely one of the rooms where I sat for special classes [in?] mathematics fifteen years before, I guess, something like that. And anyway, I’m sitting there in ’62 with... and I had a guitar, of course. I had my guitar. And I opened the guitar and Stéphane Grappelli... I never had met him before. I had... he was my first guru with Django, you know. And he was, I mean, it’s not the... a critic to say he was gay, you know. He was elegant. And he was funny, his sense of humor. So he’d [speak?] French [inaudible]. And I sit there. I take my guitar and I tune it, and Bluesette comes out. [singing]

Not just like that, maybe. And Stéphane said, “Oh, c’est jolie, mon petit Toots.” My little Toots, it’s beautiful. And I said, “Stéphane, tu m’inspire.” You inspire me. You’re my... one of my dear guru. And then I had to change a few notes. I happened to... I just had the start of the melody. [singing, then playing on harmonica] You know? [sings a few notes] But that was not, that was just the start, and I didn’t want to lose it. I didn’t have a cassette. There were no cassettes then like now. And I took a piece of paper, of music paper, and I wrote just that... those first notes. I didn’t want to lose the start of the song. See? And, and I called it Bluettes—The Blue Flower in the Field. The Bluettes. The cornflower. This is what they call the blue flower in the field in the summer, you know. That was Bleue [Bluettes?]. And then, “Oh, Stéphane, tu m’inspire.” Oh, it was so nice, you know. Yes. [laughs] He was supposed to be kind of not greedy but, you know, he had to force himself to really write that check, you know. [laughs] No, no, no, don’t talk about it. [laughs]

Brown: Did you ever get a chance to...

Thielemans: [inaudible] is the one who can tell you, because he worked a lot with him. The Belgian guitarist.

Brown: Yes.

Thielemans: No. Where were we? And then in those days... that’s 1962, I had become popular in Sweden with the guitar and whistle, you know. We should have something in the iPad that you can listen to me playing the guitar. Oh, I know. In ’82, a concert with Fred [Hersh?], Joey Baron, and Marc Johnson in Brussels. That’s the best that... because the arrangement, the recording, I have... Okay, we get to that... make a note that you should ask me about Bluesette.

Brown: From ’82.

Thielemans: So... I’m at the... I come in Sweden, and I had become popular with some songs that I played. Not yet Bluesette. Swedish popular things I made popular in Sweden. And there was a show, a revue. In those days in New York, there were some Broadway revues with four people, four artists doing a revue. They had a name for that. And there was in Sweden four fellas and two ladies, and it was run on the [inaudible] [circus?]. [laughs] And he said... I had... the producer said, “Toots, I want you to do something else. Everybody love you and knows you, and you... something you haven’t done.” Although, that was another thing. “What do you want to do?” I said, “[in Swedish].” I have this piece but it’s not even complete.” It was just a piece—half a piece of music. [laughs] From Brussels, you know. I have this song, and I finished it really then. And maybe I like that with play it as a solo for me. “And let me hear it,” he said. And this, you know, there was a case like I meet a guy like you, who knows all his stuff. And this guy knew jazz, you know. He’s a comedian, a writer. He died. And he hears the song. “Well, that’s the blues, ain’t it, Toots?” [Dagger?] asked me. I said, “Why did you call it Bluettes? Put the S in there real quick. Bluesette.” And he put the S in there. That was fantastic, because

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Bluette... what the fuck is Bluette [inaudible]? [laughs] Bluesette. That's happened in Stockholm in 1963.

Brown: So the next year or '62? '63? Next year?

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: Okay.

Thielemans: I found it in '62 and I had to go to Sweden in '63 to [inaudible] but... And then, that's not jazz. And then, I was getting good and popular. My Swedish, I was speaking. [speaks in Swedish] I speak fluent Swedish. [speaks in Swedish] Flowing [inaudible], fleeting. [laughs] And "Toots, [in Swedish]." Anyway, and so they had me recite the... you know the producer? The other associate in the show? Thought I'd be good as an actor, and they thought I had the Chaplinesque quality. But that was the time of Ingmar Bergman, you know, with all those big movies. And I said, "Oh, yeah?" [laughs] No, but... And he had me recite the monologue in Swedish, all Swedish. But that's nothing [with?] Charlie Parker or Coltrane. And I had... I worked already... I had the records of... I knew I wanted... I was already... In '63, Coltrane was already making a lot of... And then I tried to, on my spare time, I practiced my Giant Steps, you know, [inaudible]. [plays a couple of bars on harmonica] [laughs]

Brown: Yeah, it's on this one, too. You put Giant Steps on this one, too.

Thielemans: Oh, yeah.

Brown: It's East Coast West Coast, yeah, yeah. [laughs]

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: That's later.

Thielemans: Was it...

Brown: Much later. [laughs]

Thielemans: Yes.

Brown: But did you like John Coltrane when you heard him? Did you... 'Cause I know his big hit was My Favorite Things, but he was playing Giant Steps before then.

Thielemans: Yeah. No. I met him later on, you know, and it was once in Washington. The Miles Quintet was playing, and I don't know what I was doing in Washington. Playing another club, maybe? And the afternoon was a matinee concert, and I went to... And John Coltrane, I remember, asked me, "Hey, I'll tell [Mans?] you're here. Maybe you can come and play a number." It didn't happen but... So that was, that saw me just like that.

Brown: So after you left Shearing, you most...

Thielemans: I started to do everything.

Brown: Freelance and studio work and...

Thielemans: Yeah. After I had done Bluesette, for instance, those jingles came in, you know, for the whistle. They said I was the known whistler in the studio scene in New York. There was a little period, there's, "Get Toots in. Find something to do. Play the harmonica. Play a little guitar. Whistle. Then fine, you know, those jingles. And I was fairly... and I made... if I can say, [and they?] [inaudible] whistling. [You know?], that was... Once they asked me, "Mr. Thielemans, can you whistle like somebody who cannot whistle?" he asked me. "Well, sir, I can try it." [laughs] [makes sounds] The cash register was already... I had made quite a few dollars with the John Glenn, when I whistled for John Glenn, [that?] jingle. Not, not thousands, no, but just for \$200 was a good week for me then, in those days, you know.

Brown: I don't think we had that on tape. Do you want to tell the story about the John Glenn jingle?

Thielemans: Yeah. Okay. Well... Well, after I recorded Bluesette, and Bluesette came out in 1963. That is where I play and imitated. I stole some of the idea from Slam Stewart, who played with the arco and sang. [sings] You know? I did the same. I whistled [inaudible]. Sorry, folks. I can't whistle and play the guitar [inaudible]. But I did that, and my record got released and got a lot of play in New York, where I played, whistled Bluesette. And so that made, attracted the attention of those producers. They wanted a new sound. "Hey, that guy, [inaudible], you know, with the whistle and the guitar. Let's get him for John Glenn," you know. And then I... other things... sewed... sewing machines. Singer sewing machines. [laughs] [That was?] also. And things like that. And at... that was already... I mean, I was not just doing that. I was playing clubs and traveling and going... I was also on staff at ABC at the Jimmy Dane Show. [laughs]

Brown: Jimmy Dean?

Thielemans: Jimmy Dean, the sausage [inaudible]. [laughs] Yeah, but... I met all the country guys. They said I had played the harmonica on the [show?]. But okay. Let's go back to the whistling. So I got that engagement, and I got established somehow as the best whistler in New York. I don't know if I was but... For those people, I was. And I get a call: "Mr. Thielemans, can you whistle like...? We're looking for somebody who cannot whistle, you know?" But it was the Old Spice. Maybe you've seen that. When her sailor comes out of the boat. And in the... I'm whistling. [singing]

Brown: Right. That tune.

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Thielemans: [plays tune on harmonica] [inaudible].

Brown: I remember that. Sure.

Thielemans: Yeah. You remember that?

Brown: Oh, yeah. Sure.

Thielemans: But I can't whistle anymore so... And... that was on... I worked one hour, and it was the hot spot Old Spice. If you know it, if you heard it. And on a football game. That was \$150, when my whistling was heard. I wasn't seen on camera. That was \$150 then already.

Brown: Wow.

Thielemans: So in one year, I made \$15,000 from that whistling.

Brown: Wow. [laughs]

Thielemans: And you stay home. You work one hour and the thing [inaudible]. So that's where all those singers and announcers on jingles, they made a lot of bread. It was just one [break?] but it was good, you know. And they... so... and as a result, I also got major medical from Screen Actors Guild, still now. So... [whistles]

Brown: Before we talk about working with Quincy and those kinds of things, I want to go back and look at a couple of your earlier recordings. But I want to also talk about how you got the nickname Toots instead of Jean?

Thielemans: Yeah. Oh, you pronounce Jean so well. That was in Belgium. I started to make some noise. At first, I got a reputation. He looks like he's a little corny-looking [stud?], but he arrives on time. I had the reputation of being punctual. Eh, call him. [laughs] And finally, you know, I was up to all my bebop. And there was a group popular on the seashore in Knokke. And they called me to go audition, and I go with the guitar and the harmonica. They didn't want to get the harmonica. That's for [inaudible]. In your [ethnic?], you play [inaudible]. Okay, okay. But they liked the guitar. And they wanted my name for the poster. And... [laughs] "Comment tu t'appelle?" What's your name? I said, "Jean Thielemans." That's if a French-American... if an American singer wants to sing in French, he cannot be called Joe, Joe...

Brown: Smith. [laughs]

Thielemans: [inaudible]. He has to be Francois, you know what I mean? And I had to be American. I play... I didn't play French. I played like Al Casey and those guys. Then Charlie Christian. And [inaudible]? And that was in the days where the magazines—Esquire. They had [inaudible] the tolls. No, what do you call it?

Brown: The polls?

Thielemans: Polls. Excuse me. Sometimes... Polls, you know. And we saw, and we knew all the guys who played with whom. There was a Toots Mondello with Benny Goodman, and there was a Toots Camarata writing music for Jimmy Dorsey, I think. And also some backgrounds for Billie Holiday. And a trumpet player, you know. He still lives. We'll call you Toots. And I just said, [inaudible]. I didn't say anything. But it's kind of good. It's a timeless kind of stamp on you, I guess. You can look old and be called Toots. [laughs] That's it. That's how I got the name.

Brown: So somebody suggested it, or you just said...

Thielemans: No, I didn't say anything. I got on the poster.

Brown: [laughs] Okay.

Thielemans: And ends with piano [makes sounds], guitar, Tools Thielemans. And it still got on the record. They [inaudible] critics on the magazine and whatever, you know.

Brown: I'm showing here on your discography, Man Bites Harmonica, 1957, on Riverside.

Thielemans: Yes.

Brown: Can you talk about that date?

Thielemans: Yeah, [inaudible] that was all the guys and [dead unfortunately?]. There was Orrin Keepnews. He wanted me make a record with Riverside Records so it was [inaudible], you know. And back at the [inaudible] [were then?]. And I was still playing a lot of guitar and not whistling yet, I think. Anyway, that was with Kenny Drew, and no more there. Art Taylor. No more there. Wilbur Ware, who played with Monk, [right?]. And Pepper Adams. With baritone. So we had some [inaudible] and baritone. Many people say, you know, the guys who are inclined to [give?] a little more [on my?]. . . purist, clean. You know these guys. I played well on that record. As a 1957 bebopper. [laughs] Then sometimes I think I should have been more, but I was maybe now and then too ready to make concessions. I mean, but whatever I did, I did well, you know. I think. If I... Bluesette is not a piece of stuff, you know. Now, that's it.

Brown: In 1958, for Decca Records, Time Out.

Thielemans: Yeah. That period, I'm not so crazy anymore about that. That was with Hank Jones, I think, yes. And Burns, the arranger for...

Brown: Ralph?

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Thielemans: Ralph Burns, yes. Over the [year?] [inaudible]. I remember Watkins, the bass player.

Brown: Doug. Doug Watkins?

Thielemans: What?

Brown: Doug Watkins?

Thielemans: Doug Watkins. He had a good sound and a good feeling. And Art Taylor and Hank Jones. And on my record that I make for Columbia, there was [Bobi?] [makes sounds], small group type thing, with Ray Brian, Wendell Marshall, who used to play with Duke Ellington and Billy Hart, the drummer.

Brown: Did you have an agent or management to handle all these...?

Thielemans: No. That happened... I did everything myself. Just an accountant, you know, to get figures together for the income tax.

Brown: And for a period of time, were you going back to Europe frequently?

Thielemans: Yes. I did [inaudible] there. But I had one lucky break. I was composing, you know, of course, and I had written Bluesette, which was never a major hit. But a hit goes like that, and Bluesette is the kind of song as... [inaudible] and Jimmy Smith had recorded Bluesette. And once 100,000 copies, albums. That's 100,000 pennies then, you know. For me, as a composer. You split with the...

Brown: Publisher.

Thielemans: Publisher. I was lucky to be with an honest publishing company, because some of the guys... you [were?], put your name there, you know. And yes, that was Lou Levy, Leeds Music. Bluesette was with Duchess Music. But then, I had written a song, and Lou Levy, the boss of the publishing company, said, "Toots, you got your foot in the door now, man. Write, write, write, write and bring it to me." [laughs] You know. [laughs] And I said, "Okay." And then, in those days, maybe you remember... they had things with two trumpets. Do-do-do-do. The Rings of Fire. Johnny Cash.

Brown: Johnny Cash. Right, right.

Thielemans: [imitating trumpet]

Brown: [laughs] Right.

Thielemans: And I was doing the Jimmy Dean Show, and they came. And I said, "Hey, I can write that. Something like that." And I wrote the song with another name. I called it Ladybug. [laughs] And I take that to Lou Levy, the publisher, the boss of Duchess. And he said, "Toots,

it's great but it ain't Bluesette," you know. [laughs] I know [inaudible]. And he had a representative in Los Angeles. The brother of Les Brown. Les Brown, the band... He had a brother or cousin, something Brown, was operating the office of Duchess in Los Angeles. And at that time, they say, "Oh, there was this guy, Herb Alpert, starting."

Brown: Tijuana Brass.

Thielemans: Tijuana Brass. And see, they said, you, there's this guy... They didn't even know. Like the [unintelligible], the jazz. You know, the Jewish pejorative. Kind pejorative for describing something. Meshuggeneh. This mesuggenah group. Yeah, they like it, that song. [laughs] So they recorded it. And it went six million. The copy, the album. Not my song. So I got... Those are the lucky breaks. It was not a jazz. [laughs/unintelligible] [imitates trumpet] You know? And Tijuana Brass recorded it, and it was on... maybe you've seen that album with the chick with a lot of whipped cream.

Brown: Whipped cream and other delights. [laughs]

Thielemans: Whipped cream and other delights.

Brown: Yeah. I remember that picture. [laughs]

Thielemans: [inaudible/overlapping voices] And I said... [laughs] And you know? So with that then the... So my money didn't come from bebop, as you can [unintelligible] gather. Then this... you have six million pennies is already \$60,000 thirty years ago. And then, the jingles. And then I worked... I mean, I worked. I stayed steady. That's the good part, I guess. And still now, I [steady?].

Brown: So is that when you bought this, after you got that? Or where did you live in New York at that time?

Thielemans: No. This was later.

Brown: Where did you live?

Thielemans: I was able to buy that house on Montauk. [Went?] and bought a nice house on Montauk, if I remember.

Brown: Oh, Montauk. Oh, yeah.

Thielemans: It was... We went... Well, I'll tell you this story. I tell you just about everything, the truth. You'll see what is useable or of interest. We were living in Yonkers. And uh...

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Brown: Mm... Way up there. [laughs]

Thielemans: Yeah. 279. 278th North Broadway in Yonkers, on the eighth floor. And on the same floor, there was a couple, and every Sunday night they came back full of spirit and sunburn. And we meet each time on the... where you throw the garbage. How do you call that?

Brown: The garbage chute?

Thielemans: On the eighth floor. Like here. And they said, “Hey.” And finally we went, “Yeah, I’m Toots [inaudible].” “We’re [Jane and?] [inaudible].” And, “You gotta come out to Montauk.” I said, “You guys are so happy when you come back on Sundays,” and so... “Oh, we have a house in Montauk now.” I’m going [inaudible]. “We have a good time.” [laughs] So we went there one night, one weekend. Labor Day or a typical weekend, there was [inaudible]. And we look through. They were on a hill, you know. And we look. “What’s that there?” “Oh, there’s two fellas living there, and I think they want to sell.” And that was my first wife, you know. “Oh-oh, oh-oh.” And I had some money [and income?]. So we bought it. And then, we started to, and then you can [meet some wonderful?]. I don’t think... Oh, we have some photos, right? When the Belgian TV came and follow us. Toots Suite, of course. [inaudible]

Brown: Of course. [laughs]

Thielemans: And that’s, that’s the part that the fruit fell far from the tree, but somehow it was a jazz connection with the whistle. With the [imitates]. [laughs] And those Western guys, yeah. And they were [inaudible]. Hillbillies came to sing for, on the show. The... Roger Miller—the King of the Road, you know. That was the period—the ’60s. Then Bluesette came out a little bit, you know, around there.

Brown: What years were you with the Jimmy Dean Show? ‘Cause I’m...

Thielemans: ’61, something like that.

Brown: So it was only one year or...?

Thielemans: Yeah, but that was... the job was one day a week. And I got lucky from the contractor. You know, in those days, the TV networks have to get and give employment to so many musicians from the union, you know. [inaudible] and twenty-some musicians on staff. And the guy kind of dug me. He gave me staff, which was 250 for a week, for one day’s work. And when I say one day, it’s only five hours work. If you go six hours, you get already overtime. Even for that one day. You know. And finally, you know, it was enough. And I had a bunch of lucky breaks. No star business. But we could buy a nice car and [we’re buying?] a summer house. So that’s it. And then, ask.

Brown: Well, you know, when I look at your career, you know, later on, you’re work...

Thielemans: There's a mixture of making the money, making a living, and always staying in, if not interested, at least active. And it grows through time. I became really friends with Quincy Jones, also. We... that's a whole chapter, too.

Brown: Well, let's talk about how you first met Quincy, because for me, when I heard Bluesette when you did it with Quincy, I went, "Ohh." To me, I liked that version. [laughs]

Thielemans: Well, then... Quincy... I met Quincy at Birdland. I think it was... don't quote me, unless you're sure or find out [and?] be sure. He was playing trumpet with [inaudible] trumpet or so with Lionel Hampton then.

Brown: Yep, yeah.

Thielemans: You know that [inaudible/overlapping voices].

Brown: Mm-hmm.

Thielemans: And he was walking around and living in New York, and then we met. And he had heard me and saw me. And he said... and we met like that. "Hey," he said, "you have the most beautiful humming voice." Quincy. "Oh, yeah?" [laughs] And [inaudible] we came, you know. And then, he finally had his first movie job. That was with Cary Grant. Walk Don't Run. [inaudible]. I think I have Walk Don't Run somewhere. But it was [not?]... And then, he called me to go to Hollywood for that one job. One week. And then, we... you know. One day, for instance, he had that Bill Cosby Show, you know [inaudible]. Music, he was a music director [inaudible]. And he [inaudible], "Toots, you've gotta come." And while I'm there, I do [inaudible]. I had to finish an album with, for Quincy, while being with Bill Cosby and [inaudible]. And... that's happened, and what happened then? See, I get blurry [inaudible]. Oh, while we're there... "Bye, Quincy." The job is finished with Bill Cosby. I'm home. "Mama, I'm home." I put my suitcase down, and she says, "Yeah, Quincy just called." [laughs] I had to go back right away for... I'm not sure of the [inaudible]. One of those things with Ali McGraw and her man, Jim.

Brown: Is that Love Story? No. Ali McGraw, yeah, 'cause... and Ryan O'Neal? No, not that one.

Thielemans: [inaudible] called The Cowboy, actually.

Brown: Oh...

Thielemans: You see, my memory...

Brown: Yeah, I can't remember.

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Thielemans: Anyway, there was a film and, “Hey, yeah, you come.” And then I was back in New York, in Los Angeles for Quincy. So it’s been like that. I guess, now I’m a little out of context. He still goes to Montreux, you know. We have some nice... On YouTube, you can see. Not [inaudible], I cannot have the YouTube here. You say Quincy. I play his song. [plays harmonica] That’s The Eyes of Love. You know, I played that for his birthday [inaudible]. And we did, yeah... at Montreux, there’s a couple of things [inaudible] on the YouTube. I don’t know to what.

Brown: You want to take a break?

Thielemans: Things like that.

Brown: Okay. Let’s take a break. We’re gonna take one more break.

Brown: I was gonna say, Toots, was that, you know, later in your career... Well, at least on paper, you started doing many more things that were outside of jazz. You know, pop, like the Billy Joel and, you know... And there’s a quote here that in 1959, John Lennon came to see you perform. Do you remember that?

Thielemans: Not John Lennon. He didn’t see me perform. He saw... Are you taping?

Brown: Mm-hmm. Go ahead.

Thielemans: John Lennon... in those days, I was... in 1955, with Shearing. I had one of the first jazz guitar [mystery?] players—solid body. That was a rock guitar, which I played, and it goes [unintelligible]. “Oh, [makes raspberry sound], well, whacha doin’ with... what the hell are you doing with that?” And I said, “Watch out.” And I had [heavy?] strings. So the sound was long, and I used it okay. And that was on a photograph on a CD. LP photograph with George Shearing Quintet in Pasadena College concert. And in those days, John Lennon was a kid in Liverpool. And George Shearing was a role model. He was an Englishman who made it in America before the Beatles. Way before. And then, John Lennon bought the same guitar, and they had seen. But I met him in 1962, when the Beatles came for the first time to the States. And the manufacturer of this guitar said, “Yeah, there’s this group—the something Beat... I don’t...” He didn’t know, and they were unknown, either. I didn’t know. “Yeah. And one of the guys plays your guitar,” he said. [laughs] And uh, I went to meet him in the Plaza Hotel. They were in the Plaza Hotel. “Hey, you’re the guy.” [laughs] He had recognized me from that photograph, you know. And he said, “Yeah, I bought that guitar.” He said, “If it’s good enough for...” Liverpool accent, I can’t imitate. “If it’s good enough for George Shearing, it’s bloody good enough for me.” That’s, John Lennon told me that. And then he bought that guitar and they [sold?], I don’t know... But I was not... But that’s... Yeah, I [read them like that?].

Brown: Uh-huh. A Rickenbacker.

Thielemans: Rickenbacker.

Brown: Yeah. [laughs]

Thielemans: Well, that's it. I don't know if that's important. You're the judge with what's important. [laughs]

Brown: Oh, just in case somebody else wants to be imitation of you. [laughs]

Thielemans: Yeah, it was an imitation. [inaudible/overlapping voices]

Brown: But to be like you.

Thielemans: He knew very well what he wanted to do, of course.

Brown: Mm-hmm. So working with films... I mean, I can remember...

Thielemans: Five films.

Brown: Wow. Midnight Cowboy, I remember this. Yeah.

Thielemans: Midnight Cowboy, that was...

Brown: That was big. [laughs]

Thielemans: Yeah. I used it a lot but that was... I was, that was my [period?]. When was that? Was that... do you have the year of that?

Brown: That would be '68 or '69, Midnight Cowboy, yeah.

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: Probably '68.

Thielemans: Well, I was doing studio work then, you know. And [unintelligible] I was... when I was in New York, I tried to do studio work, and when I had tours, I went sometimes to Sweden, to Europe, and say hello to my folks and come back here. We had that house in Montauk then. It was beautiful. But yeah, that was studio, you know. And... and I'm not quite sure that John Barry himself liked my sound of the harmonica. They used it for the film, but when the record came out, there was an English guy. He didn't like, from what I hear, John Barry didn't like the recording done in New York. Not just me, but the total. And on the record, that song, [both?] in L.A. Jon Voigt and Dustin Hoffman.

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Brown: Dustin Hoffman, mm-hmm.

Thielemans: On the street like that.

Brown: Right.

Thielemans: That's another guy playing.

Brown: Who was it?

Thielemans: But that will be done in England. He redid it. Apparently, I think, for the record. On the movie, they used the band that I was playing with.

Brown: Well, since you said English and you were talking about a harmonica player, let's talk about Larry Adler.

Thielemans: No. No, no, Larry Adler. He was big-time then, you know. He was the biggest influence. He was... he was the pioneer on harmonica. And he was... if you look at YouTube, you'll see a lot of him. I'm not making fun, you know, but he did it tastefully and well, and he convinced quite a few classical... [I mean?], he did even a duo with Itzhak Perlman, the handicapped violin virtuoso. I don't know what his story... whether one of those big standards. And no, he did... But I met him a couple of times, but he was awesome as a performer. And he established the harmonica as a show... I mean, what he did... the harmonica became a show instrument, you know, implemented. [laughs] But he was fantastic at what he did. And he played. But then he got political, blacklisted or something. I have no knowledge or no opinion to say about that. But he was really the pioneer and a good... he played piano sometimes. Played the piano and the harmonica.

Brown: But he didn't really play jazz.

Thielemans: Not jazz, no. You could listen to him on YouTube, you know. And no, but look, there's... not everybody likes jazz or needs jazz, you know. [laughs] No.

Brown: Well, even Stevie Wonder... I mean, he...

Thielemans: Oh, Stevie, yes. He's the most... Oh, Stevie... He's not enough considered as a harmonica player. They say, "Oh yeah, he writes every [unintelligible]." He's a great composer, a showman. He sings [unintelligible]. But I can tell you what he plays... You listen to the YouTube again when he plays... plays Alfie with Burt Bacharach. [inaudible]. I have it on my... but I can't show it to you. There is no signal here. I [had thought?] that he played... I heard him. He was as a guest sometimes as a... Stanley Clark, the bassist, teaches somewhere at a school or conservatory or university—a jazz class. And Stevie went, and they played. I think in Spain. Giant Steps. He plays the [inaudible] piano.

Brown: Right.

Thielemans: Right?

Brown: Right, right.

Thielemans: But he... don't fool with Stevie.

Brown: Right.

Thielemans: I have a lot of... more than respect, you know. I take off... I cannot do what he does, you know. [inaudible]. And he's, he's a black gentleman, you know. He's pure. I mean, he's... you know? Okay, talking about that, my Quincy Jones connection. I said, "Quincy? You at home?" "Yeah." Blah, blah, blah. These guys are black, you know. I can't... I'm telling Quincy, I wish I had more of that black... When a black man looks at the instrument, then I already know it's a black man. To me. Or he touches a piano, you know that [inaudible]. And the shoulder goes with it, you know. And, or he plays the saxophone. Or Stevie plays the harmonica. And then I said something like equivalent to, with all of [them?], Quincy, you know. "Man, I think you guys are something..." [laughs] And we were on that basis, you know. And he said, "Toots, I..." Watch out for this. "You're the blackest motherfucker I know." Quincy tells me that. Well, [I'm not gonna say it?]. [laughs] You know? And then another example. I was on the [unintelligible]. I should have kept the message on the answering machine. I was on a tour. I came back home from a concert in Europe, in Belgium, and I go, I check my answering machine. "Hey..." Quincy calls me Stink [inaudible/overlapping]. Because [inaudible]. To a regular interviewer, I would say, well, it's because I project the aroma of a black man who needs a shower. Funk. You know, that's [inaudible]. Yeah, some guys you have to explain that. Not to you. [laughs]

Brown: [laughs]

Thielemans: [inaudible]. [laughs] And oh... That was shortly before Ray Charles died, you know, [inaudible] a few months. And the message... He said, "Hey, Toots. [I call you?] the Stink." [I was?] Toots [then?]. "I'm here with Ray Charles." He went to listen to Ray Charles, maybe [unintelligible]. [unintelligible] for a minute. Something like that. "[inaudible]. And we wanted to talk about your black ass." That's on... I have it on tape now. [laughs] That's Quincy talking to Ray Charles, you know. Yeah, and he calls me Mr. T. I played with Ray a few, couple of times. He [inaudible], yeah. "Where is T?" [laughs] I had to come and sit next to him on the piano bench. So I'm just relating what I hear. But of course, that's... They don't say that to everybody.

Brown: No.

Thielemans: Not even to all, all black guys [inaudible/overlapping].

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Brown: No. They don't.

Thielemans: Because there's some sad black-ass [inaudible].

Male: Fellas...

Brown: [laughs] Yeah. That's true.

Thielemans: You know? It's good and bad everywhere, you know. But I know I feel... I'm very close. And in my concerts in Belgium, sometime... They asked me once to make quote or [inaudible] in the program, they said, in French. But I'd say it in English: "I would not be the same person or the same musician if it were not for that blue note that came from Africa via America." That's... and that's me. [laughs]

Brown: So, that first blue note came from Louis Armstrong, right?

Thielemans: Oh, yeah.

Brown: That was the first... that was that first contact with it.

Thielemans: Well, I don't know if he was... Oh, I know I was [burning?] with Shearing at the... Oh, [white Dutchy?], that's me. Can you [inaudible]?

Male: Oh, yeah.

Thielemans: Excuse me, but I don't know. But you heard how I was playing, and that's... and with Shearing and... I was burning, you know. And that's three, two, three years later than what you heard with Benny, you know. So whether that touched one way or the other, or whether Armstrong though, oh, there's another of those guys... They [unintelligible] hit many notes. I don't know. But he called me Bop Chops. [laughs] That I know.

Brown: While we were on break, there was a conversation about you actually even playing with Armstrong. Even if it was just a matter of seconds. Could you talk about that? Playing with Louis?

Thielemans: I played... I played that jingle with Louie [inaudible]. That was... they even flew me in from Belgium to do it. And they flew me in... It was for Chrysler. And I'm just quoting... I mean, I'm not... with all due respect to Maestro Armstrong. "Chrysler, [unintelligible], has the car for you." And that was it. "Hey, play." [plays a few notes on harmonica] Something like that so... I forgot the thing, but I played with the little wee-wee on that thing. And I made not even a hundred dollars, you know. I mean, I was just there as a [side?] man, you know. Nothing important. And he was already... e looked... if I say he looked sick... He looked like he was... he was suffering, I mean.

Brown: So this would have been in the late '60s then.

Thielemans: Yeah, it was...

Brown: Yeah. Or maybe even...

Thielemans: And then, he passed away, and when he passed away, I was in the band in the staff then of ABC. And we were doing the Dick Cavett Show. And we had the break and the whole bland... excuse me... the whole orchestra jumped in the cab... in a couple of cabs to come across town here on the East Side. Funeral Famous Armory, or something? Where he was in state [inaudible] [with the trumpet tones?]. Anyway... we all went from the whole band. I remember that.

Brown: When I walked through the hallway, I saw a picture of Duke Ellington. In your hallway here.

Thielemans: Oh, yeah.

Brown: So...

Thielemans: I only shook hands with Duke. Yeah. No, I... I heard he said nice things about me to [Willa Deis?], who's a Dutch personality. TV but no, not let's not get into... That's, that would be a little [drawing too hard?]. [laughs] Now, of course, that's an [inaudible] like everybody said. [They said, or he said that?]. Nobody... He came once. I was playing with Peggy Lee in Las Vegas in the Flamingo something. And Duke, Duke's band... we were playing in the big room, and Duke's band was playing in the slot machine there, you know. Midnight to six or whatever it goes, you know. And he came once in a while to say... he knew [who was important?] and he wanted to talk to Miss Lee [inaudible], you know. But... no, that's... Oh, in Belgium, when I had made that Stardust arrange... record. I went, in those days... that was maybe '47, '46, '47... Duke Ellington's band came to Belgium for several concerts. And I met Ray Nance. He was my buddy. Of course. You laugh already. He would've been your buddy, too. The trumpet and...

Brown: Violin and singing and scattng.

Thielemans: And he heard... I took him to a record store—[Rue de Midi?]-in Brussels. And [inaudible], you could buy records and, of course, listen to what you were intending to buy. And Duke, Ray Nance, and me went in there and played my record of Stardust, you know, on one of those [new?] phonographs. And yes, he was curious. "How many strings were they?" he asked. "[Beautiful?]." And I remembered that, you know. I said only four. He said, "Oh." [laughs] It was a good arrangement, the Belgian guy. He died. [unintelligible] He was a cello player and then he wrote at that class... classic. He wrote where there were need... you need no microphones. You know what I mean? The acoustic value of the arrangement.

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Brown: We've only got a few minutes left on this tape, but there's one anecdote that I hope that you could share with us. And this is about you going to the Musicians Union in New York City at 52nd Street on Wednesdays to find gigs. And you went up to a trumpet store and you heard Donald Byrd.

Thielemans: Oh, yeah. No. Okay. Yeah, that's very, very interesting. And, and that was the period where I needed to work. Once in a while I was on staff one day, one afternoon, one day a week. And I... you know, there was only one [unintelligible]. And on Wednesdays, the Musicians Union could use the Rose Bowl, the dance floor of the Rose Bowl Dance Hall.

Brown: Roseland Ballroom?

Thielemans: Roseland Ballroom. And on the first floor, there was the union where you could go if you had checks for a recording. And so I went to the floor. Maybe there was a bar mitzvah [laughs] to work on the weekend or bar mitzvah [probably on Sunday?]. And I went to get eventually some check. And I walk... say here... say here's the union. Here's 52nd Street. And here, the same sidewalk, it was a trumpet store—G.F. Deli. See that I remember, right? Yeah, I'm telling you.

Brown: My man. [laughs]

Thielemans: Eh... And the G.F. Deli, he had a beat-up piano on the first floor, and a little [first?] where a band for \$10 an hour, or a few dollars an hour, you could go to rehearse. And I passed by there, and I hear some great stuff. I go upstairs, and it was Donald Byrd playing the trumpet, right. And Dunlop, a drummer.

Brown: Frankie Dunlop?

Thielemans: And who've played with all those hot guys, you know. And a guy playing the piano. I see the back. I say, "Donald." And he knew me, of course. We knew each other. We never worked together but... "Hey, hi." So... And I needed a pianist. I was looking for a pianist to go play in an Italian Mafia restaurant in Long Island. "Okay, you got that." "You, you need this piano player this weekend?" [laughs] "No, take him. He needs... He just got in. He needs it." So that's how I met Herbie Hancock. That's beautiful, [isn't it?]? And we rehearsed. We go to the restaurant in Long Island, we are back [inaudible]. And we check the usual—Just in Time, what you play or what you play. [singing] Or whatever, you know. And he knew all that. He was already wide open to other things than what we talk about. [laughs] And that [you sense he?], after five minutes... not even, not five minutes... "I think I'll have to dig a little deeper into my [unintelligible] bag for you." That's Herbie. And he... I don't know... "Herbie, I'm so proud of what you..." and you... and he [inaudible]. And he said, when I had my thing at the Carnegie Hall... I told him, "You remember [inaudible] that we..." And he told the people that I was one of the first to give him... make him earn \$35. [laughs]

Brown: Playing in... [laughs]

Thielemans: Or maybe 40, I don't know. No, that is true. See that I remember things that are so precious, you know. You don't forget. You know that, "How ya doin', Bob Chops?" You know? Or Charlie Parker saying, "Man, you know I told Benny... Benny, you know, he's not the Bee Gees, a motherfucker." Charlie Parker in your ear. And you were trying to forget that. [laughs] But I... This is... and me sharing, when we played the Billie Holiday show at the... No, the Dinah Washington all-star show in the theater in Philadelphia, he asked me to come. He said, "Stay with me," in his dressing room. And I was practicing. I [am?]. You were at the movie at eleven, then you're two hours... [laughs] That was something. And the movie. But those two hours, you go to wherever you do... whatever you want to do. And I was practicing, you see. And Byrd said, "I hear ya." You're damn right you hear me. It's all your stuff. [laughs] I'm talking about 1952... 2, 3.

Brown: Yeah. Let's call it a day. How are you gonna top that? [laughs] Talking about...

Thielemans: [inaudible/overlapping voices] We have a lot of things to do yet.

Thielemans: Hey, Bart, how ya doin', man? He doesn't look Flemish, does he? [laughs] But he is, believe me. [It's connected?].

Brown: [laughs] Yeah, well...

Thielemans: And proud...

Brown: And so is... so Ludwig Von Beethoven is Flemish, too. [laughs]

Thielemans: [I normally?] have a Flemish. My mother is from Antwerp so...

Brown: Okay. Let me... We'll begin... We'll just go ahead and begin formally. This is September 1, 2011, and we've returned to the home of the incomparable, the incomparable inimitable Toots Thielemans on the harmonica, virtuoso guitarist and whistler, back in his apartment in New York City. Jazz Oral History interview for the Smithsonian of NEA Jazz Master Series, conducted by Anthony Brown, Ken Kimery, and of course, Toots has some of his countrymen here with him, and so...

Thielemans: Yes.

Brown: So that's always great to have a feeling of camaraderie in the room.

Thielemans: Yes.

Brown: So, so, Toots, what I want to do is pick up on some of the things that we had, maybe some gaps that we left in the story from yesterday.

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Thielemans: Okay.

Brown: We were talking about the movie with Steve McQueen and Ali McGraw. That, that...

Thielemans: That's the...

Brown: The Getaway.

Thielemans: The Getaway, yeah. [That's right?].

Brown: Yeah, yeah. With Quincy Jones.

Thielemans: Yes, [that's right?].

Brown: So, so I wanted to make sure we have that in there...

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: ...because 1972...

Thielemans: Yeah. And I... the anecdote, anecdotic event was I had dinner with Quincy, and Bill Cosby. He had his own weekly show that... and, "Now, Toots, you've gotta come." "Okay." After the show, the week finished, I go home, I enter... open the door [at home?]. "Toots!" Mom, my wife says, "You're gonna go back." [laughs] And then, that was my [meeting and that session?].

Brown: Right. So we didn't have the title. I was a little bit thrown because you said it was a cowboy movie, and I was trying to remember. Steve McQueen, he did many cowboy movies...

Thielemans: Yeah, Steve McQueen.

Brown: ...but it's more of a cops and robbers movie rather than a cowboy movie. But kind of same spirit. So, let's see, one of the things that I want to talk about is, as we were getting into your career after the '60s into the '70s, was talking about some of the pairings that you had with various other artists. In Montreux, you did a lot of pairings with like Oscar Peterson.

Thielemans: Oscar Peterson.

Brown: And then you did, you were with Diz in 1980, and he had Bernard Purdie and those kinds of things.

Thielemans: Yeah, yeah.

Brown: So let's talk about your relationship with the Montreux Jazz Festival and working with these other artists.

Thielemans: Claude Nobs is not... is president, I guess, the master of the Montreux Festival. And I was there, and each time... Well, I went there a couple of times for Quincy. Yeah, right? That's it. And then I went, went a couple of times with Brazilian... I forgot a little bit. But one important appearance was with Oscar Peterson. Of course, with Louie Bellson, Joe Pass, and me, and Oscar, of course. Oscar [with accent]. [laughs] And Ray Brown, I think. Yeah.

Brown: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. So what was it like... I mean, 'cause those are things that you just do there on the spot.

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: No rehearsals? Or did you rehearse for any of those?

Thielemans: No. Well, at least an [unintelligible], [unintelligible] theme, mel-- I mean, that song by, Blues, by Charlie Parker, I think. And [standards?].

Brown: So that's...

Thielemans: Yes. That was just... I don't even [inaudible] the record.

Brown: [laughs] Probably let Claude Nobs know. He can get it. [laughs] So okay... I notice that there was a... if we just return to some of the recordings that you did under your name... We talked yesterday about Herbie Hancock. There was a recording you did named Toots in New York in 1968 with Herbie on the date. I guess that was...

Thielemans: Yeah, [first one?]. And we did A Child Is Born. [inaudible]

Brown: Mm... Thad, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Thielemans: Thad Jones.

Brown: Yeah, Thad Jones' tune, yeah.

Thielemans: And then it was... well was, here and there, there was a couple of good notes in that album. But it was not the traffic light we expected. [laughs]

Brown: Oh, okay, okay. Now, later in the '90s, you did two albums—the Brasil Project Volume I and II.

Thielemans: Yeah.

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Brown: So obviously, you have this great affinity for Brazilian music and Brazilian artists.

Thielemans: Yes, yes.

Brown: But this starts before with Astrud Gilberto...

Thielemans: Yes.

Brown: ...in 1967 and then in '72 you talk about... So let's talk about the roots of your Brazilian love affair. Let's talk about a love affair.

Thielemans: It started... Well, I found out it's exactly that—the love affair. And the Brazilian music per such. I'm a minor 7 musician person. If a minor 7 chord is... [plays chord on harmonica] That's minor, right? And you had the third above there. And the four top notes... the three top notes make it a major come [plays chord] minor. [plays major chord] Major.

Brown: Mm-hmm.

Thielemans: So it's a smile and a tear right there. With one chord. And Brazilian music full of that—Jobim and...

Brown: Louie Bonfa, all of them.

Thielemans: Luiz Bonfa. Ivan Lins is a great favorite of mine. And we'll do some concerts later in October.

Brown: Great.

Thielemans: Yeah, in Europe. In Amsterdam and in Belgium, and in Antwerp, also. So I was in Sweden in 1972. It was the winter and snow like that at. And that was a trip... tour, I guess, by Elis Regina and their musicians. And the idea was of Swedish television, let's do a program of, you know, and she knew about me. I mean, it was easy. And that was very funny, for instance, to see those Swedes... those Brazilians used to hot weather in winter, right. [laughs] It's snowing [like that?]. But in two days, we did a nice little album. And that was my, so to speak, first foot in the big door. Of course, Elis Regina, for those who follow the music, know that Elis was some Billie Holiday type icon for Brazil. And then, later on, I went a couple of times to Brazil just like that, and in... when was it? You said there's something. Well, in '90, yes. It was '90. Oscar Castro-Neves, the guitarist and a producer from Hollywood, Miles Goodman. They came to Brussels for a film. And the film was finished, the recording, and Oscar said, "Toots, you have so many good feelings in Brazil, you should make a record with a Brazilian." And he starts to name the big shots. [laughs] I said, "These guys will never record just with me," you know. And two weeks later: "Toots, we got all the guy. We got, not Gilberto, for instance, but we got Luiz Bonfa. We got... [you name them?]."

Brown: Joao Bosco, Chico Buarque...

Thielemans: Chico Buarque.

Brown: Yeah. Dori Caymmi.

Thielemans: Dori Caymmi. And uh...

Brown: Gilberto Gil. [laughs] Milton...

Thielemans: Gilberto Gil.

Brown: Caetano Veloso. [laughs]

Thielemans: And Gilberto Gil eventually became... He was one of the militant...

Brown: Right.

Thielemans: What then was social unrest, so to speak. They had to fight and Chico Buarque...

Brown: Same.

Thielemans: And Gilberto Gil were in jail even. And lately... three, four years ago, Gilberto Gil was Minister of Culture.

Brown: Perfect.

Thielemans: And they were in Brussels and they... I mean, I received a distinction. That's because they have no parents or stuff like that [unintelligible]. [laughs] But they have Commandador de Rio Branco. That is the highest, you know... You don't have to get up. [laughs] The highest distinction in [inaudible] medalist. So that was my [inaudible] and then... And then, I went... that was done in Rio, most of the music with all the composers and... And it's two great albums, and they still get a lot of play in Brazil. So they [asked?], "What is Toots down there [for?]?" so... But that's even more jet lag, right... [laughs] from Brussels. Anyway, but I love [inaudible].

Brown: So you mentioned the harmonic flavor of Brazil but...

Thielemans: Yes, it's...

Brown: We're... Ken and I are drummers, so we know the rhythm of Brazil is also quite distinctive.

Thielemans: The rhythm of [jazz?], yes. But the harmony, you know...

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Brown: Yeah.

Thielemans: Especially... typically, the Ivan Lins' Começar de Novo. That's the... let's try again sort of thing. The Island, it was a hit sort of in this country with the two songwriters from Hollywood who did all the Michel Legrand music. They did Ipanema. Oh no. Ipanema, the guy who wrote the lyrics, is the one that wrote the lyrics to Bluesette—Norman Gimbel. So... where were we?

Brown: We were just talking about Brazil. I brought up rhythms but...

Thielemans: Well, [inaudible]. The minor 7th [inaudible].

Brown: [laughs] Right. Okay.

Thielemans: That [inaudible] the Ivan Lins' melody—The Island, right. [plays melody] Minor 7th. [plays a few more bars] [Well?], did you hear that? [plays another bar] B-flat altered, you see [inaudible]? [plays runs] You know, I get mad.

Brown: [laughs]

Thielemans: Yeah, but this is... somehow all these runs I practice so much in every key on the harmonica. But if you play in Montreux, you need those same chords, too. [laughs]

Brown: [laughs] Right.

Thielemans: But they just found the reverse. All these Brazilian cats, they knew me from the work I did with George Shearing in the '50s. And wait 'til the end. The bossa nova explained... exploded the [inaudible], the beginning of the '60s. Anyway, [inaudible/overlapping voices].

Brown: Well, that's great. That's great. So you know, we're music... we're all... well, we're musicians here at the table and we form these real strong connections with certain people. There's kind of what they call kindred relationship.

Thielemans: Yeah, affinity.

Brown: Affinity, yes. Affinity.

Thielemans: Like me and Bill Evans. [laughs]

Brown: Exactly. So let's talk about your Bill Evans' project and how that came to be.

Thielemans: Well, that happened in '72, I think. I forgot. I had played at that time with Paul Simon, and my moment of sunshine with Paul Simon was a few bars solo in the melody by Mr. Simon called I Do It For Your Love. And then, you, if you imagine that I get a call from Ellen Keane, the manager of, outstanding manager for Bill Evans.

Brown: Helen Keane, uh-huh.

Thielemans: And... “Toots, we have a new engagement, new contract with Warner Bros. and we’d like you to come and play two songs,” something like that, with, on the session. And I said... I answered right away. “Yes, but before you confirm that then really, you have to come... I was playing at the, with the quartet at a jazz club called Hoppers. That was... here’s the Village Vanguard, and 200 yards on the other side of the street was Hoppers. So there I was playing with Phil Markowitz from... I knew from Rochester, you know. And the drummer was Joe LaBarbera, who wound up also with Bill Evans [inaudible]. And so I said, “You better come and check, see if I can cut the mustard for you.” [laughs] And they came to listen—Bill and the manager. And that was a beautiful moment. We played with Phil Markowitz. I played this, I Do It For Your Lovin’. [plays a few notes] We were married on a rainy day. That’s Paul Simon. And after I played that [unintelligible], he took, he grabbed the sheet and didn’t wait any longer. He said, “See you Monday.” [laughs] And then he adapted... no, he didn’t change much. One chord or something, you know. So that was a great moment. That session with Bill. And then, again, he looked after... something happened that only happened with Bill. I said, “Bill, I’m...” “See you tomorrow.” And I said, “Well, I was only to play for two numbers.” [laughs] “No, no.” Helen said, “No, no, you come tomorrow.” I said, “Bill said...” “Wait a minute.” And they went to talk a minute, and Bill came back to the... there was the famous studio—Columbia 30—downtown where Miles and Tony Bennett, all those biggies were recording. And he said, “Toots, I wish... I won’t tell you how much I received, but we’ll double your fee.” I never had that done. [This was no Bill, no?]. And then, and then he looked in my charts, you know. I still have the same book. You’ve seen it. And he said, “Hey, that looks good.” The Days of Wine and Roses, where I play in two keys, you know. “Let’s try that. Can we use it?” [laughs] He’s asking. “Nooo.” And now after that, you know, when I go out sometime, maybe no more now. That’s thirty years ago. And “Let’s play the Bill Evans arrangement.” [laughs]

Brown: Yours. [laughs]

Thielemans: You know. This was mine. That’s... “Okay. Yes, I know it.” [laughs] And also, yes. So that was a great event. And then I said, “Bill, this is your CD. You know, I play... don’t let, don’t use... I felt I was playing too much. It could have been: “Toots Thielemans featuring Bill Evans,” you know. [laughs] I said, “Bill, I play...” “Don’t you like to work?” [laughs] No, he said, I want people to know you can play like that. That’s Bill.

Brown: Yeah. Well, I think... the title of the album is Affinity, so we were looking for that word...

Thielemans: Yeah. [inaudible/overlapping voices]

Brown: ...to describe that kind of... symbiotic relationship.

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Thielemans: And the cover, the cover shows that beautiful top of the piano and a harmonica and [inaudible/overlapping voices]. [laughs]

Brown: Right. Right, so...

Thielemans: Well, that's, that's a beautiful... And again, in the... after we... if you listen... I don't know, I'm not asking you to listen, but the arrangement, when we recorded the Days of Wine and Roses, there was one spot where we really play on top of and together. We're [unintelligible]. And Bill never forgot that. "You know that's what I like." Something like that, you know. And also, when I said, "Bill, I play too much"... "Don't you want to play?" I said, "No, but..." And that was the end of I Do It For Your Love. "Hey, listen, man, I'm playing with the great Bill Evans here." [laughs] And I'm just the, you know. And if you listen to the end of I Do It For Your Love, when [inaudible], "Fuck Bill Evans," he said, "play." You know? And [there's two?] in the studio then. And that's true. Your [inaudible] [friend?] is laughing. He said, "Fuck Bill Evans," [which made me play?]. And I let [it hang out?] [inaudible/overlapping]. [laughs] Ah. So those were great moments, of course.

Brown: Did you guys have a chance to talk outside of the studio, or not when the tape was rolling much?

Thielemans: No, there was no necessity. The way we said... we played what we had to say. [laughs]

Brown: Mm-hmm. That's beautiful.

Thielemans: That was a great moment.

Brown: Yeah, that's beautiful. It's 1978.

Thielemans: And then... yeah.

Brown: Yeah. Well, let's talk about your relationship with pianists. What is it that makes it...

Thielemans: Well... when I came to this country before with Benny Goodman, I learned a lot. When I played with Benny Goodman and there was Dick Hyman, who still, you know, he had a nice little write-up in [inaudible] lately. And he was, to me... he was my contact with New York, you know. He had played a few jobs on the street with [everybody?]. And he was... he knew all that, that double scale. [plays scale] You know, I remember. He would [rule?] that [fluently?]. And... [laughs] For instance, you know. And so, that was then. Then I came here, and then I ran up through a year here. I auditioned for George Shearing. He wasn't... he was but he still... [inaudible] I tried to call it other things but a traffic light. You know, stop, with George Shearing, you know, about six years. And during those six years, we traveled some, mostly by buss or by car. And there was also Lullaby of Birdland that he wrote, you know. And then, there were tours—all Birdland All-Stars. All that in one bus. The Count Basie Band, you know. Miles Davis, sometime, Quintet. Billie Holiday. I sat here, and two people here. The bass player with

Count Basie. He had the nice leather coat, because the windows were... it was winter. And I, I slept like that. And Miss Holiday was there with her man and Mr. McKay. And so that's... and Lester Young was in the back of the bus.

Brown: With his people. [laughs]

Thielemans: Yeah, with his people. Yeah. You might... I mean, it's not so much about me that's... of course, I was happy to be there, and there was only two white guys on the bus. [laughs] Me and the vibraphone player with Shearing. [phone ringing]

Brown: Uh... before Cal Tjader, right?

Thielemans: Before... After Cal Tjader.

Brown: Oh.

Thielemans: Okay.

Brown: Do you want us...

Thielemans: Lift that one, please.

Male: Oh, this one's out. That one's unplugged so it's [unintelligible] back there.

Male: Okay.

Brown: Are you paused?

Male: No, [inaudible].

Thielemans: That would be a relative, maybe. Oh, okay.

Male: Here we go. Let's keep on rolling. Keep rolling.

Thielemans: Where were we now?

Brown: We were talking about traveling. I had asked you about relations...

Thielemans: Oh, yeah.

Brown: Yeah.

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Thielemans: And the bus, right?

Brown: Mm-hmm.

Thielemans: That's my, my phantasm, my phantasm bus. When I can't speak, I say, "What the fuck did that do?" When I was in that bus, too, you know. [laughs] And in front, there was a whole band—Count Basie's band. And with Joe Newman, that era, you know. And Lester Young sometimes as guest. And also sometimes Lester and Stan Getz, both as guests with Mr. Basie, you know. And I was sitting there with the George Shearing Quintet, and here and there [inaudible], and Sarah Vaughn sometime. And Lester Young has an anecdote that you might like that all lovers of Lester Young might like that. Lester was sitting in the bus. Everybody was fighting to sit next to Lester. Sarah Vaughn, you know, there were six... room for six people in the last row of the bus. So two here, two here, and the aisle of the bus here. Five people here. And Lester Young: "That's mine. I want that." And then, in those days, there was a popular song—Tweedlee-dee.

Brown: Mm-hmm. [laughs]

Thielemans: And Lester was crazy about that song. That's a beautiful story, you know. That's for Lester memorabilia. [laughs] And so, the whole band, the whole bus was singing, "Tweedie, tweedie, tweedlee-dee. Bomp, ba-doo-da-doo-doo. I'm as happy as can be. Bomp, ba-doo-da-doo-doo [scat singing]. Tweedlee, tweedlee, tweedled-domp. And then boom, ba-da-da-da-da." Lester was fighting. [inaudible] my [inaudible]. "Ba-da-da-da-ba." [laughs] [unintelligible]. Isn't that beautiful?

Brown: Oh, yeah.

Thielemans: And we were traveling and that bus was primarily... I mean, you know, two white guys and the rest were [unintelligible]. And you know, sometimes we, we stopped in Arkansas, you know, and I took orders with the vibraphone player to get them the super at the [superette?] or something. And that was also the beginning of Ray Charles's popularity, you know. [singing] "Da-da-da, on my favorite [cup?]." You know that song?

Brown: Mm-hmm.

Thielemans: And each time we stopped, everybody was fighting to get to the juke box, put a quarter or whatever it was, a quarter, to hear that Ray Charles song. [laughs] Well, that's worthwhile talking about, I think.

Brown: Oh, surplus.

Thielemans: I just was a little guitar player—a funky guitar player. [laughs]

Brown: Now, you mentioned something about you and... it could have been... I just found it was either Joe Roland or it was Johnnie Ray or Emil Richards.

Thielemans: It was... in those days it was Johnnie Ray.

Brown: Johnnie Ray? As the vibist for...

Thielemans: But I think Cal Tjader was the one that made a little more of a name for himself, of course. He was really possessed by Milt Jackson.

Brown: Yes. [laughs]

Thielemans: And, and Milt Jackson's favorite things. [singing] And Cal would always sing that way. [singing] Somewhere [and Where on the Street?]. [singing] That's Bags, eh?

Brown: Right, right.

Thielemans: [laughs] No. [The cat?], he died, too, [inaudible]. Many people have died, you know. [laughs] I am... sssh, [inaudible].

Brown: Let me talk about something...

Thielemans: I'll be ninety next year.

Brown: Yeah. Ninety years young.

Thielemans: I want to see you... Ninety years young. [laughs] No. But I'd like to say that, you know, my wife is fantastic.

Brown: Yeah.

Thielemans: And I'm not a bargain to live with. No musician is. No. I had...

Brown: Right. [laughs]

Thielemans: You know, the time... [inaudible].

Brown: Toots.

Thielemans: I'm absentminded. Not absentminded. I only got music in there, you know. And sometimes it's me, me, me, me, you know. And... she deserve more than a medal. [laughs] Okay, let's, just...

Brown: Well, I wanted to talk about...

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Thielemans: [Don't?] put that in there, you know.

Brown: Yeah. I'm glad you did. You have to because, you know, musicians, without a really supportive partner, it's a difficult life. Or impossible.

Thielemans: Aw, we [inaudible] here. I didn't do the decoration. I only... I only brought in some... a few dollars to it. This, you know, I know where they come from, but you know, it's... and in Belgium, the same. They clean our house in Belgium. Anyway, okay.

Brown: I want to ask you a serious, something about a very serious subject, because you talked about something that, kind of in passing, but I think is important. You talked about you and the vibist going out and taking the orders. This was because of the race relations in America.

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: Was that something shocking to you when you first encountered it? Or what was your reaction when you first...

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: ...realized that in America, there were two separate, two separate Americas?

Thielemans: Yes. There was. Well, but I must be honest. All the musicians or the Europeans that came to the States, and I was anxious to be in the, in the black, you know, parts of the world or the city or... Back in Los Angeles there was still the Watts Hotel in Watts, you know. Yeah, that's...

Brown: Were you surprised or did you know that that was the way it was?

Thielemans: Yeah, but [different?] in some, some places. Even in Washington, when I joined the George Shearing Quartet, it was... when was it? '52, '53, maybe... '53? There was a club, a restaurant club where we played. Olivia, Olivia's Lounge Hotel Restaurant. I think Club and Lounge on the first floor. And there was McKibbon and Billy Hart, you know.

Brown: Oh, we were going to correct that. It's Billy... Bill Clark.

Thielemans: Bill Clark.

Brown: Right. Okay. So for the record, it's Bill Clark.

Thielemans: Yeah, it's Bill Clark.

Brown: It's okay. Bill Clark.

Thielemans: [inaudible].

Brown: No problem. We got it.

Thielemans: He called me, “That’s my sister.” I was his sister.

Brown: [laughs] Okay.

Thielemans: Billy. Bill Clark. Oh, thanks for correcting.

Brown: So you...

Thielemans: And yeah, they had to go in... I didn’t know. That was my first exposure, and I had to go and [inaudible] said, “Hey, come.” Yeah, I... we were in different hotels. And in Baltimore, also. And that’s even closer to New York really, right? And later on, you know, we were on tour and... Later on, the law was against segregation, right? That didn’t mean no more racism, but they had no right anymore to forbid access or to refuse service on the grounds of difference. And I remember Joe Wilder, the trumpet player. You met him, too? Joe Wilder. He’s still alive?

Brown: Mm-hmm. He’s older than you. [laughs]

Thielemans: Yeah, we worked together in the Jimmy Dean Band. It was the ABC band.

Brown: [laughs] Okay.

Thielemans: And we were somewhere in the South with the [so?] sort of thing, but he went in the pool. I said, “[Man?], have you guys seen that before?” Joe Wilder. He went and didn’t make a show of it, but he went in the swimming pool somewhere in the South, [inaudible] which he couldn’t have done five years earlier. Five years. Yeah, something like that.

Brown: Did anything happen to him?

Thielemans: No, nothing, [I’m sure?] not [inaudible], of course. He’s married to a Swedish lady. I don’t know if she’s, you know... I speak Swedish, you know, so I [unintelligible]. [laughs] I’ll think it’s the Swedish lady. [You have met her before?].

Brown: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Thielemans: Anyway...

Brown: Yeah.

Thielemans: [inaudible].

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Brown: Yeah, 'cause I was just wondering, you know, because maybe in your... back in the '50s, they didn't know that America was two separate because you can't see it on the records. [laughs]

Thielemans: No, no.

Brown: You know. So I was just... But perhaps because of the...

Thielemans: That's, that's... Well, Benny Goodman was the first one with Lionel Hampton, right?

Brown: Mm-hmm. And Teddy Wilson.

Thielemans: And Charlie Christian.

Brown: And Charlie Christian and then Ted--

Thielemans: And...

Brown: Teddy Wilson.

Thielemans: Teddy Wilson, mm-hmm. And in the '50s, George Shearing.

Brown: Mm-hmm.

Thielemans: You know? He didn't... Well, I'm blind. I don't know what, know what those are. Life approaches the dramatic subject, you know. But yeah.

Brown: It didn't affect you, though. Or maybe...

Thielemans: No, because I was, to me... the music was so important and my sense of humor, my sense of being was so much... You've met me, right? I mean, I haven't changed, and I was like that when I came to this country and I was looking for and I enjoyed the group with Shearing was a mixed group in those days. Like two black guys, right? Milt, Clark. And McKibbon and me and the English fella, [inaudible]. [laughs] Yeah.

Brown: Yeah. So, but you know, now that America is much different, you know, but some people...

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: We have to remember that things were different in the past.

Thielemans: Yes, [it was?].

Brown: And maybe the music helped make it different because, like you say, Benny Goodman...

Thielemans: Goodman.

Brown: George Shearing and... so pioneers—people who were charting new territory.

Thielemans: They were pioneers, right. I must say, I wasn't that, you know... of course I didn't go militantly. I should have, maybe.

Brown: Maybe it wasn't necessary. The statement was made...

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: ...by the camaraderie on stage and people could see...

Thielemans: Yes, certainly.

Brown: ...that people can get together and do wonderful things. So, let's talk about some other real close relationships that you've had. Well, let's talk about some other relationships like the Paul Simon. There's Billy Joel. You did some things with Billy Joel. So I'm not concerned with jazz.

Thielemans: Well, that was... Paul Simon and the producer, Phil Ramone. Outstanding. I don't know if he... but he's the one of those Sinatra things with Bono. [laughs] Those duets, I mean. I mean, big time, you know. And he was also the producer, music producer for Paul Simon. And he said, told Paul Simon... I was doing... there was a concert with Quincy at Madison Square. But the smaller... Madison Square Garden, but not the big... But, and there we played with Quincy, and Phil Ramone was also working once in a while, if not all the time, with Quincy. And Phil told Paul, "You should come." And Paul, from what I understand, noticed me with Quincy, and that's how I got the rehearsal... the call. And, oh, one funny thing. Yeah, you [inaudible]. And there was... Paul Simon, if you talk about being cool, you know, there might be an earthquake here. He'd say, "[Hmm?]," you know. I'm exaggerating but his facial or his behavior doesn't really react to the gravity of the event. [laughs] I mean, to me, from a distance. And yeah, "Toots, can you come?" And if you look, he was just finishing his album, his solo album, after they split up with Garfunkel.

Brown: Still Crazy After All These Years.

Thielemans: Yeah, that one. Hey, you remember all that. And on that, he had one track about a ballgame. Night Game, I think they called it. And, okay, I go. To hear that the [6, 50s?]. I mean, you know the studio. I mean, I... oh, my memory... And I go there, you know, I play. I

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sure do my best. And I didn't think... I think I laid an egg, if you ask me, to be blunt. [laughs] I say good-bye, because I had to go to Monterey to the jazz festival, take a taxi from the studio and go right to the airport, you know. I said, "Bye, Paul." "Bye." "Bye, Phil," you know. And I get... I open... [laughs] Oh boy, I really didn't make it there. [laughs] And I stepped into my motel in Monterey, you know. "Hey, please call Mr... [laughs] Phil Ramone." "Hey, Toots. Paul loved you." [laughs] You know? That's Paul. I mean, with all due respect. But he didn't have to explode after he hears something he likes [inaudible]. But that was... And then, we have on video the Belgian... Belgian TV came to film... We have that here. Where I play with Paul in Mont... at the rehearsal. We have [inaudible] [for you?]. You can maybe...

Brown: Okay. Well, I asked about...

Thielemans: And Billy Joel, him...

Brown: Yeah.

Thielemans: Probably the same thing.

Brown: Yeah.

Thielemans: But not so... I was a little closer musically, also, because in that band with Paul Simon was Steve Kann.

Brown: Right.

Thielemans: [laughs] Oh, you being a drummer, or is he the drummer?

Brown: Both. [laughs]

Thielemans: He has a foot... You know. I don't have to... The foot... [imitating drummer] I would be a drummer, too, you know. And that's Steve. And then there was Hugh McCracken. Fantastic guitar. He did great imitations of Elvis Presley. And he... you know, I couldn't do. But he, yeah. And then who else? Richard Tee.

Brown: Oh. [laughs]

Thielemans: He called everybody Junior. "How ya doin', Junior?" And he had one little sound box, you know. You see all these guy with pedals [inaudible]. He had the usual, right from the rack, you know, Fender piano, and on that a little box and a plug... [blows raspberry] and then he had a way to move. Are you familiar with his move?

Brown: He's a big man, too. [laughs]

Thielemans: [imitating] That's him. But he was... And from the back, seeing from the was beautiful. [laughs] And playing, too. He called me... Everybody was Junior [inaudible]. "How ya doin', Junior?" [laughs] He died, too.

Brown: Yeah, yeah.

Thielemans: All these guys died.

Brown: This is a hard life.

Thielemans: A lot of people. [laughs]

Brown: Your people, yeah. [laughs]

Thielemans: [inaudible] broke his bottles that way. He broke his people.

Brown: Yeah.

Thielemans: I didn't have to break [them?]. [laughs] Ah... I had another. See, this guy could move a building just [tapped them?]. [imitating] And some tasteful funk, you know. Whoop.

Brown: Straight out of the church.

Thielemans: Yeah. Oh, I didn't know that.

Brown: And the organ. Oh, yeah. That, that organ sound, everything.

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: That's, that's...

Thielemans: Okay, go on.

Brown: Oh, well, I was going to ask you some more about the relationships. But I can understand how the Paul Simon band would have had a greater affinity with you because of the jazz.

Thielemans: Yeah, Sanborn was there, too.

Brown: Sanborn was in there, too. Right, right.

Thielemans: At the beginning of his career. That's... I'm talking about thirty years ago, you know.

Brown: Right, right.

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Thielemans: I saw another anecdote with Sanborn.

Brown: Sure.

Thielemans: We were together and the show in Montreux with Quincy. And there's a run-through. Everybody has his thing for the evening, you know. And I do my thing. Quincy Jones, Quincy's song—The Eyes of Love. [plays a few bars on harmonica] And when I play that, Quincy cries [inaudible]. Hi, Quincy. But when I did that, you know. And... [laughs] after that, I go back to the green room, as they say, you know. And Sanborn had to follow me doing his solo, you know. [laughs] I never forgot that. That's the only time I heard that. "Hey, Toots, you left your ass on stage." You know the musician. We say, "He played his ass off," you know. "Hey, man, you left your ass on stage." I reminded him we were in Poland. In Lodz. He was there with his organ player, the strong guy there, and a good drummer. The trio. And he said, "Hey." [laughs] And he remembered saying that. "Yeah, you still do." [laughs] Or something like that, you know. That was about a month ago. [laughs]

Brown: [laughs] Oh, great, great, great, great.

Thielemans: So these are anecdotes I [inaudible/overlapping voices].

Brown: Sure. Yeah, well, that's the music. It's the relationship of the people that make the music.

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: So that's what I want to talk to you about. More of these relationships. Working with singers... You've worked with the greats, you know. With Nancy, all of them. So what is the... Do you have a particular specialty or favorite?

Thielemans: Oh, Peggy Lee. What, you can see it on the YouTube.

Brown: Sure. I watched it, yeah. Oh, yeah.

Thielemans: That was in Las Vegas in 1965, maybe. And there was... Peggy had heard my recording of Makin' Whoopee and he liked that. She liked that, I'm sorry. And so that was... and this time. And I had the round, round ball face, you know. [laughs] And I looked like a burgermeister, you know. And she called [friends?], you know. I'd like to bring our burgermeister to the club in Vegas, you know. Then I go to the front and play.

Brown: Makin' whoopee.

Thielemans: And that was beautiful, you know. She was very music... Music was important to her, and she had always a few special fellas, you know, in... Snooky was with that band, also. In Vegas and the Copacabana.

Brown: Right, right.

Thielemans: Yeah, you know. Snooky. Uh, Grady Tate. A bass player and Hubert Laws, too.

Brown: Oh, yeah. [laughs]

Thielemans: In those, those days, yeah.

Brown: Yeah. Well, just like you played...

Thielemans: And that was... That's with Peggy Lee. And she's Swedish.

Brown: Oh.

Thielemans: Her real name was Egstrom. That's a typical like Jones in Sweden, you know. Egstrom. I don't know the first name. Maybe Maria Egstrom or something like that, you know. [inaudible]. And so, I... after the show, we all were invited—the special guys—the retinue, the extra guys. You know, not the band, not the... No, she was not... I mean, she respected the musicians but the guys that could upstairs, have a drink. And then she liked a good solid drink. Get me...? I'd get her a drink sometime. "No, get me a real drink." [laughs] You know? I don't drink. I'm sick before I'm drunk. [laughs] No, but... And [inaudible]... "Oh, you're from..." I was [inaudible]. She was impressed with... She wanted me to tell her about Sweden, you know. I said, and then I played for her at four in the morning or whatever, after the show, you know. We went [off the air?]. No, not, not that bad. But I'll play you the Swedish song, and if the Swedes heard that, they cried.

Brown: Go ahead.

Thielemans: It's something beautiful. [speaks in Swedish] It's possible to sail without wind, blah, blah, blah. But you cannot live with love. And that's... when I played that in Sweden... I have it here where you can hear me playing all alone, and the people, the Swedish public, humming with me. So that's how big... That was a couple of months ago. Okay, I'll play for Miss Egstrom. [plays song on harmonica] Isn't that nice?

Brown: Bravo. Oh, yeah.

Thielemans: And then I say thank you, good night, see you tomorrow. [laughs] Yeah, I took my subway back to Yonkers...

Brown: Ah...

Thielemans: ...where I was living then.

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Brown: Well, just like you've played with some of the greatest pianists—Hank Jones and Ray...

Thielemans: And Shirley Horn. She had the, she had the way and she, she only sounded good with these two guys—George Abel, electric bass, Abel... and a drummer, [Washington?].

Brown: Steve Williams.

Thielemans: Steve Williams and... And the bass player was always... sort of looking up in the back of, excuse me, Shirley, catching her left hand, you know. And I heard Shirley... I was at a session later, where she had top name fellas, you know. And it didn't sound... Those guys were just tops for her. And anybody else with her was not the same feeling.

Brown: Did you ever develop this kind of relationship with any particular drummers?

Thielemans: Bill Clark. That was when Shearing, with Shearing. And after hours, sometimes, even in Detroit that I remember very clearly. We went... he had the phone book in his room, right. May I use your phone book? "Come on, sister. That was [his?] sister," you know the... I'm kidding, you know, but a black man saying sister, anyway... [laughs]

Brown: Come on, sister. [laughs]

Thielemans: Come on, sister. And we played. And when the groove started to move nicely, he said [inaudible], would stay like that as long as you play, you know. [imitating] That's Bill.

Brown: It's too bad the...

Thielemans: And with Steve Gadd, also, was wonderful. And I played... No, I can't say I played much with... there's people like Roy Haynes, Maxwell [inaudible]. No, I really wasn't with Shearing, you know.

Brown: I have a list of some of the drummers that you played with. Dannie Richmond. Of course you mentioned Arthur Taylor earlier.

Thielemans: Oh, yeah.

Brown: And Elvin Jones. Ed Thigpen. Oh... you want to talk about Elvin. [laughs]

Thielemans: Oh, Elvin. Yeah. That was a [inaudible] [Gelder?], at the studio in Jersey. Oh, [bloomy?], we were together. And Elvin... It was a date for J. J. Johnson, I think.

Brown: Right. Mm-hmm.

Thielemans: And he played so... He [sounded?]... Oh, I'm going to remember to do it with my little harmonica [inaudible]. And it sounded so light. No [more?] he could blow a house

away, but it was right there then. It's a matter of feeling together, and there's no way you may be playing with this, the greatest drummer in magazines and write-ups, but if you're... if your pulse is not the same, you don't feel together. [laughs]

Brown: Right.

Thielemans: And that's what, you know... [imitating] Whatever he did, it was there, you know. And you know what I'm talking about.

Brown: Oh, absolutely. [laughs] Going through your discography, I saw...

Thielemans: And, yeah. [unintelligible]

Brown: Well, do you...

Thielemans: Ed Thigpen.

Brown: Ed Thigpen, yeah.

Thielemans: Oh, he passed away in Denmark, right? I played once in a while with him. He was so great for that rim shot on the fourth beat. One, two, three, pop.

Brown: Yeah, that could...

Thielemans: Billy Cobb, too. Uh, no.

Brown: That's Philly Joe. He actually... Jimmy Cobb?

Thielemans: Jimmy Cobb.

Brown: Right.

Thielemans: Yeah, [inaudible].

Brown: Same thing.

Thielemans: [inaudible] he did it [inaudible], it's history with him and Miles. They're [walking?] [inaudible].

Brown: Oh, sure. Everybody has. [laughs]

Thielemans: [inaudible].

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Brown: Now when I went through your discography, I saw you did a lot of work with Grady Tate.

Thielemans: Well...

Brown: 'Cause he maybe he's a studio drummer so he's doing a lot of work.

Thielemans: No, he was... He was... on some of the dates with Quincy, he played the drums. And when, with Peggy Lee. And when I talked too much, he said, "Hey, Tits, shut up and play your chrome sandwich." That's Grady. [laughs] See, you wanted anecdotes. You got it. "Hey, Tits. Shut up, man, and play your chrome sandwich." So that's Grady. That's Grady. [laughs] I hope he's okay, because he must be up in, in those numbers. Not far from mine. [laughs]

Brown: And then I saw that you had done a date with Dannie Richmond, of course known with Charles Mingus.

Thielemans: No, but my revelation was we're not [inaudible].

Brown: With Diz or with Quincy?

Thielemans: [inaudible] Montreux.

Brown: Right, with Diz. No?

Thielemans: With Dizzy.

Brown: Right.

Thielemans: And me on guitar and Dizzy. I think that's what... three.

Brown: Yeah, he was doing a trio.

Thielemans: A trio. And I said, and he's the number soul, Mr. Soul, that... [makes sound] rockin' with him. And he sounded, again, like relatively to be compared with Elvin, you know. [imitating] And I was playing the guitar then. I... And each, we met lately about a few months ago at the... in Holland at the North Sea Jazz something.

Brown: Ah, yeah. [laughs]

Thielemans: And he was there with a workshop or something. And he looked... "Hey," you know. He just about like Richard Tee. "How ya doin', Junior?" [laughs]

Brown: Oh, that's great.

Thielemans: Yeah. That's great. Hey, you, you, you're doing your homework.

Brown: Well, I have to. [laughs] Uh...

Thielemans: I have to do my homework. [laughs]

Brown: Now, because I lived in Europe as well, in the '70s and '80s, I know there was a drummer named Billy Brooks from America, who lived in Switzerland, and you...

Thielemans: I don't know him.

Brown: Okay, but you recorded a couple things but maybe... I was just wondering because...

Thielemans: Yeah, it's, it's possible that we made, but you go into studio...

Brown: Right.

Thielemans: ...and the session is finished.

Brown: Yeah.

Thielemans: Yeah. I know the name now, yes.

Brown: Yeah. It's just unfortunate because like Kenny Clark, once he moved to Europe, people forget about him here.

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: And Billy... and like Oliver Jackson moved to Paris. People forget about them here.

Thielemans: [inaudible], also.

Brown: Yeah. Oliver Jackson, yeah.

Thielemans: Oliver Jackson?

Brown: Yeah, he was... Yeah, Paris, yeah.

Thielemans: His son or his nephew plays with Marsalis. The drums.

Brown: Hm. Oh. Oh, that's right. Ali Jackson. Right.

Thielemans: Yeah.

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Brown: Right, right, right.

Thielemans: Yes. And... I jammed a little bit with Marsalis [on?] one number. And he came up to me and said, “Hey, you know very well Oliver.” “Hey, how’s he doin’?” That sort of thing. Hey... [laughs] It’s great [inaudible]. [laughs]

Brown: You want to take a break now?

Thielemans: [inaudible]

Brown: Okay. Oh, you got a minute? You got a few minutes? Go ahead, go ahead.

Thielemans: No, that’s... Oliver Jackson, yeah.

Brown: Yeah. So yeah, you know, when, when people move to, from America to Europe, they forget them here.

Thielemans: No, Kenny Clarke.

Brown: Ah.

Thielemans: I met Kenny Clarke. He was also married to Annie Ross at one time.

Brown: Yes. They... Well, I don’t know if they were married, but he did... they have a child. Yeah, Toby, yeah.

Thielemans: I mean, [together?].

Brown: Right.

Thielemans: And I had met Annie Ross on the seashore, the seashore in Belgium with her aunt [inaudible] or something. And I’m sitting on the beach. And then, later on, because Kenny had this band with the French... the Belgian Francy Boland.

Brown: Right. Boland.

Thielemans: It was a great arrangement and the Boland-Clarke Big Band. And one day, at those times, in those times, I did a lot of guest recordings. You know, you play a few numbers for the radio stations. And I was in Cologne. And that’s where I spent some time with Kenny talking [inaudible]. He said, “You should come to Paris. I hope. That would be nice if you came.” So he was already settled in Paris, yes.

Brown: Okay, we’re going to have to change a tape.

Thielemans: He played, but we played together and that was my group—Joey Baron

Brown: Fred Hersh?

Thielemans: Fred Hersh.

Brown: Marc Johnson?

Thielemans: And Marc Johnson. And I asked him in the middle of a set, “Joey, [want to?] play on the solo?” He said, “Blue and green.” [laughs] The slow number.

Brown: Right.

Thielemans: [imitates] [laughs] And we... he was in Brussels... in Antwerp, right, with John Zorn. And I asked him... we crossed... “Mr. Play blue and green.” [laughs] And these guys, you know... Joey and Greg Cohen, the bass player... they’re [bad guys?].

Brown: Well, we’re going to talk about why or how is it that you are able to stay so current. You’re always, you know, like moving forward. You’re never like resting on your achievements. You’re never like, oh, well...

Thielemans: Oh, no, no.

Brown: ...that’s the music I grew up with but this is...

Thielemans: I am...

Brown: You stay... you keep going forward with the music.

Thielemans: Well, I’m trying to assimilate. There’s so much happening, you know. And if you look at the piano players I’ve played with... you know, Bill. There was a lot to learn from him. And I have some records not only YouTube things but records. Oh, Bill and me. Oh, Bill, especially. Shortly before his death. And he even played in that session that was taped, and he played then he announced, “This is a Toots Thielemans arrangement of The Days of Wine and Roses.” And he played it.

Brown: Great.

Thielemans: But then, he probably was... there, you can hear [he rushes?]. It was with Marc and [LaBonne?].

Brown: No.

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Thielemans: Joe LaBarbera.

Brown: Joe LaBarbera, right, right.

Thielemans: Because there was a drummer in New York called... What did I say? I've forgotten already. Joe LaBarbera, yes.

Brown: So, while the tape wasn't running, I asked you about the correct pronunciation of [Marciel Solel?].

Thielemans: [Maxiem Sorel?].

Brown: Perfect. [laughs] So, we were talking about some collaborations with you and other artists. So, if you want to talk about that, then we'll talk about the [Jaco?] project.

Thielemans: Well, yeah. I have a lot of respect, and [Marciel?] is one great musician. I... and I... He asked me. There was a tribute to him in South of France, but it involved traveling in the summer, and I had to turn it down. But I [just phoned?] him. But he's a fantastic... [Lee Cony slides into?]. I mean, though, they played. I can't put words in somebody's mouth. But he played in the Village Vanguard. Marciel did. [inaudible]. But Jaco, okay. Shoot.

Brown: Well, you know, of course, those who go to YouTube will see many, many postings of the concert with you and Jaco, and you're playing, of course, one of the greatest pieces of music ever written—Sophisticated Lady. Duke Ellington, of course. And it's a feature for you. And then the band comes in and...

Thielemans: Well, let's first see... tell you how I met, how we met and how we... he asked to meet me, so to speak. He was... there was just at the dissolution of the Weather Report. And Jaco was doing a single. [laughs] And I was in Berlin, I think it was, whatever [inaudible] years.

Brown: '79.

Thielemans: '79. And I was representing Belgium in the festival with the three musicians from, all of them Belgian. And at the press conference, somebody asked Jaco: "Mr. Pastorius, you see the menus of... and the menu of everybody who plays at this thing. But if you was to do a duo with somebody, who would you... would be your idea?" "Get me Toots." That's true. He said that. "Get me Toots." Somebody told me that. "Get me Toots." That's what happened. And then we played Sophisticated Lady in Berlin. That was not [inaudible]. And then later on when he made... No. I wouldn't record it in a studio. We played it...

Brown: On tour in Japan, right?

Thielemans: In Japan. Budokan or what?

Brown: Mm-hmm. Budokan Theater.

Thielemans: Yeah. And I was just... I had had a stroke when I was [through?]. I had lost a lot of weight. And I was... the doctor said, “You’re okay but take it easy.” And then, Jaco calls me. “Papa. I want you to go to Japan with me.” And that small group with [Otello?] playing...

Brown: [Bontilio?].

Thielemans: I called that the kitchenette. [laughs] I called it... “I wrote some new music for the kitchenette, Papa. You’d better come and play.” [laughs] Isn’t that cute? That’s Jaco. And our doctor... yeah, we... he saved my life. But we had that house in Montauk, you know. And he had seen and that I had the stroke there, and he drove me. He’d take a few papers and a toothbrush and... but he knew [laughs] the bad news. So I was... Anyway, I was out of the hospital. I was three weeks in the hospital here. And a couple of months later, I says, “Doc, this guy [laughs] wants me to go to Japan with him.” And yeah, about nine, ten concerts. And, but he... he wrote a [inaudible] and we had a concert with that group, that band—Word of Mouth band—at Avery Fisher. Not Carnegie, the bigger place there. Avery Fisher Hall. And I say, “Okay, I played with...” And during the intermission, the doctor: “Oh.” [laughs] “It’s the best thing, the best therapy for you to go to Japan with this guy.” So that’s, that was Jaco. And then in Japan, I said, see, Jaco... he stays in his... I mean, he was in the... was nothing for him to run to the gate, you know. [laughs] And his bass running... sweeping the floor on his... you know what I mean? And he was... [makes sound] [laughs] And I said, “Jaco, I cannot run. I just got out of the... [laughs] the hospital.” “Okay, Papa. I take care of you.” He had the... he had the band boy, a Japanese band boy, for me, carrying a towel for me. [laughs] And my harmonica. [laughs] “Take care, Papa.” [Japanese] [laughs] That was with Jaco. [laughs]

Brown: And that was an all-star band, too.

Thielemans: Oh, yeah. That was with the Brecker... trumpet Brecker. And... good musicians. And then, oh, yes. Yeah, you hear it then when... He was too much for me. And he’s still... But of course, he created the... a [block?] for the electric bass. And he could play piano. If you look at the YouTube, you can see him in Brussels a couple of months after the tour, where he plays piano and he calls me from the audience to play Three Views of the Secret with him. You can find it. You just say Toots or Jaco Toots and you’ll get it.

Brown: Unfortunately, you know, Jaco had a very, very tragic, tragic death.

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: Did you see him... did you see a kind of deterioration or anything like that?

Thielemans: No. No. Well, I saw him... I mean, when we played, when he was in Brussels for his probably last European tour, he went... after the show, he went. He had a... I don’t want to put, say anything that didn’t happen, but he did strange things, going to a beer place, a bar or a

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café [unintelligible], and make noise and look to be... You know, apparently that's what... But 'til the last minute, I was Papa, you know. Of course. And he stayed even in Belgium became... when John Lennon died...

Brown: Yeah.

Thielemans: He had done that... song for John Lennon by John Lennon.

Brown: Imagine? No?

Thielemans: No.

Brown: A different one? Hmm. John Lennon died in December of 1980.

Thielemans: Well, he... you know, Jaco wanted to come to Brussels, and he came from wherever. Oh. He wanted... [laughs] That's Jaco. He wanted... "Toots, you gotta come. I wanna see you to... I wanna... you gotta come and do your thing on the one track to Brussels and..." I was in Miami. "How do I get to Brussels?" I said. "There's Miami-New York and New York-Brussels," you know. [Regular?]. "No, I want to go with the Concord," Mr. Pastorius. So we, he went to Miami to Washington, where he could catch a Concord, [if you please?]. And [laughs] from there, he got a Concord to Paris, and then from Paris he had to get... So... [laughs] And it costs... I don't say. I don't want to know. It's not my business, but much more. And he was half a day later than if he had... you know? And we're there waiting in Brussels, and he was... Come on, what's the name of that John Lennon song? You'll find it again.

Brown: Okay.

Thielemans: I can't look here.

Brown: When we take the next break, I'll look it up. Unless anybody in...

Thielemans: That's Jaco. [laughs] And he stayed at our place and he came here, too. And he started to play with things. He started to throw these things, you know. It was [shuh?] [inaudible], you know. [laughs] That was some strong [stuff?].

Brown: Yeah.

Thielemans: But okay. But he was... it's easy to say he was correct with the musicians, maybe, and not all that correct with his... dependence. I don't know. It's not [inaudible].

Brown: Again, it's just a tragedy....

Thielemans: [inaudible/overlapping voices]

Brown: ...a tragedy for such a genius to meet such a tragic fate.

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: Yeah. But you know, we look at Bud Powell, too, you know, and other folks.

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: Yeah, yeah. Did you see Bud Powell when he was in Europe?

Thielemans: Once... yeah, I didn't see him play, but I went once... What's that club in Paris? The Blue Note, too, right?

Brown: Mm-hmm. Yeah, the Blue Note, mm-hmm.

Thielemans: And it was Benjamin. Some person called Benjamin who was running the club. And I went for a drink some... maybe after a concert. And Bud was sitting there. I said, "Hi." Not... that's all.

Brown: I'm going to switch gears and talk about you. In 1998 you received a joint honorary doctorate from the University Libre de Brussels and the...

Thielemans: Libre. It's Libre.

Brown: Okay. And then the other University of Brussels. So you received an honorary doctorate...

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: ...to acknowledge your achievements in music.

Thielemans: In two languages. It was... Yeah, in Flemish and French. That was very unusual. And [inaudible]. I was... And then, of course, there were the Baron.

Brown: Yeah. Let's just talk about 2000 when you... about this honor.

Thielemans: Well, the right person next to the King advises who somehow gives and takes orders from His Majesty. The thing... the word was out that this guy Thielemans deserved... that's [Herman Van Hove?]. They pushed the lobby. Do you know that? Ah, he knows. It's a Flemish publisher friend of ours. But he was... my nobility came from the Flemish side a little more. I'm somehow... I'm both but somehow I get a little more attention or whatever in [inaudible], in north of Belgium. Anyway, so I get there and I'm all dressed up. You won't believe this. I'm in a tie and everything. And [unintelligible] is his name, right. His name, Mr.

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[unintelligible]. “Yes, I’m...” “Oh yes, Mr. Thielemans.” In French, sit down. And His Majesty has deemed the advisor or correct to give you the title of Baron, you know. And I... and my wife... [laughs] She will be a Baroness. Oh, okay. But then, the thing is decided, right. But the national day like the Fourth of July here is the 21st of July, and I received... I had that meeting the end of June. But we... [laughs] We couldn’t say a word to anybody, even family or the press or something. We have to be silent for three weeks. And my lady, of course... “Hey, what’s happening today, dear?” You know. “Well, nothing.” [laughs] You know, that’s... that happened. And then, we received... It’s a ring and the [inaudible] diploma. But this ring, my fingers are so small that when I do that [clap hands], you know [makes sound], it fries you to the, to the audience or whatever. And then, also, I received from Brazil, right, the Comendador do Rio Branco, which is... They don’t let no nobility in Brazil, but is the highest echelon. [laughs] That’s it.

Brown: And what year was that?

Thielemans: But you don’t have to sit down or stand up, you know. You, Anthony, and that’s good enough for me. [sings] That’s Good Enough For Me. [laughs]

Brown: Baron Thielemans. [laughs]

Thielemans: You’re right.

Brown: Oh. And what year was the honor from Brazil? What year was that granted?

Thielemans: Maybe ten years ago.

Brown: But after the Baron. After you received the Baron?

Thielemans: I forgot. Yeah, after.

Brown: After the Baron. Okay, all right. Just to try to get a chronology.

Thielemans: A year after Baron.

Brown: Uh-huh. And then... and that was... the Baron title was bestowed to you by, upon you by King Albert, correct?

Thielemans: King Albert. But I was on tour. So you get... when we received the invitation to go collect, in Belgium we were photographed with [inaudible], with the King, you know. You’ve seen that probably, right? So she wanted to get my Baronship. [laughs] Yeah. It’s... Many journalists ask, “What [inaudible]?” My first reaction was, I don’t play better because of it, but it’s a reward, you know. You know, for services like the National Endowment of the Arts or whatever. I don’t play better for it, though, you know, but... right? When you feel you’ve done something or... but it doesn’t change this, you know. And the note blue, the blue note stays there. [laughs]

Brown: Well, what about the NEA Jazz Master Fellowship? What, when you received that three years ago...

Thielemans: Yeah, that was... that was the same thing. In those... that, that year was Jimmy Cobb. Lee Konitz. The engineer from [inaudible] Van Gelder.

Brown: Rudy Van Gelder. Mm-hmm.

Thielemans: Rudy Van Gelder from Jersey. I mean, there were six, six... nobility.

Brown: He's going to find the...

Thielemans: Nobility... noble... Is that... yeah, there was, was an important...

Brown: So then, you know you're not only in Belgian royalty but you're in jazz royalty, too.

Thielemans: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Well, I can't read well.

Brown: Okay, 2008. [Candido?]. Andrew.

Thielemans: [Candido?], yeah.

Brown: Yeah, yeah. So... let me see. No, here... No, the year is actually 2009, so this is wrong. George Benson, Jimmy Cobb...

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: Lee Konitz, Rudy Van Gelder, Snooky Young. Snooky. [laughs]

Thielemans: Yeah. [inaudible/overlapping voices]

Brown: Yeah. Yeah, so 2009 was the year.

Thielemans: But I think Snooky was not somebody... two other guys came. Frank West and the California band leader.

Brown: Gerald Wilson.

Thielemans: Gerald Wilson talked about the achievements of Snooky, who was sitting, you know. I remember that.

Brown: Who introduced you or talked on your behalf?

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Thielemans: Billy Taylor.

Brown: Ah. [laughs]

Thielemans: Billy Taylor. Dr. Billy Taylor. He died, also. He was very hospitable to me when I came... As I told you, we played with the Don Redmond Band.

Brown: Right, you did.

Thielemans: Touring Europe. And that's where... dressed like that, but [inaudible], "Hey, this guy can play," you know, that sort of thing, before I came to the States. And then, when I just had my permits but I didn't have the union permit. I had to be six months of a resident, proved residence in New York to be able to work. And Billy was playing the piano at the Hickory House. There was a piano. [Marian McPartland?], [Bac Bachman?] played there, also. And I was, I had a job for a couple of months waiting for me card at [Spina?] Airlines, [inaudible] Airlines. I made... I won't say [inaudible] much, but it wasn't much. But at least I wasn't starving, you know, with my wife. And so, he let me... I could... I had enough money maybe to go for one beer at Hickory House on the weekends, you know. And Billy invited me to play. And he remembered that when he gave me the award, the diploma, I think it was... Yes, he wasn't... Yeah, but... [laughs]

Brown: So...

Thielemans: Some people... sometimes I say I'm grateful that I'm still here to talk about all that. [laughs]

Brown: No, we're grateful, too. [laughs]

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: Let's talk a little about... because I saw in 2007, you performed a jazz master class series in NYU. So let's talk about teaching. How do you teach this music? What do you... what is important?

Thielemans: I have found out I cannot teach, but what I can do... I can show my, what I learned, what I use for practice. It's enough on a small piece of paper that what I need, need, is to be able to play the chords and formal scales in the C major. [plays C major scale] C minor [plays scale] Or... [plays] And then the diminished. And then the altered chords. [plays scales] That's... oh, it's my loved... my beloved C altered going to F. [plays scales] You know? [plays scale] That's F to [inaudible]. That's a C-7th with a F-sharp feeling. [plays scales] You know? Things like that. And that's what you have to know in every key then, when... you know. And that's enough to... it's just three scales that you have to know [inaudible]. You know? From one to the other. In every key. And look on the harmonica or whatever instrument you play, the runs that lay easy. For instance, C-7th... G-7th. [plays scales] You know, that... that's only G-7th, of course. You know? [laughs] Don't laugh. It's true. That's what it is. And

then, you have to be able to play that stuff in F-sharp, also, not just in G. And in E-flat. E-flat. [plays scales] That's also E-flat 7th. When A combined with A altered, whatever. I don't know even the names of those things, you know. I wouldn't know how to... but I have them here, and I hear them.

Brown: Well, we were talking yesterday that, you know...

Thielemans: That, that's... but in terms of teaching, I can tell the guy the names of the scales and the notes that go into it, you know. But not... an instrument is a person, you know. No teaching and... I, when I play something, if you ask me, "Hey, sir, what do you call what you just played?" That I [can?] explain. And then try to do that in that key played slower, of course, if you want. But take it part by part and then... Then you go into every key and [inaudible] you do that shit in every key, you're [inaudible]. [laughs] But then, the guys today, they... the pentatonic, you know, or the blue notes, you know. It's... [plays] Oh-ho-ho-ho, mama. [laughs] Did you hear?

Brown: Yeah. I heard a little straight note chasing and then it went way out. [laughs]

Thielemans: You know, that... see, and... you have to... the whole thing is to tell the story with taste, you know. It's not about how many notes you can play. It's how many right notes and tasteful, and that's, that's where the meditation comes in, I guess. Or listen, listen to yourself. For instance, that thing I played for you, I can't play it anymore today that... [sings] That's too fast. But those runs I do, won't play them, either anymore. That's thirty years ago, you know. Even though they still hold up. Of course, they will. But I would say I trimmed my tree. If you [call me?], your language. If you improvise, it's your language, right? And that language becomes a tree. When you become... And after thirty years, that tree... some of those branches are getting tired or worn out or you don't want to hear them anymore, so you've got to trim the tree. That's what... In French, they would say, "[elongé?]"—trim the tree—elongé." In Flemish, how do they say it?

Male: [Snuya?].

Thielemans: Huh?

Male: [Snuya?]

Thielemans: [Snuya?] [speaks in Flemish] [unintelligible] [snuya?]. The tree bomb. Not bomb, bomb.

Brown: Bomb.

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Thielemans: You little tree, [snuya?], please. He went to school in Flemish, too, you know. [laughs] Thank you for everything.

Brown: Say your name for the tape?

Male: Peter [Lombart?].

Brown: Oh, great. Okay.

Thielemans: So, that's it. That's what I... I'm into now. I'm always being into. Even... but now, I try to say this as much with fewer notes. Is it Miles who said, "Less is more"? Something like that. And okay, just listen. Keep listen. Keep listening. I listen to... for instance, this lady, Terri Lyne Carrington. Isn't she [mean?] [inaudible]. I think she's mean, you know.

Brown: Yeah.

Thielemans: And I think these days, she's companion... she has a companion, Greg Osby. They're together. This... that's a little... Greg Osby or Steve Coleman. The sound remains... their touch and their tone production is, without a doubt is from your side of the street. [laughs] But somehow the blue note... you know, I'm old-fashioned. I mean that... [plays harmonica] Well, I'm exaggerating now, you know. And [inaudible]... [plays] You know? But day to day, they can do that. But they... somehow their runs I don't always... but more power to them, you know. Who am I, you know?

Brown: Are there any youngsters that catch your ear? Anybody playing from the younger generation that you..

Thielemans: I listen to them, and there's a few trumpet players. [Patch?] something. And a guitar player. I have him there. [inaudible] And this Indian fellow... Eli [Jai?]...

Brown: Oh. Vijay Iyer. He's a piano player. And then Rudresh Mahanthappa.

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: A saxophone player.

Thielemans: Yeah. And oh. The tenor playing with him, I like. Rudish...

Brown: Yeah, Rudresh.

Thielemans: Ooo. [laughs]

Brown: He's mixing the Indian.

Thielemans: And he sounds like... he's a singer, a religious singer of this country. [imitates] I beg your pardon. But he sounds... that's it. I have it here and everything. I listen to those cats.

And here and there, something's [inaudible]. I'm not, I'm not, I would say, this... I'm still [rubbable?]. [laughs] I'm still a, you know, it's not [that I'm just standstill?]. There's still a little balls here and there for some of that shit. [laughs]

Brown: [laughs] That's great. Keep an open mind, right?

Thielemans: Yeah. [inaudible/overlapping voices]

Brown: Keep open mind, open heart.

Thielemans: That's right.

Brown: Mm-hmm. Do you have any projects that you want to do?

Thielemans: Any what?

Brown: Any projects or any...

Thielemans: No, we do. For instance, we have... I have some great musicians I [inaudible]. We're doing some jobs, you know, with some European rhythm section. They're good. Then we... but I like to play what... okay, I [would?] start my set with Dave Brubeck. The... Your Sweet, you know.

Brown: In Your Own Sweet Way.

Thielemans: Sweet, yeah. You know. [plays a few bars] And then, on the second after that, I would play My Wine and Roses. [plays a few bars] Still, that's a [nice?] one. Still, that's a funny one, right? And then after that, we do with Kenny. He plays great strings, you know, with synthesizer. But it's not [imitates] the string sound. I Love You Porgy. [plays a few bars] Et cetera. And then, Summertime. I have to [inaudible] for Gershwin, you know. [plays a few bars] Then, then we would go to a Norwegian... [laughs] uh, Brazilian song. But not so popular. It's called The Dolphin. Stan Getz made a nice record of that on the iPhone... on the YouTube. I have it. [plays a few bars] Yeah. Then maybe another Jobim. And then what do I do? I don't know. You know? That's [solely?]. So if you get a hardcore today player, you know, they, they're not... they wouldn't get the kind of feelings sometimes I'm after, you know. I don't want to burn all the time, you know. I want, "Yay, nice lady. How are ya doin'?" you know, whatever.

Brown: Do you keep Sophisticated Lady in your repertoire?

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Thielemans: And then... then, of course Bluesette, you know. [plays a few notes] And then... or... [plays a few notes] I played that at the... three years ago at the Avery Fisher. No, where was it where we played?

Brown: For the NEA?

Thielemans: NEA. [inaudible]

Brown: It would have probably...

Thielemans: It was murder. Lee Konitz said, right after, he's... "How am I gonna follow that?" [laughs] Something like that, but it was funny and nice, you know. You know? But I have a variety, you know. And then I play 'Round Midnight all alone, [for instance?]. I did that in Antwerp. For instance, we had with Kenny, Oscar and [Iyuto?] and me. Yeah, that's it. [laughs] And then, we... that was nice. And of course, they're a [inaudible], but in the middle, I feature the guys, you know. Oscar sang something—one of those Brazilian showstoppers. Iyuto... [imitates]. You know? And then I'm 'Round Midnight. You know? And then we... So, I am not quite sure, you know. And I cannot... I'm... it's not easy to get, you know, and with those musicians, they play my stuff and it comes out okay. And they are good musicians, too, you know. Anyway, that's it.

Brown: Well, one of the... when I go to YouTube and I put in Toots Thielemans, one of the first clips that comes up is with you and Stevie Wonder playing, of course, Bluesette.

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: And you're starred and then he comes out from the audience...

Thielemans: Yeah.

Brown: 'Cause you quote, "You are the sunshine of my life," and then he comes out. [laughs]

Thielemans: Yeah. Yes.

Brown: And you talk about that event?

Thielemans: Well, of course. For me, Stevie is... I, and I certainly cannot... I can't play the notes maybe that he played, but [that their?] thing [that?] you guys got and some other guys tried to get... [laughs] But he's fantastic. And he's a human being, too, you know. One day... it must be twenty years ago, I think... he played a concert in Brussels, and we went to hear him. And he knew. I think that somehow it got to him that I was in the audience. And he said, and he put a little quote, you know, "Yeah, Toots knows that thing," or something like that, you know. Or [inaudible]. I think he had one of those songs: I Know the Way... "And Toots knows the way, too," you know. Something like that, you know. And then we wound up going for dinner in a restaurant in Brussels. And at one... he asked me, "Toots, what's your day of birth date?" And because he's Black Bull Music, too.

Brown: Right. He's a Taurus.

Thielemans: [inaudible/overlapping voices]

Brown: Taurus. Yeah. Black Bull Music.

Thielemans: Taurus, or something like [that?].

Brown: Right, yeah.

Thielemans: "Oh, I was born... I'm a Taurus." "Yeah? Well, maybe I'm black bull but you sure are white bull." I mean, that's... Stevie said that at a table there. And we were... a couple of years ago, we were playing at the... in Holland at the North Sea Festival. And I had made the record with strings or something. And while... excuse me. Our performance was finished, and my manager who passed away now, dear. He goes and clean ups and gets my stuff, and Herbie Hancock comes through, you know. And Herbie at... we had met them in... I wasn't there. "What is this here?" "Well, that's for Toots," you know. "Oh, tell Toots..." [inaudible] "Stevie Wonder asked me to produce a record with Quincy and him." A jazz record. But it never happened, you know. But that was sort of a... if not the feel, something close to it. But he's fantastic. "Hey, Stevie. I'll buy a hat to take off to you." [laughs]

Brown: But it's such a touching film clip because...

Thielemans: No, but, but he uses the harmonica with an octave deeper than mine.

Brown: Mm-hmm. 'Cause I know at one point he starts the Bluesette melody. He's way down, way down. Yeah, yeah.

Thielemans: Yeah, yeah.

Brown: And then at the end, you guys kiss and hug and it's just, just beautiful.

Thielemans: Oh, yeah, it's [inaudible/overlapping voices].

Brown: Yeah.

Thielemans: I didn't know. Yes, of course. But I didn't know he was in the audience.

Brown: Oh.

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Thielemans: Not really. Or he didn't see me. [laughs] I'm trying to be funny. Yeah. [laughs] Yeah, those blind people, you know. [laughs] No. But he... we met afterwards. But that was a, a nice award [there?]. All our music that was \$100,000... Every two years or every year, they choose a jazz artist to get an award. And that was the year Stevie got it. That's it. That's about all I got to say. And my, my credo is "Be yourself. No more, no less." And to be yourself is not the easiest thing. Sometimes I get... some people tell me I'm too modest, so I underestimate, or sometimes when I'm hot, I feel I overestimate myself. You have to find a way in. That's wisdom. As you told me before, the Greek wisdom. Socrat...

Brown: Socrates.

Thielemans: Socrates. Bye. [plays a couple of notes]

Brown: [laughs] Toots, I just want to say thank you so very much for allowing us the time to have this talk.

Thielemans: And again, I'm saying, I'm hoping all those peoples I quoted, and they didn't allow me to quote, all right? Like Bird is not here to say yes or no. [unintelligible] [laughs] He called me a [monk?] [unintelligible] Benny Goodman's here. [laughs] But it's true. But I... Sorry, Bird, if I, if I overstepped my welcome. [laughs]

Brown: But they're your memories, so that...

Thielemans: What?

Brown: I said that's from your memory so you share what you have.

Thielemans: Yeah, that's...

Brown: That's all we can ask.

Thielemans: That's all I got, you know.

Brown: That's all we can ask. [laughs] But again, Toots, thank you so much.

Thielemans: You are very welcome [inaudible/overlapping voices].

Brown: For me this has been a great, great inspiration.

Thielemans: And...

Brown: Ken.

Thielemans: Ken.

Brown: Yeah.

Thielemans: Hey, Ken.

Ken: Thank you.

Thielemans: And our Belgian team.

Brown: Yes. Maybe get their names. Could you say their names on, for the camera?

Male: Bart.

Thielemans: Bart, you see.

Male: Like Simpson.

Brown: Bart. [laughs] Okay. On the camera.

Thielemans: And Peter.

Brown: Peter the journalist. From, from Belgian. So...

Thielemans: [Lombart?].

Brown: Lombart? Yeah?

Lombart: Yes.

Brown: Wonderful. Okay. So we just want to say thank you. Toots, again. Just a great inspiration. For me, Toots Thielemans is like heart. He's the heart. He's the heart of this music.

Thielemans: Well...

Brown: What else can you ask for, huh? [laughs]

Thielemans: Say, if you... and I said once at an interview, you've got to live... I think after [Brusella?].... in Brussels, I played... Whatever you do, you got somehow... it's gotta come from the heart. And if you don't come from the heart, it's [blows raspberry]. [unintelligible]. [laughs] You can say it's bullshit. [laughs] But it's just not far from that, you know. Or I mean, it's not easy to do everything from the heart. We know that. I know that. [laughs] Okay.

Brown: Thank you, Toots.

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Thielemans: And again, I'd like to say, more than gratitude, more than appreciation for my lady, [Hugette?]. She, she paid the dues thirty years ago. That's when we met. Yeah, about thirty years ago. And then after a while, we were able... I had made royalties and work. And well, after fifty years, you make a little money, right? [laughs] We were able to buy this apartment here, right. And now, it is our [inaudible]. I mean, if we have to sell it, it's [way?] but much more. But she [did it?]. You know, I only... you know, paid so many checks and things. But she got the... all the decoration. And we can turn on the--

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