

INTRODUCTION & NOTES ON THE INTERVIEWS

Perhaps it is relevant to begin here by saying that as a jazz pianist, I am not easily wowed by other piano players. I still vividly recall, though, being instantly riveted by Dave Catney's playing, when I chanced to hear his version of "This is New" on a local jazz radio program one Sunday in 1992. The tone, sparkle and energy of the piece was extraordinary, truly compelling, and I called the host of the show and asked him who the piano player was. "His name's Dave Catney, this pianist from Houston. Nice stuff; we just got the CD in." Soon after, I picked up a copy of *Jade Visions* as well as *First Flight*, his first CD, and began collecting his recordings. I encouraged a music-loving friend in Houston to go hear Dave play at Cezanne, which he did—more than once—and was highly impressed as well. George used to mail me clippings here and there about Dave and Cezanne from the Houston Post and the Chronicle, and when the article arrived about Dave having died from AIDS complications I was stunned and deeply saddened. This artist, whom I'd never even had the chance to meet, had by then even usurped Erroll Garner as my favorite pianist, a feat bordering on the near-impossible. It was clear to me too, from some of the articles my friend had sent, that Dave Catney was more than just a superb pianist; that as a human being, his soul and accomplishments had profoundly touched a great number of people.

To learn more about Dave, I began to conduct a series of recorded interviews in late 1994 with many of the important people in his life, ultimately conducting close to fifty of these. The interviewees included teachers, friends, landlords, band directors, promoters, jazz musicians, doctors, students, music critics, classmates, social workers, club owners, nurses, piano tuners, managers, recording engineers, and Dave's two longtime companions. Gargantuan phone bills aside, it was an honor and a pleasure to interview and acquaint myself with so many fine people, and the more I learned about Dave, the more impressed I became. It was more that just his personal set of artist's idiosyncrasies or his exquisitely beautiful music. Dave had been dealt a tough hand by life in the form of AIDS, and it had only compelled him to contribute more deeply and with greater energy and commitment. Through his talents and innately positive outlook, he found himself at the center of the Houston jazz community, and he supported and nurtured Cezanne, the scene, and his fellow musicians wisely and well, inspiring a vast array of people along the way. As he had been to many throughout his life, Dave Catney became a personal hero of mine.

My original intent with the interviews was to write a book. That never happened, but this website has, and I'm honored and pleased to share many of these wonderful pieces here. While not comprehensive in any way, this collection of interviews—time capsules really, recorded at a time when people's recollections of Dave were detailed and fresh—present a wonderful, multi-dimensional portrait of Dave Catney, the man and artist. Time being what it is, similar interviews conducted today would likely be far less detailed and satisfying. I was fortunate also to have been able to interview a number of very well-known jazz musicians who had worked with Dave, and in the case of a jazz legend like bassist Milt Hinton, who died in late 2000 at the age of 90, his wonderful interview, in which he praises Dave's artistry and recounts their packed-house, weekend gig at Cezanne, is, of course, now priceless.

During the laborious transcription process, I composed brief headings to most, but not all, of the interviews at the time I transcribed them. A dozen years later, some of the information in the headings is now outdated. For example, at the time of singer Kellye Gray's interview, she had not yet released the second session she'd recorded with Dave. That recording, titled *Tomato Kiss*, has since been issued on CD by Proteus Records, (PR9701), and is now available from Amazon.com and elsewhere. I did not get around to penning any headings at all for some of the interviews, and now, time having elapsed and without current contact information for some of the interviewees, those interviews will have to remain as they are.

Special thanks to Ken Ward, Scott, Linda, Barry and Cy for their gracious hospitality during my February 1995 trip to Houston, and for the daunting pleasure of playing a night of solo piano at Cezanne, as well as to all the terrific people who purchased tickets and showed up for it. My deep gratitude to all of the interviewees for the remarkable interviews, for helping me to better appreciate and understand one of my heroes. Very special thanks to my friend Richard, retired minister extraordinaire, for his considerable expertise in the creation and maintenance of the website. I would like to dedicate this website to my longtime friend, Jim Doran, author of the monumental Garner biography, [Erroll Garner: The Most Happy Piano](#), for teaching me the art of assembling effective jazz histories. The many jazz greats I was privileged to interview for our journal, [Erroll Garner Gems](#), helped to pave the way for other projects, including the Dave Catney interviews.

The interviews presented here contain straightforward, sometimes profound accounts of Dave and his music. Though for space and other reasons I have done some editing on the pieces, no attempt has been made to paraphrase or standardize dialectical expressions or regional idioms. I have made every effort to maintain and preserve the authentic voices of the narrators.