

OUCH! Jam Sessions



In Ouch! last week I said that, although economics was the subject I wrote about for my daily bread when I was with the *Daily Telegraph* in Britain several decades ago, I was able to spread some jam on it by covering soccer games for a little extra pay at the weekend.

I added a little pat of butter too by writing about jazz in my spare time, a subject for which my sole qualification was that I liked listening to it. However, as one famous journalist said of a prominent politician, I stood up for my ignorance very loyally.

One standing engagement was that every month a top American group such as Stan Getz, Chet Baker or Sonny Rollins was booked for Ronnie Scott's club and on opening night I would do a review for the paper.

These bookings were an ambitious and costly undertaking even for the most prestigious jazz club in London and as master of ceremonies Ronnie Scott himself would urge the audience not to

stint on drinks so that the club could add a little layer to its reserves.

He'd add that there was going to be a raffle for the same purpose. The first prize, he'd say, was a week in Manchester. The second prize was two weeks in Manchester. I don't remember how many times I heard it but it made me laugh every time.

What more could one want: affable company, listening to some of the world's best musicians, being paid to do it and ramming my opinions down the throats of my fellow citizens along with the marmalade at breakfast the next morning?

Yes, dear reader, it was a glorious time to be a reporter. Perhaps it was just too good to last. The Telegraph estimated its readership at 1.2 million in those days. Now for both digital and print it's around 700,000.

Or perhaps it's because their part-time jazz critic quit to come to America.