

On December 10, 1981 we made the first record session at Bob DiGangi's studio in New Jersey with the legendary drummer Freddie Moore. Fred had played with Sydney Bechet, King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton, and when you see the film clip of "Pie, Pie Blackbird" with Eubie Blake he's that flashy drummer.

The band on this first session included: Kenny Davern, clarinet; Warren Vache, Jr., cornet; Joe Muranyi, clarinet and soprano sax; Dill Jones, piano; Joel Helleny, trombone; Milt Hinton, bass; Freddie, drums and vocals, and me on banjo. A second band was recorded around the same time with Lew on guitar, Stan on washboard, Peter Ecklund on trumpet, Cynthia Sayer on banjo, Barbara Dreiwitz on tuba, Dick Dreiwitz on trombone, and Freddie.

Next came John Williams, Jr., the bass player with the Mary Lou Williams trio, Louis Armstrong's big band and the great band of Teddy Wilson at Barney Josephson's Café Society Downtown. Teddy's band featured Billy Holiday on vocals and there was a very young Johnny Coltrane on saxophone. These sessions started on October 5, 1982 at Hometown Recording Studios on Bleecker Street in Manhattan. There were various artists performing on these sessions: Howard Alden, guitar; Dill Jones, piano; Lew Micallef, guitar; Jack Gale, trombone; Joel Helleny, trombone; Peter Ecklund, trumpet; Cynthia Sayer, banjo; and guest artist Lawrence Lucie who was brought in by special request of Howard Alden. Lawrence had played guitar with Louis Armstrong's big band and was best man at one of Armstrong's four weddings.

After Johnny's first session on the 5th he couldn't make the session I had booked for the 6th, so overnight I arranged some of my original songs, added Pete Compo on bass and Giampaolo Biagi on drums, and this was the start of a third album. We finished Johnny's sessions on October 7th and 8th.

Howard Alden had come to New York from Los Angeles to do a New York Banjo Ensemble tour (this tour included a young Frank Vignola). I had added Howard to these sessions so he could get a little extra money while he was in New York. A young Dan Barrett out in Los Angeles heard about the New York Jazz sessions and asked to become a part of the project. He was added to the second session of my original songs on October 22nd. These became known as the New York Jazz trombone sessions.

Next came the Adolphus Anthony “Doc” Cheatham recordings at 39th Street Music. I asked Dan to write some arrangements for these sessions that took place on October 25, 26 and 27 and again on November 2, 5 and 12. The performers on these sessions were: Howard Alden who was working the Café Carlyle with the Joe Bushkin trio; Jake Hanna was on drums with the trio so he joined us on the sessions; Milt Hinton was on bass; my old favorite and reliable Dill Jones on piano; Dan Barrett on trombone along with Joel Helleny; Joe Muranyi on clarinet and saxophones; and, of course, Doc Cheatham on trumpet and vocals. I was especially pleased with the duets of Doc and Howard. I placed a microphone facing the “F” hole of Howard's Gibson L-5 and put two mics on Doc, one at the end of his trumpet bell and the other by the mouthpiece, the second one was to hear his breathing and for his vocals. Lew Micallef and Cynthia Sayer also sang on these sessions.

The fifth set of sessions came about because Stanley’s Washboard Kings were booked for a Japan Tour from June 1 to 14, 1983 and Stanley thought he would like to have an album to present there. On April 25 and 28, and May 2, 5, 9 and 12 the Japan sessions took place. They were recorded at PaDa Studios, 27 Washington Square North in Manhattan.

Along the way I released an album called Eddy Davis and the Hot Jazz Orchestra of Europe. It contained tracks from a session done in Frankfurt, Germany with: Herbert Christ, trumpet; Rene Franc, soprano sax; Jean-Pierre Mulot, bass; and me on banjo.

The wonderful pictures of Freddie, Johnny and Doc were taken by Ray Quaranto and all the fantastic artwork for the albums was done by trumpeter Jim Gribbon who was a first rate commercial artist. Jim created the New York Jazz logo on February 4, 1985. In March I contacted Pat Chumley record manufacturers in Nashville, Tennessee. All of the albums were produced there. I received the first copies of the albums on March 3, 1986. The poster of New York Jazz Records was designed on March 13, 1986.

The sixth set of sessions took place on December 12, 15 and 18, 1987. It was for a Cynthia Sayer album and the other artists were: Dick Wellstood on piano; Fred Stoll on drums; and either Milt Hinton or Greg Cohen on bass. Sound effects were added by J.J. Silva and myself. These sessions were recorded at 39th Street Music

and there were enough tracks for an album-and-a-half. At a later date, December 5, 1988, I recorded duets with Cynthia and Bucky Pizzarelli to complete two albums. As of 2005 Cynthia has combined these two albums to create one CD which can be obtained from her website.

After that the label sort of closed its doors. A great and true friend (and the only reason the label ever came about) was the “one of the kind” Lew Micallef. Lew was many things in his life: husband, father, builder of guitars, inventor of many things that we all use every day, and as I said before a “one of a kind” guy. In his inventing life his company was called L&M (for Leeds and Micallef). Some business would need something new created and Mr. Leeds would tell them “you've got it.” Then he would go to Lew and tell him to invent it. Lew would grumble a lot and say to me “I'll have to sleep on this,” and in a few days he would tell me “I've got it.” L&M had the patents on the pumps (sometimes known as squeeze triggers) for some famous household products. Lew was asked why these squeeze pumps cost five cents to produce. He said all the cost is in the sterling silver spring, so the question was posed isn't there something you can make without a spring? Once again, he told me he would have to sleep on this. A couple of weeks later he said to me, Eddy I've got the answer to the spring problem, but I can't use it. As far as I know I'm the only one who knows the solution – but now I guess, you will know. Lew said cut a rubber ball in half. He thought half of a rubber ball could react as a spring when squeezed. The fluid would come out of the bottle, then the half ball would return to its original shape. He said to me “Eddy, I can't patent a rubber ball.” End of Story.

With Lew's passing the last lights of New York Jazz Records slowly flickered out. Then in December of 2001, I decided I would like to record some of my original songs again. I had been listening to that wonderful old recording of Sammy Davis Jr. with the guitarist Laurindo Almeida. I called my old friend Frank Vignola with the idea of the two of us doing something like that. He suggested Nola Recording Studios, just around the corner from my apartment. So on December 21, 2001 we started the duets. I enjoyed it more than anything I had done for years. So again, on March 14 and 21, 2001, we did two more duet sessions. Then on March 21 and 25, I decided to add Joe Ascione on drums and Conal Fowkes on bass.

With my juices flowing again, on March 28, 2002 I recorded a musical show that I had written entitled The Blind Man on the Corner Singin' the Beale St. Blues. Jon-Erik Kellso was on trumpet; Orange Kellin on clarinet, Conal Fowkes was the

pianist/musical director and Suzanne Ohlmann, Barbara Rosene, Conal and I were on vocals. Oh, and I played banjo also. On July 5 and 7, 2002, I recorded my old friend, the fine actor David Huddleston on dialog. Then on the 12th Conal overdubbed musical underscoring for the dialog.

On June 28, 29 and 30, 2003, Conal on bass and myself on banjo, laid down the basic tracks for a CD that Woody Allen and I had been discussing for about ten years. On August 17 and 28, and again on September 1, I recorded cellist Ann Kim on string arrangements that I and Conal had written. On August 29 I recorded Jonathan Dinklage on violin and viola. Then on February 16, 2004 I recorded Ann Kim on four cellos and that completed the strings for the CD. I added mine and Conal's voices to the mix and in February and March of 2004, I added Woody. At that point the CD Davis, Allen & Fowkes with the Ann Kim/Jonathan Dinklage Strings was completed.

Well, that's the story – the old New York Jazz Record label is going again. The original stuff has been digitally remastered and produced as CDs. Add that to the new Vignola, Blind Man and String CDs, and here we are New York Jazz Records.