



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Moving
Image and Recorded Sound Division

Guide to the

A Great Day in Harlem documentary collection

1989-1996 [bulk 1989-1993]

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An anonymous donor funded preliminary processing for this collection, and a grant from the Mellon Foundation supported the digitization.

Summary

Creator: Bach, Jean, 1918-2013

Title: A Great Day in Harlem documentary collection

Date: 1989-1996 [bulk 1989-1993]

Size: 64 video_recordings

Source: Jean Bach, 1996.

Abstract: A Great Day in Harlem is an Oscar-nominated 1994 documentary directed by Jean Bach (1918 - 2013), a press agent, radio producer, jazz aficionado, and fixture of New York's jazz scene. The collection consists of sixty-four video recordings, which are the interviews conducted for the documentary from 1989 to 1996.

Preferred citation: A Great Day in Harlem documentary collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Collection inventoried by Stacey Doyle Ference. Collection processed and described by Anika Paris, archivist, and Shola Lynch, curator. Finding aid published in 2023.

Creator History

A Great Day in Harlem is a 1994 documentary directed by Jean Bach (September 27, 1918 – May 27, 2013), a press agent, radio producer, jazz aficionado, and fixture of New York's jazz scene. Through interviews and archival material, the film tells the story of Art Kane's photograph of the same name taken for *Esquire* magazine in Harlem on August 12, 1958. Assembled on 17 East 126th Street, between Fifth and Madison Avenues, the photograph is famous for capturing fifty-seven of the era's jazz greats in one photo. It is a feat that has not been replicated since as a snapshot of its time and during the heyday of the music.

Scope and Content Note

The collection consists of sixty-four video recordings, which are the thirty-three interviews conducted for the documentary from 1989 to 1996. These interviews are organized alphabetically by the subject's last name. The collection consists primarily of Bach's interviews with the surviving musicians pictured in the 1958 *Great Day in Harlem* photograph. It also includes interviews with musicians' family and friends, as well as the photographer and others who were working for *Esquire* magazine at the time. Each interviewee's relationship to the photograph is detailed in the item's content note.

The musicians interviewed for the documentary are Art Blakey, Scoville Brown, Buck Clayton, Bud Freeman, Dizzy Gillespie, Benny Golson, Johnny Griffin, Milt Hinton, Chubby Jackson, Hank Jones, Jonah Jones, Max Kaminsky, Eddie Locke, Marian McPartland, Gerry Mulligan, Sonny Rollins, Sahib Shihab, and Horace Silver. Musicians' friends and family who were present for the photo shoot are also in the collection: Mona Hinton, wife of Milt Hinton; Taft Jordan, Jr., son of Taft Jordan; Mike Lipskin, friend of Willie "the Lion" Smith; Elaine Lorillard, friend of multiple pictured musicians and founder of the Newport Jazz Festival; Felix Maxwell, friend of Taft Jordan and Rudy Powell; Paula Morris, daughter of Maxine Sullivan; and Rudy Powell, son of Everard Powell. Photographer Art Kane and his assistant Stephen Frankfurt, art director Robert Benton, and writer and critic Leonard Feather comprise the former *Esquire* staffers interviewed for the documentary. The collection also includes interviews with Riverside Records publicist Robert Altshuler and writer and critic Nat Hentoff.

Key Terms

Names

Altshuler, Robert, 1923-1997
Bach, Jean, 1918-2013
Benton, Robert
Blakey, Art, 1919-1990
Browne, Scoville, 1909-1994
Clayton, Buck, 1911-1991
Feather, Leonard, 1914-1994
Frankfurt, Stephen, 1931-2012
Freeman, Bud, 1906-1991
Gillespie, Dizzy, 1917-1993
Golson, Benny, 1929-
Griffin, Johnny, 1928-2008
Hentoff, Nat, 1925-2017
Hinton, Milt, 1910-2000
Hinton, Mona, 1919-2008
Jackson, Chubby
Jones, Hank, 1918-2010
Jones, Jonah, 1909-2000
Jordan, Taft, Jr.
Kaminsky, Max, 1908-1994
Kane, Art, 1925-1995
Lipskin, Mike
Locke, Eddie, 1930-2009
Lorillard, Elaine, 1914-2007
Maxwell, Felix
McPartland, Marian, 1918-2013
Morris, Paula, 1945-

Mulligan, Gerry
Powell, Everard
Rollins, Sonny
Shihab, Sahib, 1925-1989
Silver, Horace, 1928-2014

Container List

- 251001 **Altshuler, Robert** 1990 February 13
As publicist for Riverside Records, Robert Altshuler facilitated Thelonious Monk's participation in the 1958 photo shoot.
- 250997 **Benton, Robert** 1990 February 5
Robert Benton was art director at *Esquire* in 1958. He went on to have a successful career in Hollywood, winning multiple Academy Awards as a screenwriter and director.
- 251003, 251008, 251010 **Blakey, Art** 1990 March 13
Drummer and bandleader Art Blakey is in the 1958 photo.
- 250996 **Brown, Scoville** 1990 January 22
Saxophonist and clarinetist Scoville Brown is in the 1958 photo.
- 250850, 250851 **Clayton, Buck** 1989 November 6
Trumpeter Buck Clayton is in the 1958 photo.
- 251000 **Feather, Leonard** 1990 February 10
Leonard Feather covered jazz for *Esquire* in 1958.
- 250858 **Frankfurt, Stephen** 1989 December 7
Stephen Frankfurt was Art Kane's assistant at the time of the 1958 photo shoot.
- 250816, 250820 **Freeman, Bud** 1989 September 21
Saxophonist Bud Freeman is in the 1958 photo.
- 250993, 250994 **Gillespie, Dizzy** 1989 December 19
Trumpeter and bandleader Dizzy Gillespie is in the 1958 photo.
- 250804 **Golson, Benny** 1989 August 30
Saxophonist Benny Golson is in the 1958 photo.
- 251012, 251014, 251016 **Griffin, Johnny** 1990 April 21
Saxophonist Johnny Griffin is in the 1958 photo.
- 251065, 251072, 251074, 251075 **Hentoff, Nat** 1993 March 6
Writer and jazz critic Nat Hentoff is credited with publicizing the call for musicians to come to the 1958 photo shoot.
- 250998 **Hinton, Milt** 1990 February 8
Bassist and photographer Milt Hinton is in the 1958 photo.
- 250999 **Hinton, Milt** 1990 February 10
Bassist and photographer Milt Hinton is in the 1958 photo.
- 251058, 251059, 251061 **Hinton, Milt and Mona** 1993 February 20
Bassist and photographer Milt Hinton is in the 1958 photo. His wife, Mona Hinton, accompanied him to the shoot.
- 250855 **Jackson, Chubby** 1989 November 24
Bassist Chubby Jackson is in the 1958 photo.
- 250853 **Jackson, Chubby and Lorillard, Elaine** 1989 November 24
Elaine Lorillard, founder of the Newport Jazz Festival, accompanied her friends pianist Mary Lou Williams and bassist Oscar Pettiford to the 1958 photo shoot. Bassist Chubby Jackson, who was in the 1958 photo, joins her partway through the interview.
- 250884, 250992 **Jones, Hank** 1989 December 10
Pianist and bandleader Hank Jones is in the 1958 photo.
- 251082, 251087, 251109, 251111, 251112, 251115 **Jones, Jonah** 1996 April 17
Trumpeter Jonah Jones is in the 1958 photo.

- 251022, 251032 **Jordan, Jr., Taft; Maxwell, Felix; Morris, Paula; and Powell, Everard** 1990 June 27
Taft Jordan, Jr. went with his father, trumpeter Taft Jordan, to the 1958 photo shoot, and both are in the published photograph. Felix Maxwell accompanied his friends Taft Jordan and reed player Rudy Powell, as well as Powell's son, Everard Powell, to the shoot in 1958. Paula Morris is the daughter of vocalist Maxine Sullivan, who is in the photo.
- 250839, 250847, 250849 **Kaminsky, Max** 1989 October 27
Trumpeter and bandleader Max Kaminsky is in the 1958 photo.
- 250857 **Kane, Art** 1989 December 7
Art Kane took the *A Great Day in Harlem* photograph as a freelance photographer for *Esquire*.
- 251043 **Kane, Art in California** 1991 June 17
Photographer Art Kane interviewed in California.
- 251017 **Kane, Art on 126th Street** 1990 June 10
Photographer Art Kane at the original location of the 1958 photograph in Harlem. He is joined in the latter half of the interview by the unidentified ex-wife of Sahib Shihab.
- 251049, 251051, 251053 **Lipskin, Mike** 1992 November 14
Pianist Mike Lipskin accompanied his friend, pianist Willie "the Lion" Smith, to the 1958 photo shoot.
- 250995 **Locke, Eddie** 1990 January 22
Drummer Eddie Locke is in the 1958 photo.
- 250792, 250802 **McPartland, Marian** 1989 August 23
Pianist Marian McPartland is in the 1958 photo.
- 251077, 251079 **McPartland, Marian** 1993 April 14
Pianist Marian McPartland is in the 1958 photo.
- 251117, 251118 **McPartland, Marian** 1996 May 9
Pianist Marian McPartland is in the 1958 photo.
- 251036, 251037 **Mulligan, Gerry** 1990 August 15
Saxophonist Gerry Mulligan is in the 1958 photo.
- 251019, 251021 **Rollins, Sonny** 1990 June 20
Saxophonist Sonny Rollins is in the 1958 photo.
- 250822, 250825, 250833 **Shihab, Sahib** 1989 September 21
Saxophonist and flautist Sahib Shihab is in the 1958 photo. Composer Hale Smith joins him in this interview.
- 250807, 250810 **Silver, Horace** 1989 August 30
Pianist Horace Silver is in the 1958 photo.