

COOK / SOUNDS OF OUR TIMES

long play 1089

# UPRIGHT

Fugitive Piano Smasher from Fifty Second Street

## Red Camp

*mad music  
for tea-time  
in texas*





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RED CAMP UPRIGHT — 1089

Mr. Red Camp  
Corpus Christi, Texas  
Dear Red & Alvis:

I know Texans are men of few words, but everybody here is curious about how you got to play this way. Let us know the best and worst about your career.

April 24

E. C.

April 27

Mr. Emory Cook  
Cook Labs  
Stamford, Conn.  
Dear Kids:

This is going to sound a bit like a lecture at the Tuesday Music Club, — but do what you will . . .

Born Laredo 1909 . . . junior year high school heard some old Armstrong records with Earl Hines on piano. My sister Orie Lee showed me the chords to a red-hot pop tune *Yes Sir That's My Baby*. Hines decided me.

Then I heard of Peck Kelley, the great Houston jazz pianist. He taught himself to read music, so the story goes; I learned to read (slowly and painstakingly). He played the Bach 2 and 3 part inventions; I did likewise. He warmed up with Chopin etudes, and so I beat my brains out on a few of those. I also heard that he played contrapuntally with a left hand that would startle anyone, so I began working on left-hand figurations to the exclusion of everything else. All this without even hearing the guy; he wouldn't record or leave Houston, and I had no money to get there.

Then years of knocking about the country on traveling bands: Blue Steele, Ben Young, Ken Moyer, Dave Matthews, then to Dallas for two years in the old *Trocadero*, an all-night jam joint. Dorsey was out at the Centennial, Whiteman 30 miles away at Ft. Worth, Bob Crosby down the street a half block. Art Shaw across the street with his first band, all strings except Tony Pastor on tenor. They'd all drop in, and we'd jam. By this time it was in my blood for fair.

A lot of water went under the bridge, but more later about that. Anyhow, I had decided to work in music education and teach. In New York I taught half-time at the Third Street Music Settlement, worked clubs at night, and went to Colum-

bia Univ. half-time. I studied composition and piano with Dr. Harold Morris, who urged me never to give up improvisation. Instead of looking down his nose, he considered it a high form of art.

There I was caught in the war of the Moldy Figs and the Be-Boppers. When I'd work with the old jazz crowd, I didn't seem to fit too well because of unusual harmonies. The Boppers thought I was too Dixie, but Miff Mole, Wild Bill Davidson, George Brunis and Red McKenzie were encouraging and helpful. Still, nothing much happened, though, so I tried East Side solo only to discover I couldn't play tea-room *tinkle-above-the-hum-of-conversation* type piano, either. It wasn't a question of integrity, — I tried but never could learn to play that type of thing.

Finished my master's degree in '48, and three years later came to Corpus Christi cured forever of Public School Music. Opened my own studio, play jazz around town and improvise in spare time. Raising a family in N. Y. when you work till 4 A.M., six nights a week is rough. You play by persuasion, demand and bribery. Sometimes the customers even like it if they are drunk enough (or sober). Much as we liked it, Alvis and I chucked it, finally, because my teeth started falling out, if you know what I mean. Corpus Christi, our house, our sloop-rigged Mercury sailboat, our four little pianists (I've got roots, dad!) are all just what we want. This is the life; I play because I want to, not because I have to.

I've worked a long time at being able to say something musically. I hope that what I say is interesting, and said in a manner that's neither too cryptic nor too garrulous.

Glad to hear you played my things for Peck Kelley, and that he liked them.\* Record the guy if at all possible. He is the screaming end.

We love you, love you, love you,

*Red and Alvis*

\*Kelley said ". . . bmmm — pretty darn good. Red must have been practicing . . ." (He hadn't seen him in years. From Peck Kelley, this is the highest form of tribute, the blessing of recognition, bestowed by the acknowledged master.)

## PIANO

The derelict piano used by Red in this record is from a bygone era. It is a big old barroom upright with six pedals which control the various attachments that make it sound (supposedly) like a "mandolin" and/or "guitar," etc. Red sat down at it for the first time that night, and when we got through, it was a hard time getting him over to the 9 foot Steinway for his second record (1088). He just liked that wheezing upright, and with his own consummate delicacy, had nicely refrained from having it tuned.

E. C.

Piano: RED CAMP

Guitar: CHET RUPE

Bass: ARLEY COOPER

LIZA (trio)

LOVE ME OR LEAVE ME (Camp solo)

LIMEHOUSE BLUES (Camp solo)

BINAURAL BOUNCE (trio)

TEA FOR TWO (trio)

NOLA (Camp solo)

SMALL HOTEL (trio)

LULU (trio)

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