
Finding Aid for the Leonard Feather Sound Recording Collection PASC-M.0278

Finding aid prepared by Shira Peltzman, 2020.

UCLA Library Special Collections

Online finding aid last updated 2020 December 15.

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URL: <https://www.library.ucla.edu/special-collections>

Contributing Institution: UCLA Library Special Collections

Title: Leonard Feather sound recording collection

Source: Feather, Leonard, 1914-1994

Identifier/Call Number: PASC-M.0278

Physical Description: 50 Linear Feet(100 boxes)

Date (inclusive): 1960-2004

Stored off-site. All requests to access special collections material must be made in advance using the request button located on this page.

Language of Material: Materials are in English.

Conditions Governing Access

Portions of collection unprocessed. Audio materials are unavailable for access. Please contact Special Collections reference (spec-coll@library.ucla.edu) for more information.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements

CONTAINS UNPROCESSED AUDIO MATERIALS: Audio materials are not currently available for access and will require further processing and assessment. If you have questions about this material please email spec-coll@library.ucla.edu.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

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Processing Information

Collections are processed to a variety of levels depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived user interest and research value, availability of staff and resources, and competing priorities. Library Special Collections provides a standard level of preservation and access for all collections and, when time and resources permit, conducts more intensive processing. These materials have been arranged and described according to national and local standards and best practices.

UCLA Catalog Record ID

UCLA Catalog Record ID: [5610196](#)

Administrative/Biographical History

Leonard Feather (b. London, September 13, 1914; d. Encino, California, Sept. 22, 1994) was an American writer, composer, and arranger. He studied piano and clarinet while attending St. Paul's School and University College in London (1920-32) and taught himself arranging. Feather began writing about jazz for the Melody maker in 1934, and in July of the following year he made his first trip to New York to hear some of the great jazz musicians play. In 1938 he discovered George Shearing and produced his first recordings in London. Feather traveled to America at the onset of war and was the New York correspondent for Down beat magazine (1940-41). He continued to produce recordings, including the first sessions by Dinah Washington (1943) and Sarah Vaughan (1944), Dizzy Gillespie's 78 rpm album of New 52nd Street Jazz (1946), and sessions involving Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington, and Armstrong and Jack Teagarden (1947). Feather composed Washington's hit songs, "Evil Gal Blues" and "Salty Papa Blues" (both in 1943) and Lionel Hampton's "Blowtop Blues" in 1945. He contributed to Metronome from 1943 to 1950 and to Esquire from late 1943 to 1956. In the years 1944 to 1946 he played the central role in the compilation of Esquire's annual jazz poll, which made a substantial step toward acknowledging African-American giants of jazz who had been ignored in polls in Down beat and Metronome; at the same time he became deeply involved in an ugly critical battle between adherents of the newly emerging style, bop, and fans of traditional jazz, which he then greatly disliked. Later, in partnership with the disc jockey, Symphony Sid Torin, he organized a series of bop concerts at Carnegie Hall (1947-49); he also presented weekly jam sessions at the Three Deuces nightclub on 52nd Street. In 1948, Feather became an American citizen, and the following year, under the pseudonym "Billy Moore", he wrote another hit song for Dinah Washington, "Baby Get Lost". With Mercer Ellington he established the record company and label Mercer (1950) and he again worked on radio, broadcasting jazz programs on the Voice of America (1950-52). From 1951 to 1986 Feather contributed to Down beat magazine, supplying countless informative surveys and interviews, and conducting popular "blindfold tests", in which well-known jazz musicians discussed unidentified recordings. His first edition of The encyclopedia of jazz was published in 1955, revised in 1960 and then continued in volumes published in 1966 and 1976 (the latter with Ira Gitler as co-author), this 3-volume encyclopedia became the standard reference source in the field. In another comprehensive publication, The book of jazz : a guide to the entire field (1957, rev. 1965), he

surveyed jazz historically and offered essays on instruments, race, improvisation, and other general topics. During this same period he wrote articles on jazz for Playboy (1957-62). In 1960 Feather settled in the Los Angeles area, where he became a columnist for the Los Angeles Times, a position he held for the remainder of his life. He produced a German television series on jazz (1965), published anthologies of essays on jazz, two books of humor, a study of Louis Armstrong (written with John Chilton and Max Jones), and an autobiography. He taught at Loyola Marymount University (1972-74), the University of California, Riverside (1973), California State University, Northridge, and UCLA (1987-88), and, in addition to his ongoing work for Melody maker, Down beat, and the Los Angeles Times, he was a regular contributor to Contemporary keyboard and Jazz times. He is best known as an author of scholarly works on jazz and as a columnist; because of his eminence as a writer his musical talent is often overlooked, yet it contributed much to his skillful reviews and articles.

Scope and Contents

Leonard Feather sound recording collection.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Feather, Leonard, 1914-1994
