

KEEP RIGHT ON PLAYING
THROUGH THE MIRROR
OVER THE WATER

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Painted Bride Quarterly, “Elvin Jones Jazz Machine”

Max Roach / Max Ernst

Play *Budeedaht* for an oasis and enamel the zephyrine, Shadow.
Unwrap the sunlight gumming the lovelorn, Tangerine.
Grip the fleet beams of the window bracket, Seersucker.

Rubber blossoms collapse. It's a canary Floridita
Stirring the brushwork. With two brushes and a phonebook,
Max made everyone sink into swelling movement.

Raillery you say. Hay you say. Firmament made me say you say:
Laser layering and a coin and a 45 a day. Play that fen. Play bay.
How you paid a due when Diz displayed the beret over the grey?

The wind's tight lamp announced its nine presets: vandate of copper,
Volcaniclastic, the blue whisper in a crystal. All the celestial spaces
Have their Maxes, also volvoxes and diatoms, shining like foxes.

The ride haunts the beach as the waves pounce the cliffs.
A bunker outpost on mirrored shore, as the glass shines.
Metal rain pieces the blood-root grass and clandestine night.

The drums make an echo through the air.
The air, clean as a bell, remains outside.
Each note is heavy with nitrogen like a storm.

It's an ubu imperator slinging his red castle,
He's a seedless waterformer, but he fits a viewer's
Nerves within his nerves because style is the tailor.

Mary Lou Williams

Tangerine petals astound the weeds
And the park walks like a bandstand.

A ghost builds her barrelhouse—
That's what gave this place its devil's music.

Overwhelm yourself with buoyant glissando.
Wreck the boughs with orphanhooded light.

Imagine a rag doll full of indigo transfers
& the calaphony of wheels.

She scratches the keys and makes knots
In the passage of hours; the stars bind to their cinnamon.

She plays cots & thrift shops, and is strung
Like a barrel of myth, ants burning a violet.

In the trees she turned her biscuit face toward me,
And lifted her gesturing hand. . . and then she was gone.

Garden of Music

(Bob Thompson)

The black spruces wait in the orange trestles
But they cannot cease the bass leaning to the lawn.

That's the reason daddy has to drive so rough.
Each horn makes the women swoon

As if the saxophone's a steel rig
shakes the forest's meat.

The audience is a hitch for the peeling hunger
As winged apricots sit in pink wickedness.

Bright companions, the hills, reap a grove.
Someone waits, using a diamond to scoop a clam.

The sky opens its fishscales but you can't see me;
There's a turnip blocking the light to this place.

Harlem

Block of pink granite:
Fire escapes play duende
With the hoss-grasping night.
That's how it's ending. . .

But look—a frying steak
On Vonetta's balcony
Plays plush Cadillac Keats
With the moaning candy.

Folding chair nights turn like cane.
Outside it's a brownstone—inside it's marmalade.

Elvin Jones Jazz Machine

Elvin, a marvel in a vice, vying.
Reveal each torsion in a vial of gold and hyposulphite.
An iron shadow and a sterling dome.
On the doorstep its lit fuse and wires.
Brushed plantation crimson; torpid promenade.
The saxophone yellows under the petrol metropolis—
The piano like peeled peaches—
The drums torture us with their torture.
I've finally decided jazz has a pink side.
Elbows above his ears, thrashing like a blow.

“This one’s my Cadillac. This one’s my house.”

Charlie Parker said, pointing to his vein, as he tapped
it and some hazel kids played in the sprung yellow hydrant.

He’s a target, has Melvillian fuzz, and puffy fingers,
tiny bear-like eyes—dark whorls, with burnt olive pit.

It’s heroin. Hero, like the *heroisch* of its German origin,
he impresses others by sleeping late, dozing, and stealing.

He never leapt tall buildings, but he did gorge
the bucket chicken while a blonde and a redhead

untied the apparatus and introduced a line
of synthetic superior valve oils: large piston clearance,

low brass and rust-inhibition. Foamy black tar
in a clarinet case. Inhibition. Heroin. Rain.

Roil. Roast. Brain. Noir. Beat. Crump. Vamp. Doom.

I began dissipating as early as 1932, when I was only twelve.

Keep Right On Playing Through The Mirror Over The Water

“all losses trigger all previous losses”

With its blurred field, Air—the trio—throws off its slips and cases
Capturing and preserving traces.

We wait to be anesthetized—
Edging lilac and darkness beyond the double doors.

Beautiful tablecloths, a porcelain stove, a portable gramophone:
An encased man seeks comfort in the casing.

Leather lacquer, damask rose, downy rayon; nailhead trim,
Skirted double camel, speckled canapé, velvet ottoman, a square with legs.

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