

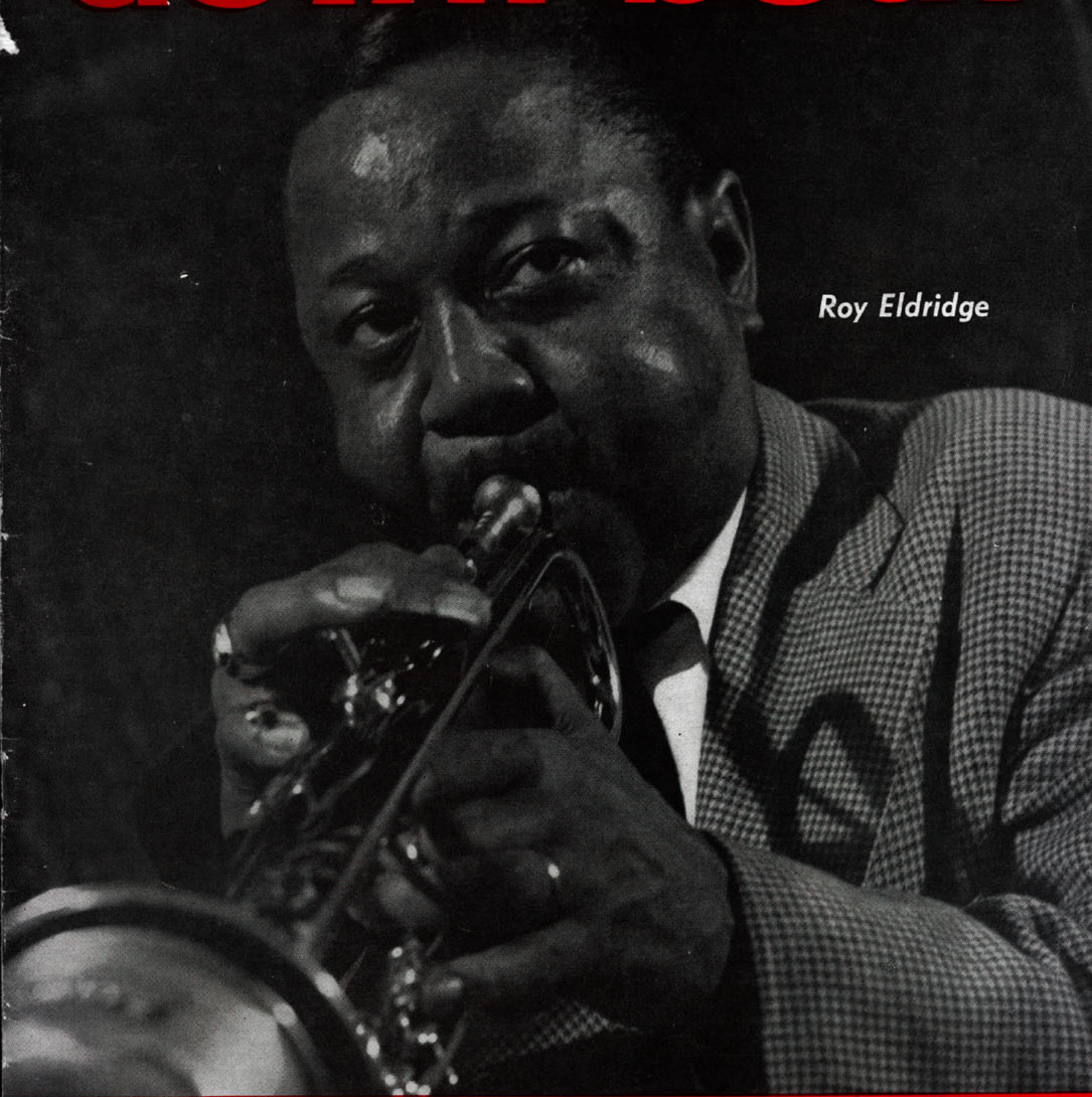
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September 19, 1956

down beat

Roy Eldridge



Nat Hentoff • Leonard Feather
Ralph J. Gleason • John Tynan



Art Pepper's Tragic Story
This Issue: Record Whirl

Alan Freed Says: 'I Told You So ...'



By Alan Freed

A COMPOSITION by George Armand and K. Leslie, *The Rock 'n' Roll Rhapsody*, has signaled that rock 'n' roll has assumed a position of stature in this era of the music business. This art form which has been satirized by comedians and analyzed by psychiatrists, has been immortalized on record by Joe Reisman's orchestra.

Needless to say, I am overjoyed to hear this and perhaps immodest enough to say, "I told you so." On second thought, I must give way to reminiscences about the first time I presented rock 'n' roll music on a radio program.

It was in 1951. I had a program on WJW, a Cleveland station. The program music, believe it or not, was classical. A friend who owned a record shop suggested that I visit the store. He said I might see something unusual. I accepted the invitation and had one of the most thrilling experiences of my life. There were dozens of kids having a wonderful time listening to the records of some of the people who were destined to become the very top performers in the idiom.

AS A MATTER OF FACT, it was under these conditions that I first heard Sam (The Man) Taylor, who was to become the music director of my band on CBS radio's *Rock 'n' Roll Dance Party*.

I spoke to some of the kids buying records at this shop. It became apparent that they were not only from the immediate neighborhood but from all parts of town.

I asked some of the kids, who came from all parts of town, what they liked about this "new" music. They said it was the beat, the rich excitement the singers and instruments provided.

I listened. I heard the songs of such artists as LaVerne Baker and Della Reese, two girls with real contralto voices who know how to tell a story. I heard the tenor saxophones of Red

Prysock and Big Al Sears. I heard the blues-singing, piano-playing Ivory Joe Hunter. I wondered.

I WONDERED for about a week. Then I went to the station manager and talked him into permitting me to follow my classical program with a rock 'n' roll party.

Well, that program hit the town like a World Series winner. So many fans were coming down to the studio to hear the records, meet Jackie, my wife and chief advisor, and me, that we decided to hire a hall and ask some of the rock 'n' roll artists over for a show.

Over 25,000 turned out for the first rock 'n' roll party. That beginning has since paled against the millions of rock 'n' roll fans spread throughout the world.

The climax of rock 'n' roll popularity has been reached by the coast-to-

coast CBS radio broadcasts of the *Rock 'n' Roll Dance Party*. And the fan mail we get from all around the country is an even match in excitement and a true barometer for the new and exciting beat that has swept the country.

AS MY FRIEND Mitch Miller says, "Rock 'n' roll in music is like comic strips in the newspapers. The kids have a right to it. It takes its place for them among all the other musical forms. But I think the reason that rock 'n' roll is popular with kids is that it represents a safe form of rebellion against authority. Also, it has contributed something — a prominent beat—which reminds us in the music business that rhythm can't be ignored."

I agree with Mitch. A long as the kids want rock 'n' roll, I'm going to give it to them, and as soon as they indicate they want something else, I'm going to give them that.

Songwriter Johnny Green Likens R&R To Tarragon

JOHNNY GREEN, A gentleman who has been writing good songs for many years, allows that bop music, hillbilly, and rock 'n' roll each has its place in the musical scheme, but he deplores the tendency of American listeners to swallow them whole, to the detriment of other kinds of popular music.

The man who composed such successes as *Body and Soul*, *Coquette*, *I'm Yours*, *I Cover the Waterfront*, *Out of Nowhere*, and more recently *Somebody Up There Likes Me*, had this to say:

"It's unfortunate that there is no kind of thermostat on popular taste. It seems as though we become obsessed with one form of music and lose all sense of discrimination. During the swing era, fine popular ballads and love songs had to take a back seat.

"Rock 'n' roll seems to me a natural enough outgrowth of our young peoples' love of rhythm. But it also seems to be taking over like an uncontrollable cell. My wife likes to cook and knows that I like the occasional flavor of tarragon. But she doesn't use tarragon on everything. Nor do we want rock 'n' roll to cut out other musical forms."

INCIDENTALLY, JOHNNY is a top Hollywood movie music executive today. He finds that Tin Pan Alley has changed completely, as far as song writing is concerned, since the day when he was composing for Broadway.

"In the old days," says Johnny, "say 20 years ago, the impetus for making a successful popular song came first from the composer and lyricist, through the publisher, and finally to the performer. But the publisher was the key



Johnny Green

man, and his promotion of a song was all important.

"Nowadays, it's the performing artist who makes or breaks a song and who is the initiator of all activity, the funnel through which the song reaches the public. Also, a new figure has come into the picture. This is the artist and repertoire man of the recording company. Through him the song reaches the disc jockeys, and get radio and television exposure. The composer? He's way back there on the sidelines."