

THE SOUND I SAW®



The Jazz Photographs of **Roy DeCarava**

The Sound I Saw®
The Jazz Photographs of
Roy DeCarava

A Cultural Presentation of the
United States of America

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cover photograph: Coltrane #24, New York 1963

Organized by The Studio Museum in Harlem
A Cultural Presentation of the United States of America

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© 1982, "The Sound He Saw: Roy DeCarava's Jazz Photographs" A. D. Coleman.

Foreword

A Cultural Presentation of the United States of America

Foreword

Roy DeCarava's first major body of photographs in the 1955 volume, *Sweet Flypaper of Life*—a collaborative effort with poet Langston Hughes—demonstrated unequivocally his ability to produce a cohesive group of subtly poetic images. It is a gift DeCarava has nurtured throughout his entire career, a gift that reaches its fullest flowering in his remarkable series of Jazz photographs. Studio Museum in Harlem is honored to present *The Sound I Saw: The Jazz Photographs of Roy DeCarava* as the fourth exhibition in the Museum's Black Masters series. Over 100 black and white images have been assembled, documenting not only the evolution of Jazz, the quintessential American music, but the extraordinary artistry of a photographer who during a thirty-three-year career, has combined a rigorous formal discipline with a rich iconographic complexity. The retrospective sweep of this exhibition of DeCarava's treatment of a single theme, the theme of Jazz, highlights his achievements as a photographer.

DeCarava is a master portraitist, an evocative dramatist and a consummate musician in his own right. DeCarava's portraiture is as penetrating as any Renaissance study. Whether he has shot his Jazz greats during a moment of introspective quiet, encased in a chrysalis of light, as is the case with his portrait of the young Joe Williams or, as with some of the noted Coltrane photographs, driving towards the edge of chaos, DeCarava captures something of the enigma of the creative art. His individual portraits gain an even greater depth from his dramatic stage settings. Jazz performances have a culture of their own, a set of rites and ceremonies that become part of the listener's expectations. DeCarava knows these rituals well and in creating his series, he has recreated the community of feeling that is evoked during the best performances. His tools are always visual. Controlling light and dark, establishing a compositional balance that seems to belie the instantaneousness of a candid shot, DeCarava, like a skillful Jazz musician, converts scenes that could be improvisational into works of studied control. What he has created are the feeling and emotion of a musical form and in so doing he

has documented a vital part of American culture. Jazz, an aesthetic source of American painters as diverse as Stuart Davis, Romare Bearden, Jackson Pollack, and Sam Gilliam, is given yet another life in DeCarava's meticulously documented tableaux. Because Harlem was, in fact, one of the earliest "homes" for Jazz, The Studio Museum is particularly grateful for the opportunity to show these photographs, which illustrate so fully the richness of our aesthetic heritage. There are many whom we thank for this opportunity.

First, The Studio Museum in Harlem thanks the artist, Roy DeCarava, for his attentiveness to this project, and his wife, the art historian Sherry Turner DeCarava, who generously shared her extensive archives on the artist. The essayist and photographic historian, A.D. Coleman wrote an insightful essay on Roy DeCarava and we thank him.

The Studio Museum in Harlem would first like to thank its former staff members Daniel Dawson, curator of the exhibition, and J.R. Sanders exhibition designer. Thanks also to staff members Terrie Rouse, Senior Curator and Al Cucci, Art Director. Education programming was provided under the supervision of the Education Curator, Schroeder Cherry. Also, we thank Carol Parott Blue who filmed the exhibition as part of a feature on Roy DeCarava.

To mount an exhibition of this scope and range required resources far beyond those of the Museum's general operating funds. We are especially grateful to the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts and to The Chase Manhattan Bank for having underwritten the costs of printing the catalogue and mounting the exhibition which opened at the Studio Museum in January 1983. The exhibition subsequently toured nationally for two years.

We are honored that the United States Information Agency chose to tour this exhibition internationally. We wish to thank *Arts America* Director Juliet Antunes and Evangeline J. Montgomery Program Officer, *Arts America*, who with Deirdre Bibby, Associate Curator at the Studio Museum in Harlem coordinated the international tour.

Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell
Executive Director
The Studio Museum in Harlem

The Sound He Saw: Roy DeCarava's Jazz Photographs

Roy DeCarava began photographing jazz musicians in 1956. That was a particularly fertile time for the music. Many of its progenitors—Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins, Duke Ellington and dozens more—were still actively contributing, and all its primary forms from dixieland through bop are simultaneously vital. This rich loam had already been seeded with various hybrid strains which would flower shortly: cool, funk, third stream and “new thing” were some of the labels soon to be applied to these attitudes and styles.

New York City was, for all intents and purposes, the nexus of this energy. DeCarava had already made this city his own by photographing it for years. Those images had earned him a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1952, and some of them—sequenced by and contextualized in the prose of Langston Hughes—had been published as a highly-acclaimed book, *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*. Perceptive, emotional, fluid and intimate, the style DeCarava had evolved was a response to the rhythms and textures of urban life, and in particular to the black experience in the cities of the East Coast. Those same forces had shaped the music too, especially the forms of it which emerged during and after World War Two. So the joining of photographer with subject matter was, if not inevitable, surely fortuitous; such familiarity breeds insight, understanding, and a deep, abiding love.

DeCarava did not set out on this venture as a pre-planned, schematized “project,” and insists that this body of imagery is “not intended to be a document of a period,” even though most of the pictures were made in the middle to late 1950s. “I just went to see people I liked and had the chance to hear,” the photographer explains, “and some of them I photographed.” Yet despite this lack of methodology, the idiosyncracies of his choices, and his insistence that each image succeed as an *image* first and foremost, any such extended contemplation of a communal human endeavor by a photographer of DeCarava’s integrity and ability cannot help but inform us, even if against its will.

However, the information this body of work offers us is of a radically different order than we normally expect from a

“documentary” study in photography. Unabashedly subjective and impressionistic, it is poetic in form and generally lyric in style—although the meditation on John Coltrane, which occupies the epicenter of this oeuvre, is appropriately epic in structure.

Of this ambitious essay, the photographer says, “It’s like him, like Trane—his idea was to exhaust the subject.” And of Coltrane himself, DeCarava says simply, “He wasn’t trying to be noble, but he was.” Certainly the photographer was not alone at the time in seeing Coltrane as both a virtuoso and a seminal figure, perhaps the central improvisational musician of his generation; that opinion was shared not only by other musicians but by poets, painters, sculptors, dancers and artists in all media, as well as a wide general audience here and abroad. But while there are many photographs in existence which annotate Coltrane’s career, we are fortunate to have, in addition, this monumental essay of DeCarava’s, surely one of the definitive responses to and interpretations of the man and his work by a major visual artist.

One of the keys to the success of all these photographs is that, in DeCarava’s words, “I don’t think of musicians as *musicians*, but as people—and as workers.” Certainly he does not glamorize, flatter, or otherwise treat them as “stars.” Yet the fact that they are creative artists engaged in a labor of love—an identity DeCarava shares with them, though in a different medium—unquestionably shapes these images, and makes of them a bittersweet counterpoint to the other images of workers which recur insistently throughout DeCarava’s photography: images which portray much urban work (particularly that assigned to black men and women) as mindless, brutalizing, and utterly without regard.

As I’ve suggested elsewhere, some of the premises of jazz as a form—improvisation, spontaneity, intuition and an attunement to the Now—are analogous to certain kinds of photography, especially the small-camera “candid” approach which is DeCarava’s forte. Both music and photography are tonal art forms, and photographers as diverse as Alfred Stieglitz, Ansel Adams and W. Eugene Smith have used musical terms in de-

scribing their imagery. Much of DeCarava’s photography can be thought of as cast in a minor key, as is true of so much jazz. Few photographers (Smith was one) have equalled DeCarava’s mastery of the darker end of the tonal scale; his is a deep, rich darkness which throbs, resonates, and evokes the luminescence of everything before the lens. Though it is not so emphatically declarative as the bravura style of many high-key printers, this is virtuoso printmaking nonetheless, all the more impressive for its understated subtlety.

In the middle 1960s, when the main phase of DeCarava’s attention to this subject had ended, he assembled a book-length essay on jazz, designed by himself and accompanied by his own prose-poem. Like this exhibit, it was called “The Sound I Saw,” but was never published. (Indeed, a quarter of a century elapsed between the publication of DeCarava’s first book and his second.) “I love that title,” he insists; “it has a lot of meanings to me—and I’d hate to have it go by, because I don’t think I’ll get the book done. I’m not sure I’d want to do it now—I wouldn’t do it the same way, for sure.” Thus some of the images in that dummy version of the essay are not included in this exhibit, while there are many pictures here which DeCarava has never shown—and, for that matter, quite a few he had never previously printed. Ironically (because it is a consequence of the long-term neglect to which his work has been subjected), one of the pleasures any exhibit or publication of DeCarava’s work affords the viewer is that of encountering a large amount of “new” major work from the past three decades.

Asked what he was after in these images, what he hoped to reveal through them, DeCarava responded, “It’s those things about people that are subtle but characteristic, which most people wouldn’t photograph. But how do you make those work in a picture?” Many of his original, revelatory and lucid answers are here, clear, for all of us to see.

A. D. Coleman
Staten Island, New York
July 1982

A.D. Coleman has been the photography critic for the New York Times and the Village Voice, and has written extensively for Art Forum and Camera 35.

The Sound I Saw: The Jazz Photographs of Roy DeCarava

The Exhibition and its Origin¹

Roy DeCarava loves Jazz music. He is, in fact, an amateur musician who knows the Jazz world from the inside. For more than thirty years, he has been photographing that world. In the early 1960s, as his collection began to accumulate, he decided to publish his book, *The Sound I Saw*. He designed a model and took it around to publishers. They weren't interested in it. The idea of a book was shelved, although the production of Jazz photographs continued. In 1980, when The Studio Museum in Harlem approached him regarding an exhibition, he decided it was the proper time to show that work. This exhibition then, *The Sound I Saw: The Jazz Photographs of Roy DeCarava*, and the accompanying catalogue had their birth twenty years ago.

Roy DeCarava believes there is a close association between the art of photography and the art of Jazz. In personal conversations, he has stressed that these two forms share a particular moment, that critical moment when a decisive creative choice has to be made. In Jazz, with its emphasis on improvisation, the musician, faced with a choice of almost endless potential variations, has to decide what note or chord is to be played. In DeCarava's photography, the choice is to decide that moment when graphic or design elements fuse with narrative or story-telling elements to form a new unified whole. This emphasis on "the decisive moment," as it is called by one of DeCarava's early influences, Cartier-Bresson, infuses DeCarava's photographs with an insistent but quiet vitality. The photograph becomes a more profoundly expressive artifact.

In an excellent analysis of both his photography and his philosophy as an artist, authored by Sherry Turner DeCarava, who is an art historian as well as the artist's wife, DeCarava explains the meaning of that moment and its consequences in his art:

My pictures are immediate and yet at the same time, they're forever. They present a moment so profoundly a moment that it becomes an eternity. It's almost like physics; there's an arc of being. There's a beginning, then the peak is reached and then there's the end. It's like the pole vaulter who begins his run, shoots up, then comes down. At the peak there is no movement. He's neither going up nor going down. It is that moment I wait for, when he comes into an equilibrium with all the other life forces—gravity, wind, motion, obstacles. Pushing up, he's stronger; coming down, he's weaker. The moment when all the forces fuse, when all is in equilibrium, that's the eternal . . . that's jazz . . . and that's life. That's when I believe life reaches its zenith, when the artist can anticipate that, can feel that, can absorb and use it. This applies not only to motion but to all things before the camera. For example, an expression can be in transit and

there are points when that expression is meaningless because it's so transitory. But, there are moments when that expression reaches its zenith, when it is so real it becomes universal, it finds its stillness. If you don't capture it at that moment, all you get is a transitory particular. When you find it at the right moment, it is not only particular, it is universal. The only way to do this is to be in tune, to have the same sense of time that the subject has. This means you have to give yourself to the subject, accept their sense of time.²

Fortunately for the lover of fine photography and the lover of Jazz music alike, the initial lack of interest in his book project didn't dissuade DeCarava from continuing to explore the photographic possibilities in the Jazz world. He was guided by his love for the music and by his belief that, in many ways, the act of creation by the Jazz musicians is usable as a metaphor by which one can analyze the experience of the Black man in the United States. To quote Elton C. Fax, writing about DeCarava:

. . . the ultimate element linking Jazz, photography, and the Black creator is the element of reality. Jazz music emanates from the reality of the musician's life experiences. In photography there is the undeniable reality of the thing from which the lens and the film take their image. Those realities eagerly welcome the embrace of the unguided reality of the Black man's experience in a hostile racist environment. That sums up a significant DeCarava belief.³

This exhibition offers DeCarava an opportunity to see a lot of his photographs, not just in contact form but as full scale prints. What looks interesting as a contact print may well lose its effectiveness when enlarged. It also has given him a chance to print many negatives that he knew would make beautiful photographs, but which he hadn't bothered to print due to problems of time and storage space. He has by now amassed thousands of images. Fortunately, he has also devised a meticulous filing system, which enabled him to make quicker than usual selections. Still, decisions were not easy, due in part to the sheer abundance of images and particularly to the fact that so many of the photographs were of such high artistic quality. DeCarava first made 300 prints from which he selected 231 to present to The Studio Museum's Curatorial Department. With his assistance, we edited those down to 156 prints. That selection was later reduced to the final 125 photographs in the exhibition. This catalogue contains 60 of those ultimate choices.

Although the Jazz photographs cover a period from the 1950s until the present, it is not the intention of the artist to

offer a historical documentation of those decades. DeCarava does not consider this the definitive photographic statement on Jazz. It is to him a much more personal endeavor: it is an attempt to evoke in his audience, through the vehicle of photography as an art form, the atmosphere and feelings that the music and its personalities have produced in him. It is an attempt to share with us his reflections on life and the process of living, using the Jazz world and photography as his instruments.

Some Notes On A Few Photographs

"Coltrane and Elvin" (Plate 8) is a good example of how DeCarava can be a part of a tradition and, at the same time, be apart from it. In this image, there is a classical use of design and repetition of shape. The dominant design element, the graceful curve of Coltrane's saxophone, is echoed in the gently sloping shoulder of Elvin Jones in the background. This motion is again repeated in the flowing lines of Coltrane's profile. These shapes are combined in a composition so simple and so gentle as to obscure the level of skill and artistry that went into its creation. Because of DeCarava's attraction to subtlety, and his constant use of a deceptive simplicity, the viewer is presented with an image that must be studied again and again to achieve a full understanding of what the artist is saying. Subtlety is a DeCarava trademark. Any overt display of graphic gimmickry would cheapen his message. "Most photographers are motivated by form. I'm motivated by content."⁴

DeCarava differs from the photographic traditionalist in his understanding of how his craft, particularly printing, should serve his vision. He has a strong affinity for tonal as well as compositional subtlety. His virtuoso use of elusive tones comes from an original understanding and well thought out philosophy of photographic craft.

My concern is always in how I use the light, process my highlights, modulate my grays. The emphasis is really not on the black tones. Most of my images that seem black are not black at all, they are very dark gray. I only use black when there is a black object, when it's solid, when it's a black wall. But space is not black unless there is no light, and since there is always a little bit of light, such space is always dark gray.⁵

And again, in a specific reference to the "Coltrane and Elvin" photograph

In Coltrane and Elvin the highlights on the horn define the parameter of the print. As long as I maintain them it is possible to do almost anything

in the image. They give the print a sense of reality and by defining the reality of it they keep it on anchor so it doesn't go away or sink.⁶

Speaking of the revelatory power of art, poet Amiri Baraka has said, "That is one function of art, to reveal beauty, common or uncommon, uncommonly."⁷ The photograph, "Ellington #9, Session Break," (Plate 60) has, for me, fulfilled that function. It was taken in a large sound studio during a break in the band's rehearsal. It is a moment of rest and relaxation. DeCarava places an almost full coat rack in the center of the frame, indicating the presence of many unseen persons, but he shows us only two in opposite parts of the frame, both quietly absorbed in their reading. He uses balanced, bilateral symmetry, which is, by nature, static. The strongest visual rhythm in the photograph is created by the pattern of the room lights, as they float easily overhead. The tonal interplay in the photograph is as subtle and as quiet as the occasion. A mood is beautifully revealed, an atmosphere evoked completely.

Another poet, Derek Walcott, has said in a personal conversation that one thing missing from most current poetry is self-amazement. Which is to say that when a piece of art is produced, be it poem, painting, photograph or whatever, the creator can be at times just as surprised at his insights as his audience. I suspect that the photographs of rhythm and blues singer Little Jimmy Scott, "Jimmy Scott, Hands," (Plate 21) is one such case. Ostensibly it represents the singer, known for his feminine voice and dramatic flare, his finely manicured hands clasped above the microphone, his head bent back, his eyes closed in concentration. He is absorbed in his song. But in the finished photograph an unexpected eeriness appears. The manicured fingers look skeletal, encrusted, almost like the legs of an insect; the pleading dramatics of the love song become a gesture of prayer. The face, lit by the strong stage spotlight, takes on the semblance of an anguished death mask. The intensity of the image revolves around the torment the artist has evoked in our subconscious. As in Jazz, the appearance of the unexpected is welcomed, and is immediately and skillfully incorporated into the act of creation. According to DeCarava:

I don't know what I'm photographing except that I know I'm photographing a duplicity of the image, one which is real and one which is the reflection.⁸

Roy DeCarava is a superior storyteller, in some cases incorporating an encyclopedic amount of cultural information and mythic implication in his narrative. Take for instance "Dancers" (Plate 22). Its image is so impregnated with the mythos of Black and Jazz culture that it becomes a virtual repository of information on Black style. The location is the now nonexistent Manor Social Club at 110th Street and Madison Avenue. The two dancers are performing to Jazz music during

an intermission. In the photograph, the location becomes the mythic Black dance hall, best remembered in names like the Renaissance, the Audubon, and the Savoy. Here are two dancers performing stylized versions of Black social dances to an audience of Black social dancers. If the audience is paying attention, you know they can dance. The other dancing figure is a waiter in a white coat, whose energetic upright gait fixes him as another mythic type: the Black man who has transformed a modest socioeconomic circumstance into a showcase for the triumph of his personal creative style. There are numerous representations of this particular heroic character, from the dancing, singing waiter in the Bessie Smith film short, "St. Louis Blues,"⁹ to the proud Pullman car porter in the James Allen McPherson short story, "A Solo Song: For Doc."¹⁰

The two silhouetted dancing figures form the focal point of the photograph. The extreme stylization of their gesture, dress and grooming (e.g., notice the highlight of the closest dancer's processed hair) has inspired commentary from all segments of the African-American populace. Painter Jacob Lawrence incorporates that angular energy in his prints and paintings. Malcolm Little, later more famous as Malcolm X, told in his autobiography how he acquired that desired look:

I was measured, and the young salesman picked off a rack a zoot suit that was just wild: sky-blue pants thirty inches in the knee and angle-narrowed down to twelve inches at the bottom, and a long coat that pinched my waist and flared out below my knee . . . I took three of those twenty-five cent sepia-toned, while-you-wait pictures of myself, posed the way 'hipsters' wearing their zoots would 'cool-it'—hat angled, knees drawn close together, feet wide apart, both index fingers jabbed toward the floor.¹¹

Author Ralph Ellison, himself a skilled storyteller, puts it another way:

Walking slowly, their shoulders swaying, their legs swinging from their hips in trousers that ballooned upward from cuffs fitting snug about their ankles: their coats long and hip-tight with shoulders far too broad to be those of natural western man. These fellows whose bodies seemed—what had one of my teachers said of me?—"You're like one of these African sculptures distorted in the interest of design."¹²

In reality, the situation that was photographed is different from the myth. It is not the Savoy and the dancers may or may not be wearing zoot suits, but in the DeCarava creation, his "reflection of the reality," he includes and uses all those imbedded cultural elements to suggest and structure a series of well known and well believed myths. This piece is, for me, a

masterpiece of narrative orchestration. In one single photograph, he has captured and interpreted the Black tendency toward exaggeration and stylization for creative purposes.

John Coltrane is the musical personality most prominent in this exhibition. As the most influential saxophonist of the 1960s, he had attracted scores of talented artists to his music. DeCarava was an ardent fan. Trying not to miss any of Coltrane's concerts in the Northeast, he traveled from New York to Washington. They came to know each other that way. DeCarava's affinity for John Coltrane is quite understandable. For my generation they shared similar positions of honor in their respective fields, with Coltrane being recognized as the keeper-of-the-flame in the Jazz/Blues tradition, and DeCarava being considered the artistic godfather of all young Black photographers. We looked up to them, not only because of their tremendous artistic abilities but because of the magnitude and consistency of their integrity. We knew who they were as artists and as men.

Coltrane was photographed many times by many talented photographers. Why are DeCarava's photographs different? Take the photograph, "John Coltrane #24" (Plate 4). The slightly low positioning of the camera indicated his size; the hunch of his shoulder and furrow of his brow recall his intensity; the blurred highlights on the saxophone retrace his movements; and in that special DeCarava touch, the metaphorical flame burns in the background. All who ever saw Coltrane perform know how profoundly he is captured by DeCarava.

DeCarava's identification with his subject is not incidental. It is part and parcel of his creative method. Recalling part of an aforementioned quote:

. . . there are moments when that expression reaches a zenith, when it is so real it becomes universal, it finds its stillness . . . When you find it at the right moment, it is not only particular, it is universal. The only way to do this is to be in tune, to have the same sense of time that the subject had. This means you have to give yourself to the subject, accept their sense of time.¹³

Roy DeCarava is an enormously talented visual artist, with an inherent gift for creating. But talent is just another form of potential energy; in this case, artistic, valuable only if developed and made manifest through the production of artifacts. Integrity is, for me, the key word in understanding Roy DeCarava and his art. It is evident in his personal and public life. His integrity has enabled him to stay true to his personal vision and to find confidence in how it has dictated that the photographic craft be utilized. Roy DeCarava's integrity has imbued his actions as a photographer, as a teacher, and, most of all, as a human being with a consistency and a depth found only at the highest level of creation.

C. Daniel Dawson
Associate Curator—Photography & Film
The Studio Museum in Harlem

Footnotes

1. In preparing these notes I decided not to interview DeCarava, who felt after decades of such encounters, that all he needed to say had already been recorded. A large amount of written material on him is available although not as much as his importance as an artist would warrant. A full listing can be found at the end of this catalogue. Two sources are excellent for their own reasons: for information concerning his art and philosophy, see the introduction by Sherry Turner DeCarava in *Roy DeCarava: Photographs*, published in 1981 by The Friends of Photography; and for more biographical information, consult the chapter on DeCarava in *Seventeen Black Artists* by Elton C. Fax, published in 1973 by Dodd, Mead & Co.
2. *Roy DeCarava: Photographs*, edited by James Alinder, introduction by Sherry Turner DeCarava, (Carmel: The Friends of Photography, 1982), pp. 19-20.
3. *Seventeen Black Artists*, "Roy DeCarava," (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1973), p. 185.
4. *Popular Photography*, "Roy DeCarava: Through Black Eyes," vol. 66. 4. Interview with A.D. Coleman April, 1970.
5. *Roy DeCarava: Photographs*, p. 12.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
7. *Black Music*, "Coltrane Live at Birdland," (New York: Quill Publications 1967), p. 66.
8. *Roy DeCarava: Photographs*, p. 18.
9. *St. Louis Blues* (1929), a film-short, directed by Dudley Murphy, starring Bessie Smith and Jimmy Mordecai.
10. *Hue and Cry*, "A Solo Song: For Doc," (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1969).
11. *The Autobiography of Malcolm-X*, edited by Alex Haley, (New York: Grove Press, 1966), p. 53.
12. *Invisible Man*, (New York: Signet Press, 1947).
13. *Roy DeCarava: Photographs*, pp. 19-20.



Plate 1. Coltrane, Half Note, New York, 1960



Plate 2. Coltrane #25, New York, 1963



Plate 3. Coltrane #32, New York, 1961



Plate 4. Coltrane #24, New York, 1963



Plate 5. McCoy Tyner, Playing, New York, 1963

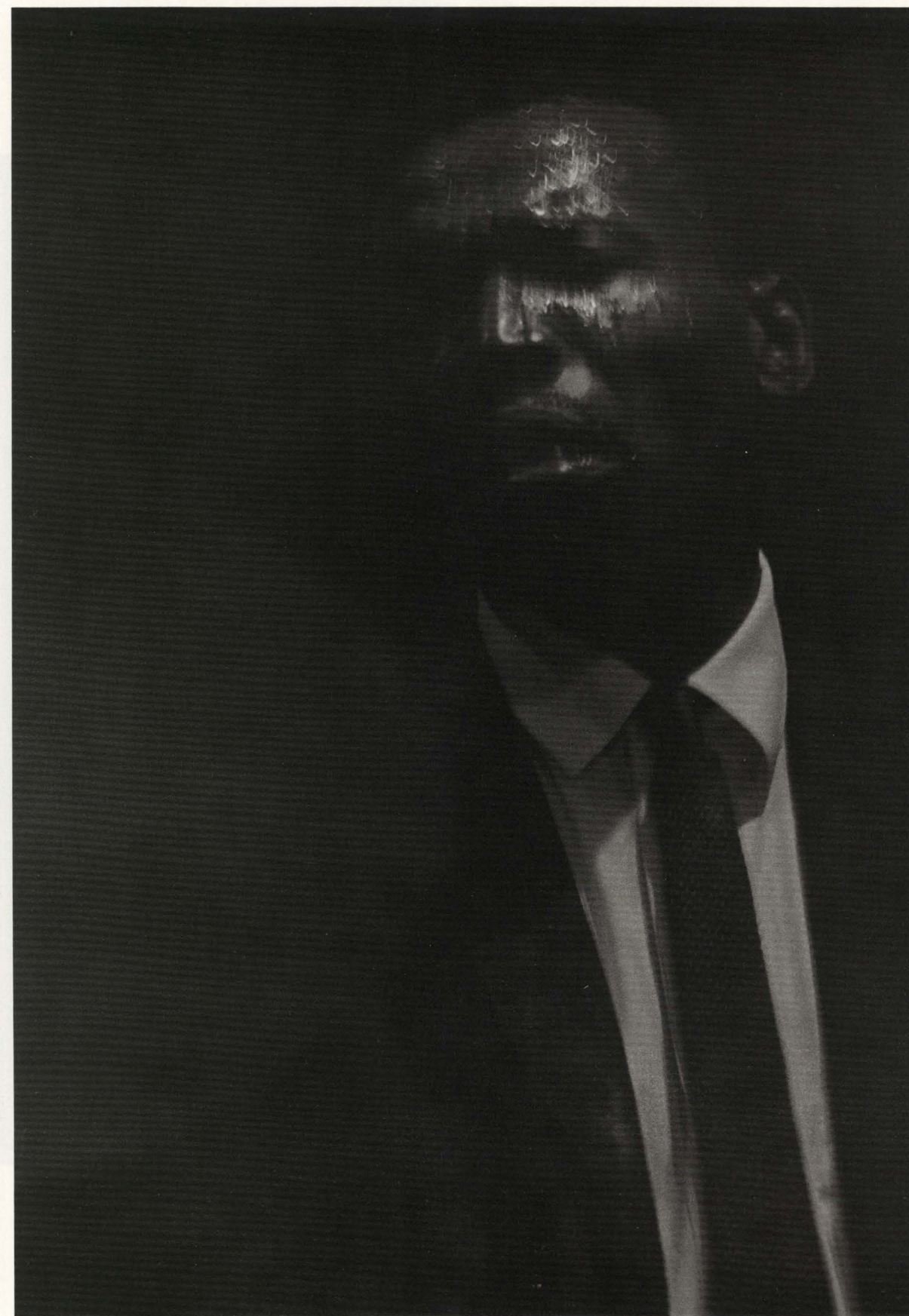


Plate 6. Elvin Jones, New York, 1964

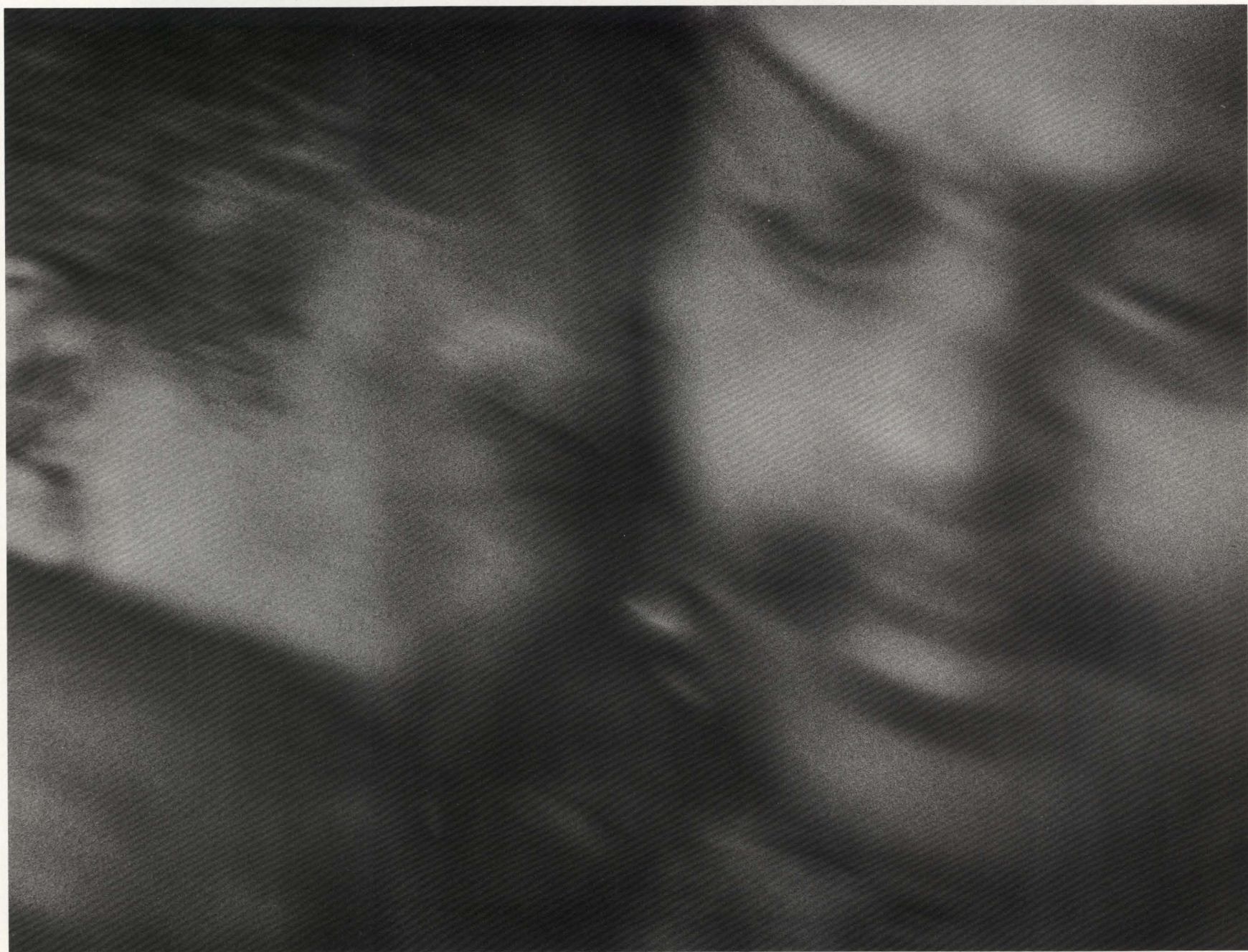


Plate 7. Coltrane and Ben Webster, New York, 1960



Plate 8. Coltrane and Elvin, New York, 1960

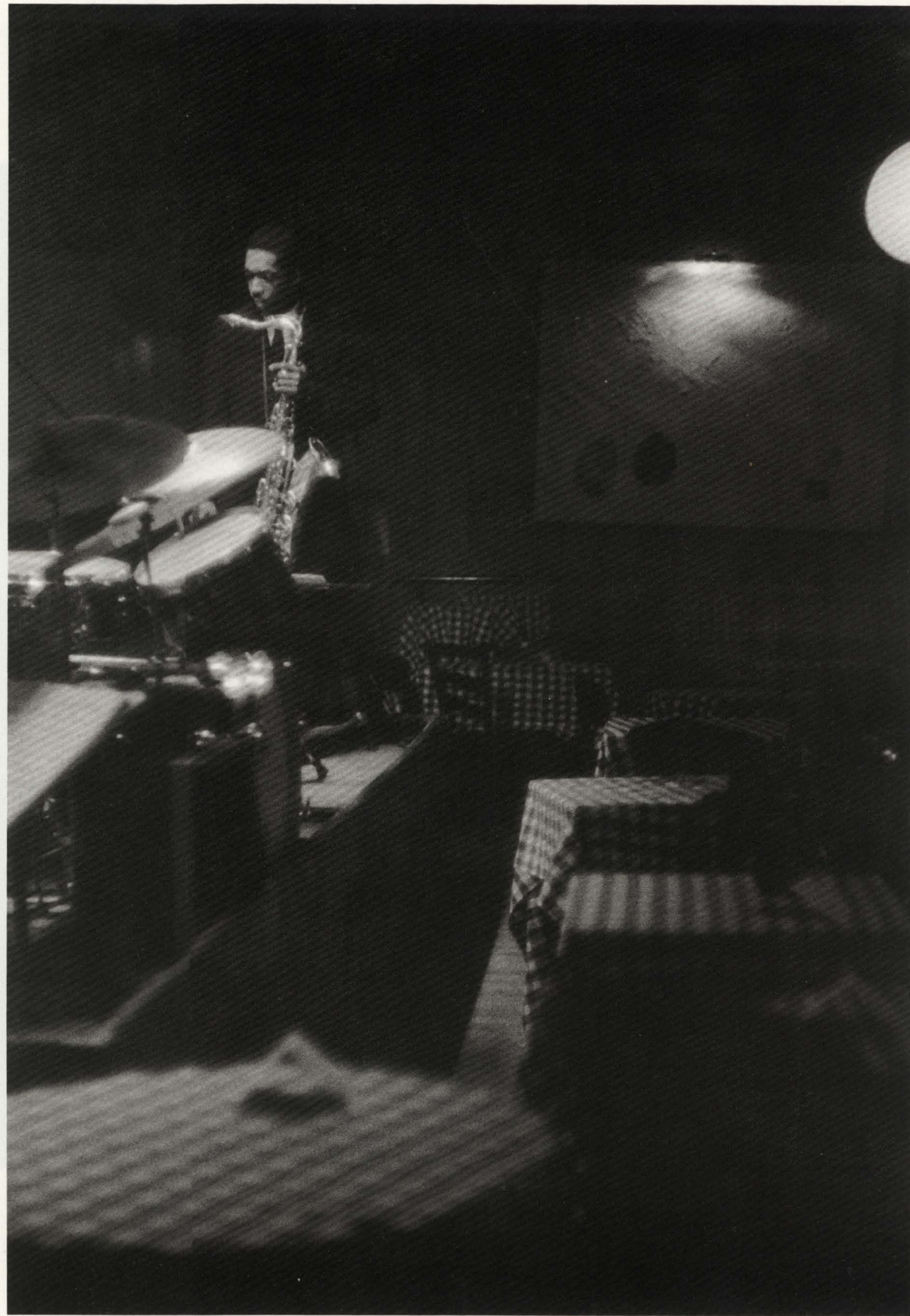


Plate 9. Coltrane Alone #4A, New York, 1963



Plate 10. Coltrane Listening #33, New York, 1964



Plate 11. Singer at Piano, New York, 1952

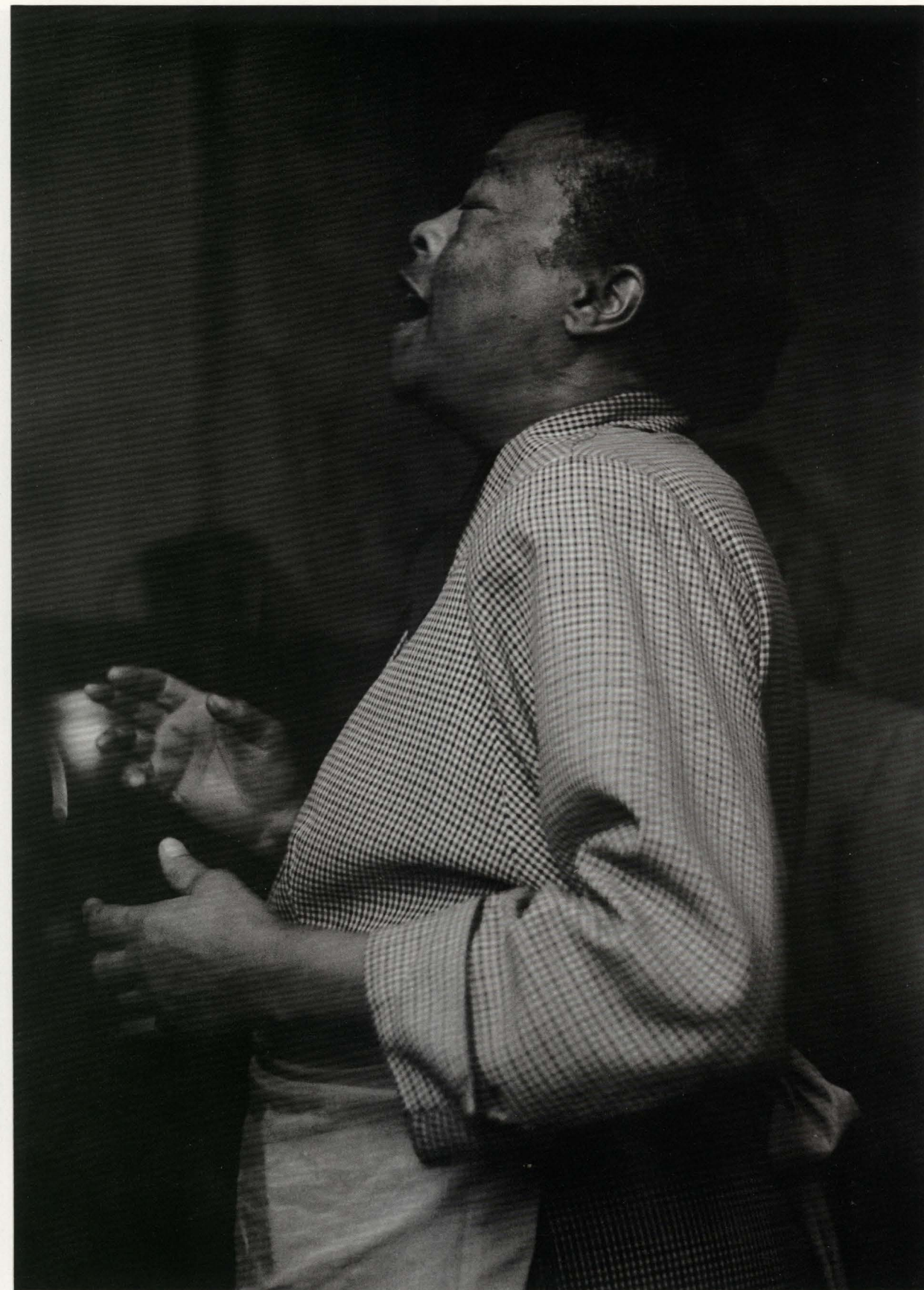


Plate 12. Maude Mills, New York, 1952



Plate 13. Gloria Lynn, New York, 1960



Plate 14. Billie and Hazel at Party, New York, 1957

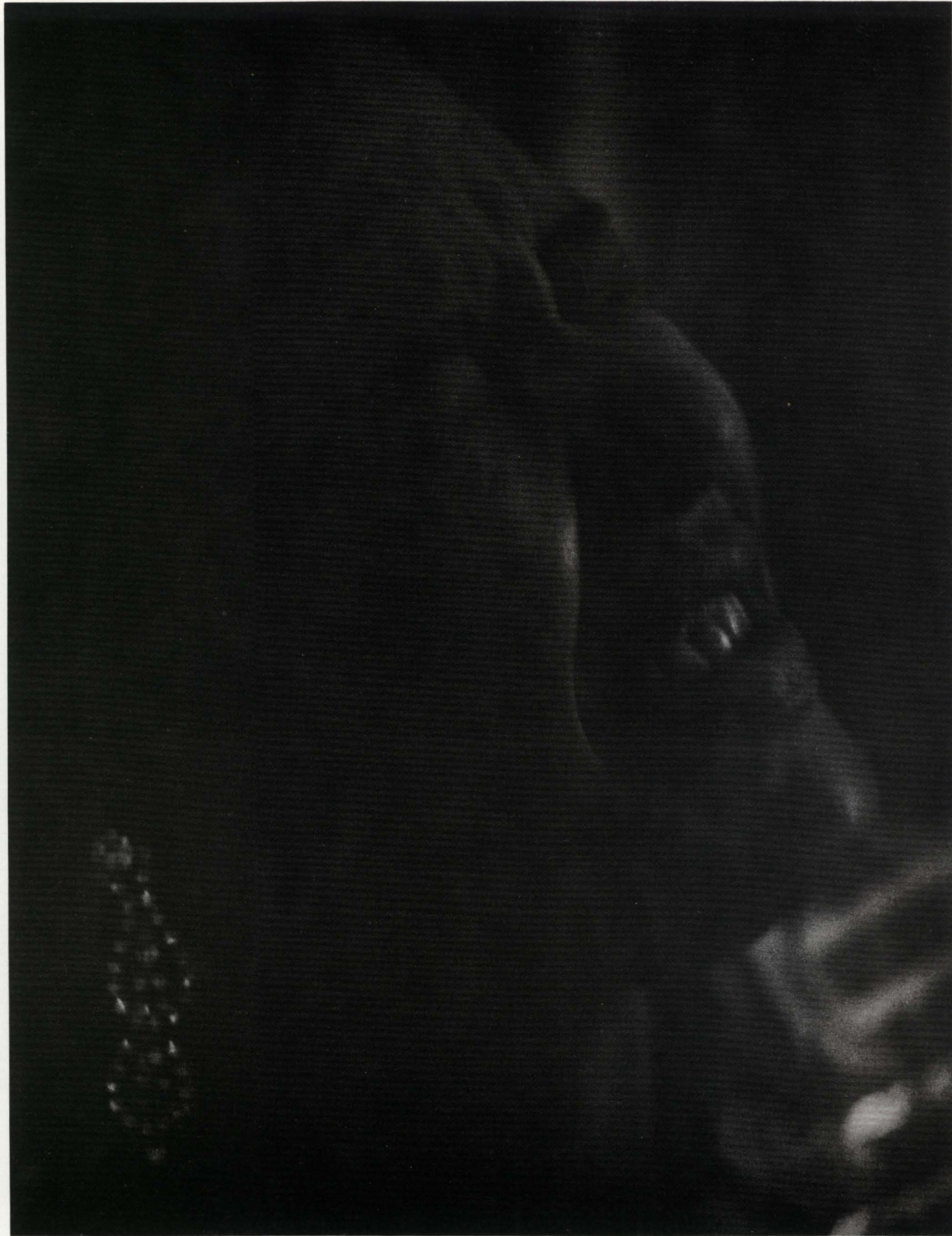




Plate 17. Billie, New York, 1952

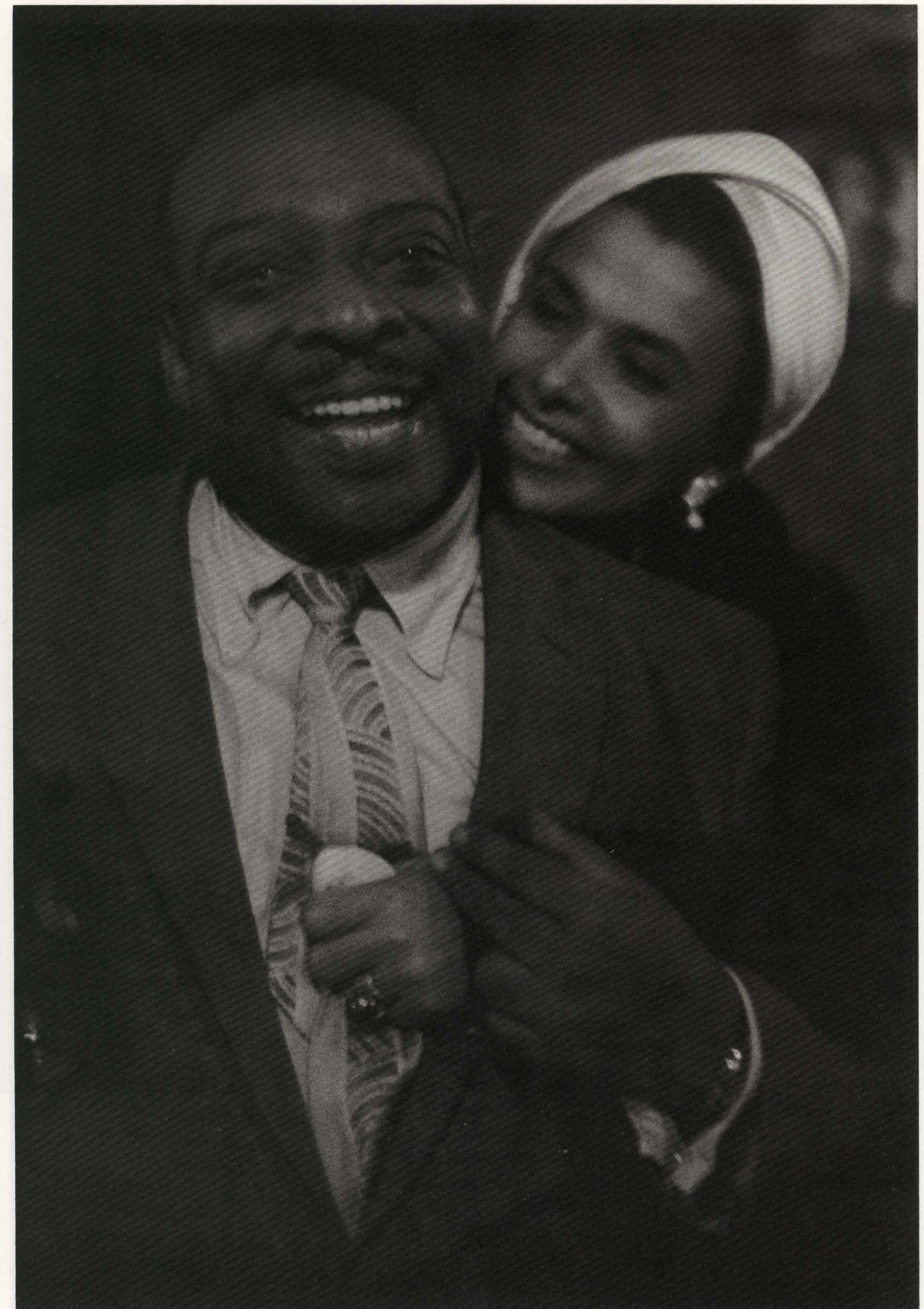


Plate 18. Basie and Lena, New York, 1957



Plate 19. Mahalia Jackson, Singing, New York, 1960



Plate 20. Mahalia Jackson, Clasped Hands, New York, 1957

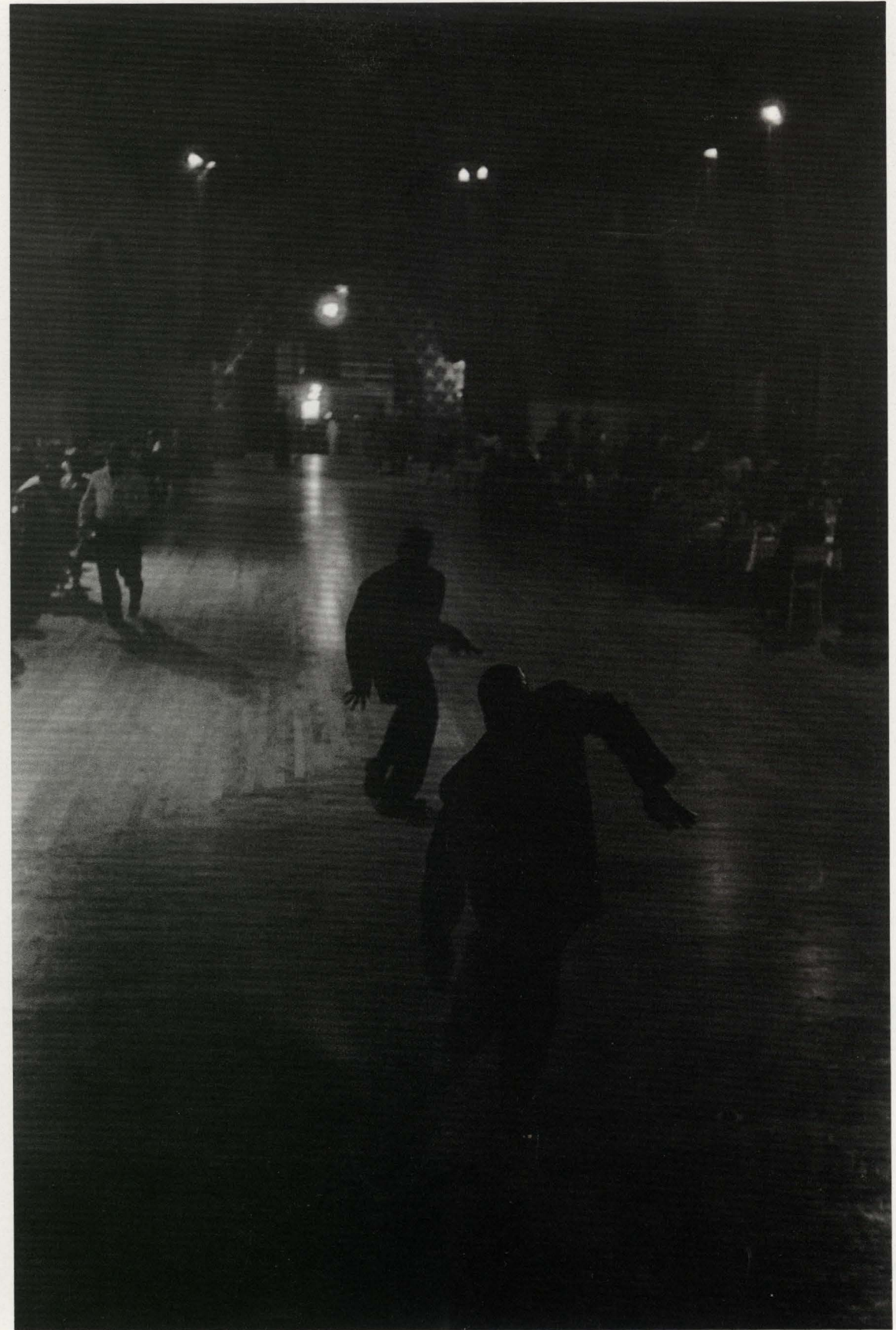




Plate 23. R&B Singer, Baby Grand, New York, 1954



Plate 24. R&B Group, Apollo, New York, 1956



Plate 25. Hands On, New York, 1955



Plate 26. Couple Dancing, New York, 1956



Plate 27. Piano Player and Trumpet, Connie's, New York, 1953



Plate 28. Horace Silver #42, New York, 1963



Plate 29. Milt Jackson, New York, 1956



Plate 30. Roy Haynes, Ellenville, N.Y., 1956

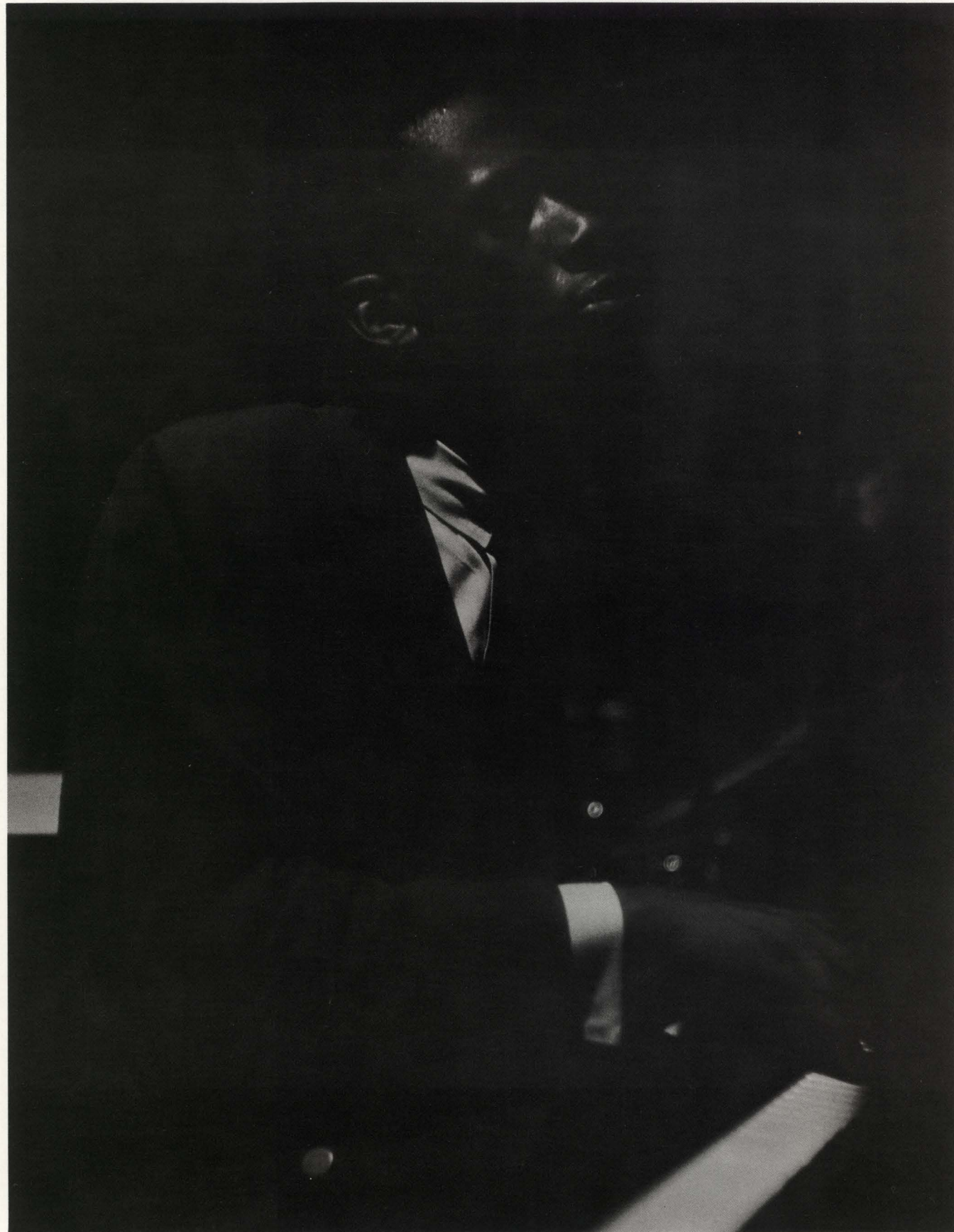


Plate 31. Bobby Timmons, New York, 1963



Plate 32. Lefty Simms, New York, 1955



Plate 33. Errol Garner, Joe Benjamin, Ellenville, N.Y., 1956

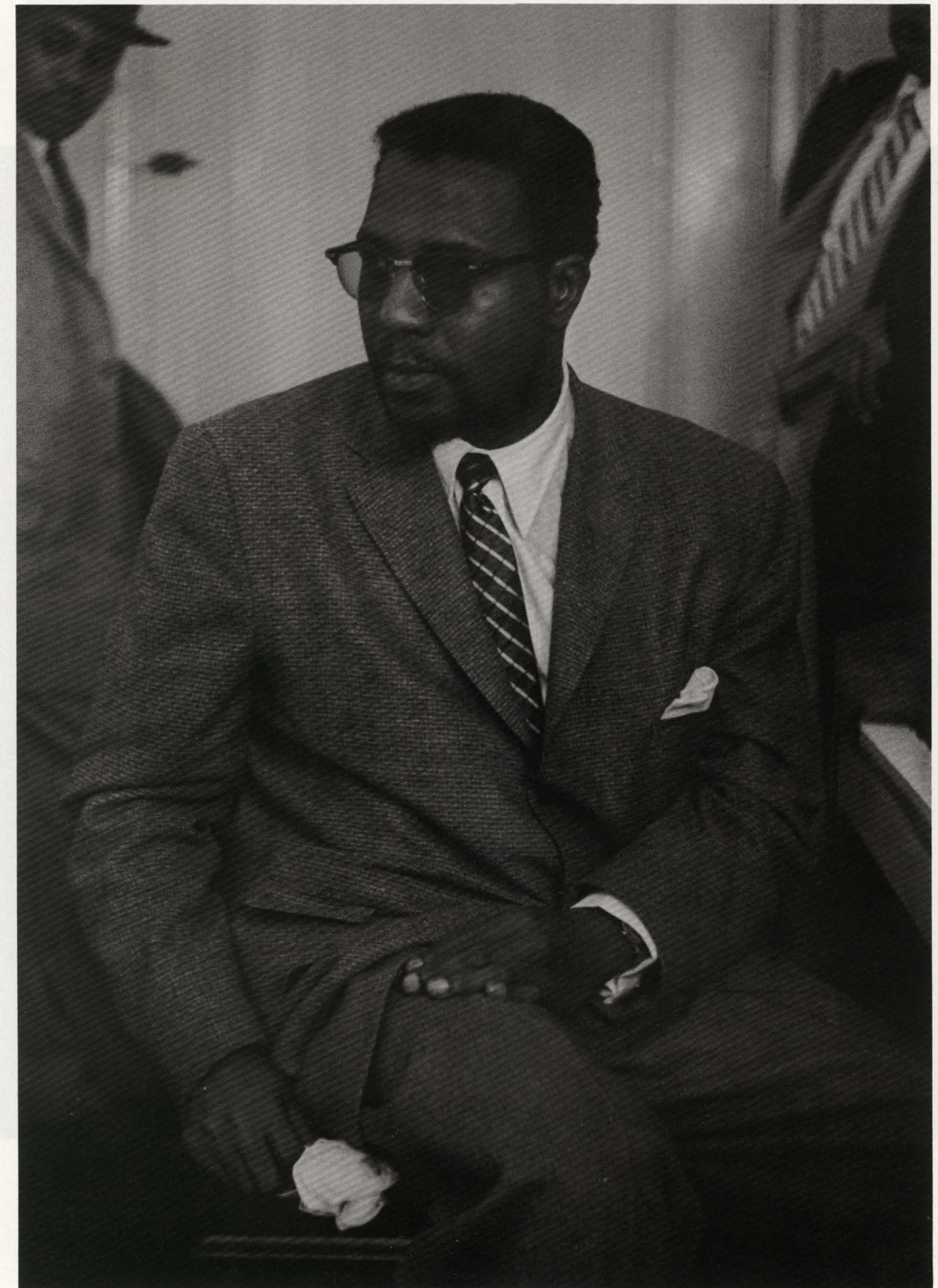


Plate 34. Monk at Piano, New York, 1955



Plate 35. Man in Striped Shirt at Piano, New York, 1954



Plate 36. Bassist, Small's, New York, 1956



Plate 37. Percy Heath, New York, 1960



Plate 38. George Morrow, New York, 1956



Plate 39. Trumpet Player at Connies, New York, 1953

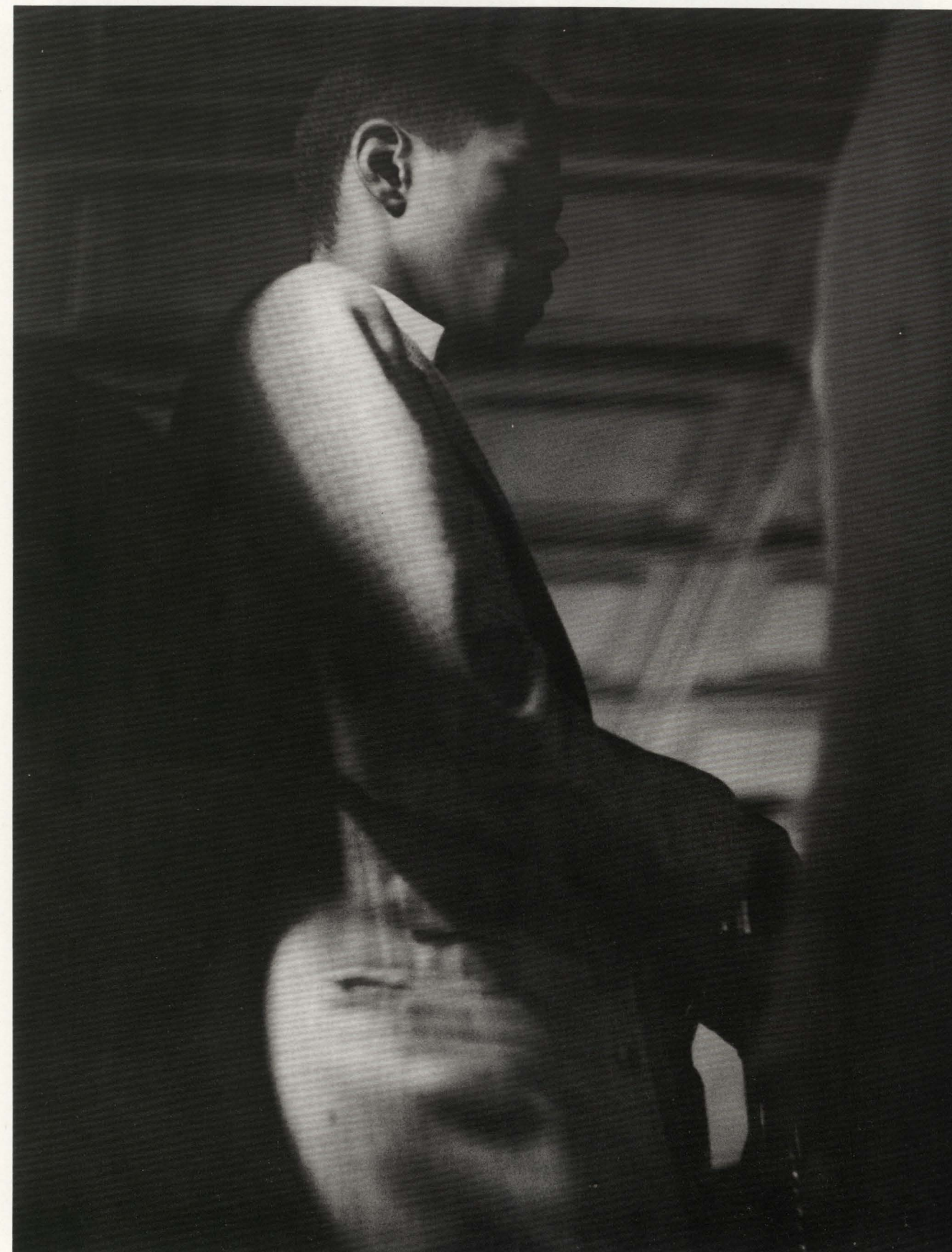


Plate 40. Oliver Beener, New York, 1956



Plate 41. Miles, Mobley, Washington, D.C., 1963



Plate 42. Eldridge and Gillespie, New York, 1956



Plate 43. Lester Young #6, New York, 1956



Plate 44. Booker Ervin and Listener, New York, 1961

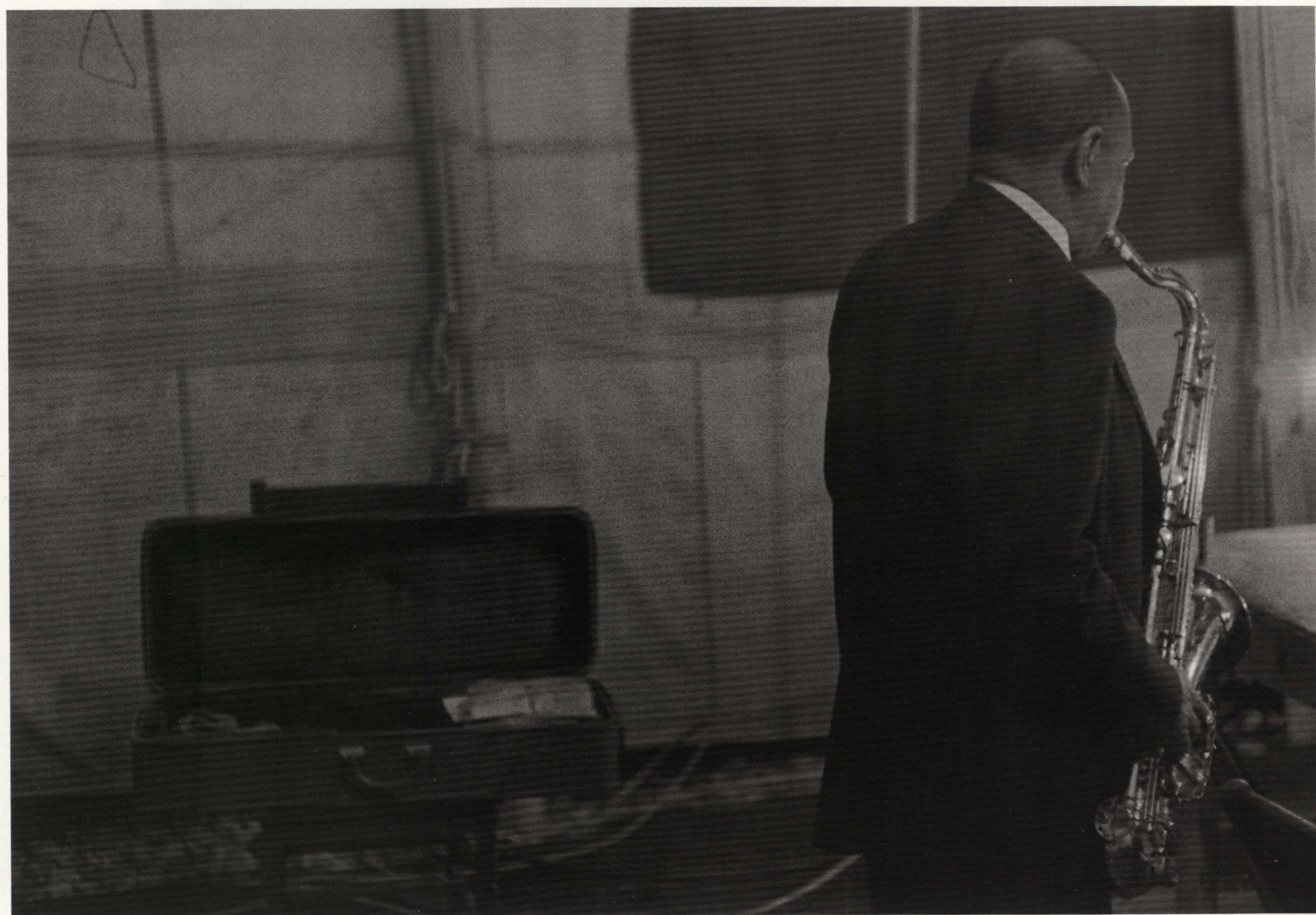


Plate 45. Coleman Hawkins, Backstage, Ellenville, N.Y., 1956



Plate 46. Coleman Hawkins, Ellenville, N.Y., 1956



Plate 47. Henderson, Farlow, Pettiford, Scott, etc. and Gillespie, New York, 1956



Plate 48. Bassist, McLean and Hardman, New York, 1956



Plate 49. Zoot Sims, New York, 1957

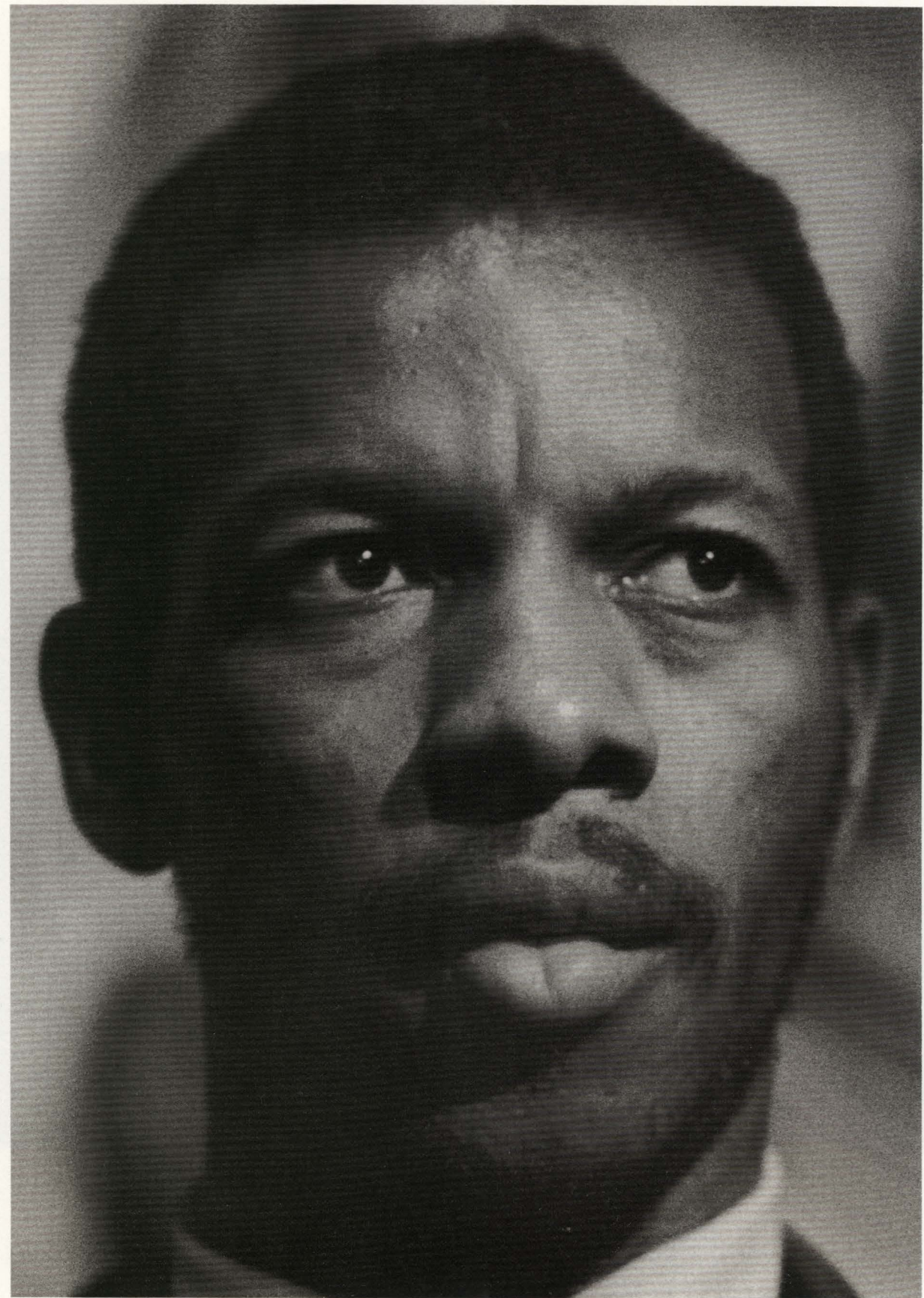


Plate 50. Ornette Coleman, New York, 1960



Plate 51. Joe Benjamin, Checking the House, Ellenville, N.Y., 1956



Plate 52. Table at the Blue Morocco, Bronx, N.Y., 1955



Plate 53. Listener, Bronx, N.Y., 1955



Plate 54. Beener Group #13, Bronx, N.Y., 1956



Plate 55. Haynes, Jones and Benjamin, Ellenville, N.Y., 1956

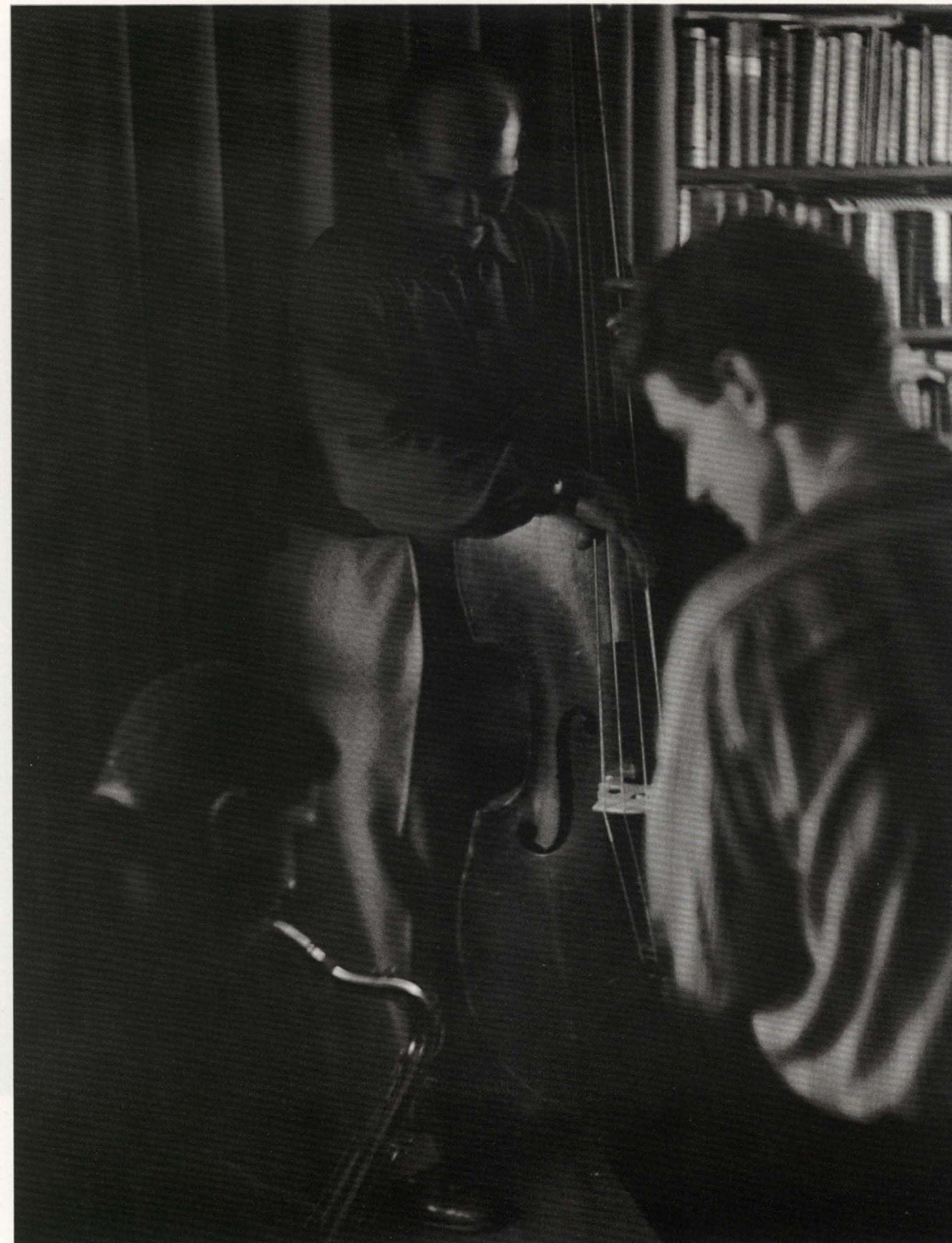


Plate 56. Rollins, Pettiford and Amram, New York, 1956



Plate 57. Bobby Hackett and Fan, Ellenville, N.Y., 1956



Plate 58. Duke Ellington, New York, 1967



Plate 59. Johnny Hodges, New York, 1954



Plate 60. Ellington #9, Session Break, New York, 1954

CHRONOLOGY

The chronology is reprinted by permission of The Friends of Photography, Carmel, California from their 1981 publication, *Roy DeCarava: Photographs*.

1919
Born December 9, in Harlem Hospital, New York City.

1925-1934
Attends several New York public grammar schools, demonstrates a facility for art.

1929
Attends the Heckscher Foundation for Children, a neighborhood arts center.

1934-1938
Attends Textile High School in New York City, with a major in art.

1938
Graduates from Textile High School and begins work in the poster division of the WPA project, New York City.

1938-1940
Wins city-wide competition for entrance to The Cooper Union Institute; attends Cooper Union at night while working as a commercial artist during the day for the WPA art project.

1939
Drawings appear on covers of *Crisis* and *Opportunity* magazines.

1940-1942
Attends the Harlem Art Center to study painting and printmaking.

1943
Begins work as a commercial artist producing technical illustrations.

1944-1945
Attends the George Washington Carver Art School; studies drawing and painting with Charles White.

1944-1946
Member, National Serigraph Society.

1946
Receives second prize for a serigraph print exhibited in Atlanta University Annual, Atlanta, Georgia.

Begins to use photography as a means of sketching ideas for paintings.

1947
Makes decision to stop creating work in painting and serigraphy to become a photographer.

1948-1950
Joins the Committee for the Negro in the Arts, a community art organization sponsoring classes and activities for local Harlem residents. Becomes chairman of the art chapter.

1950
First one-man show of photographs at the Forty-Fourth Street Gallery, New York City. (See exhibition list following the other one-man and group shows.)

Shows prints to Edward Steichen, Director of the Photography Department of the Museum of Modern Art. First print sales when Steichen buys two prints for the MOMA collection.

1952
Receives Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship in Photography, becomes the ninth photographer since 1937 and the first Black artist to be honored.

1954
Exhibition of photographs from the Guggenheim project at the Little Gallery, New York Public Library.

Founds and serves as Director for A Photographers Gallery, one of the first galleries in the United States devoted to the exhibition and sale of photography as fine art.

1955
Simon and Schuster publishes *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*, with photographs by DeCarava and text by Langston Hughes.

1956
Begins to photograph Jazz musicians intensively.

Closes A Photographers Gallery

1958
Quits work as a commercial artist to become a freelance photographer.

1960
New York 19, a Harry Belafonte television special, shown on CBS. Program was planned around specially commissioned DeCarava photographs taken in New York City's postal zone 19.

1963-1966
Serves as member, then Chairman, of the American Society of Magazine Photographers' Committee to End Discrimination against Black Photographers.

1963
Chairs public American Society of Magazine Photographers-sponsored meeting on the issue of discrimination against Black photographers.

Founds the Kamoinge Workshop with several young Black photographers.

1967
The Sweet Flypaper of Life reprinted by Hill and Wang.

1968
Pickets *Harlem On My Mind* exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.

1968-1975
Photographs under contract to *Sports Illustrated*.

1969
Receives Certificate of Recognition from the Mt. Morris United Presbyterian Church and Community Life Center for outstanding service rendered to the Harlem Community in the field of art.

Begins teaching course in photography at Cooper Union.

1970
Lectures at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, in conjunction with exhibition at the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery. Catalogue edited by Jim Alinder.

1972
Lectures in the International Fund for Concerned Photography Lecture Series at Columbia College, Chicago, and at New York University.

Lectures in the Cooper Union lecture series, New York.

Receives the Benin Award from the Benin Gallery, New York City, for contributions to the Black communities as a creative photographer.

1974
Lectures at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

Television interview with Casey Allen on *In and Out of Focus*, Channel 25, New York City.

1975
Lectures at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Named Honorary Citizen and Goodwill Ambassador by the Mayor and city officials of Houston "in appreciation of his valuable contribution and unselfish public service for the benefit and welfare of mankind."

Receives appointment as Associate Professor of Art at Hunter College, New York.

1976
Interviewed at "NBC News Center 4," New York City, by Cultural Affairs Editor Robert Potts.

Presents Gallery lecture at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Presents lecture and workshop at the Benin Gallery, New York City.

Participates in lecture and panel discussion, *Third World Photography*, Photographer's Forum, New York City.

Does television interview for WABC-TV *Like It Is*, produced by Gil Noble, with discussion and viewing of Coltrane photographs published in the *Black Photographers Annual*.

Appointed to the Curatorial Council of The Studio Museum in Harlem.

1977
Does half-hour television interview with Anthony King on Channel D Cable TV, New York City.

Presents slide lecture at the Swarthmore College Umum Coloque, *The Roots of Black Art and Literature*.

Takes part in slide lecture and panel discussion, *Social Photography Today*, at the Brooklyn Museum.

Receives Focus Award from the Bedford Stuyvesant Camera Club, New York City.

1978
Lectures at the Port Washington Public Library, Port Washington, New York, and at the conference, *Indigene-Anthology of Future Black Arts*, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

Receives commission to be one of twenty photographers invited by American Telephone and Telegraph to photograph the United States for a traveling exhibition and book.

1979
Receives award for Artistic and Cultural Achievement from New Muse, the Community Museum of Brooklyn.

Serves as faculty member for the Ansel Adams Workshop, Yosemite Valley, California.

Television presentation on *In and Out of Focus*, with Casey Allen, Channel 25, New York City.

Serves as juror for the New York State Photographic Awards.

Receives appointment as Professor of Art at Hunter College, New York City.

1980
Receives tenure at Hunter College.

Television interview shown on *Black News*, Metro-Media Television, New York City.

Lectures at the Akron Art Institute, Ohio, and at the Summer Members Workshop, The Friends of Photography, Carmel, California.

Presents lecture and workshop at the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona. Does videotape with Jim Alinder for the Center's archive.

Presents lecture and slide exhibition at Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota.

1981
Radio interview with Joe Cuomo on WBAI, New York City.

Lectures at Queen College, Queens, New York.

Exhibitions

ONE MAN EXHIBITIONS

- 1947
Serigraph Galleries, New York City (Serigraph prints)
- 1950
Forty-Fourth Street Gallery, New York City
- 1951
Countee Cullen Branch, New York Public Library
- 1954
Little Gallery, New York Public Library (Guggenheim project photographs)
- 1955
A Photographers Gallery, New York
- 1956
Camera Club of New York, New York City
- 1967
US, Countee Cullen Branch, New York Public Library
- 1969
Thru Black Eyes, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York City
- 1970
Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska
- 1974
University of Massachusetts, Boston
- 1975
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
- 1976
Roy DeCarava, *The Nation's Capital in Photographs*, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
- 1977
Witkin Gallery, New York City
- 1978
Port Washington Public Library, Port Washington, New York
- 1980
The Friends of Photography, Carmel, California
- Akron Art Institute, Akron, Ohio
- 1982
Los Angeles Center for Photographic Studies, Los Angeles, California
- Witkin Gallery, New York City
- Clarence Kennedy Gallery, in conjunction with the Photographic Resource Center, Boston, Massachusetts

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1953
Always the Young Stranger, Museum of Modern Art
- Through the Lens*, Caravan Gallery, New York City
- 1955
The Family of Man, Museum of Modern Art
- Eight Photographers*, A Photographers Gallery, New York City
- 1956
Group Show, A Photographers Gallery, New York City
- 1957
Seventy Photographers Look at New York, Museum of Modern Art
- 1958
Six Modern Masters, The Institute of Fine Arts Galleries, New York City
- 1960
New Acquisitions, Museum of Modern Art
- 1964
Photography in the Fine Arts, Metropolitan Museum of Art
- 1965
Fine Art Photographs, Edward Steichen Center, Metropolitan Museum of Art
- 1966
The Photographer's Eye, Museum of Modern Art
- 1974
Photography in America, Whitney Museum of American Art
- 1977
The Black Photographers Annual, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
- 1978
Modern American Masters, Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center, New York City
- 1979
Loan Exhibition, Office of the President of the New York City Council
- Mirrors and Windows*, Museum of Modern Art
- 1980
American Images, International Center for Photography, New York City
- Photography of the Fifties*, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson
- Silver Sensibilities*, Newhouse Gallery, New York City
- 1981
The Catskill Center for Photography, Woodstock, New York

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CATALOGUE OF THE EXHIBITION

(All photographs are Silver Prints.)

1. COLTRANE, HALF NOTE
New York, 1960
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 1

2. COLTRANE #25
New York, 1963
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 2

3. COLTRANE #32
New York, 1961
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 3

4. COLTRANE #24
New York, 1963
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 4

5. McCOY TYNER, PLAYING
New York, 1963
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 5

6. ELVIN JONES
New York, 1964
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 6

7. COLTRANE AND BEN WEBSTER
New York, 1960
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 7

8. COLTRANE AND ELVIN
New York, 1960
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 8

9. COLTRANE ALONE #4A
New York, 1963
13 x 9
Catalog Plate 9

10. COLTRANE LISTENING #33
New York, 1964
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 10

11. McCOY TURNER
New York, 1963
12½ x 10

12. COLTRANE #20
New York, 1963
13 x 10

13. JIMMY GARRISON LISTENING
New York, 1964
10 x 13

14. COLTRANE SITTING ON BANDSTAND
New York, 1964
13 x 10

15. COLTRANE SOPRANO ON KNEE
New York, 1961
13 x 10

16. SINGER AT MIKE
New York, 1954
13 x 9

17. SINGER AT PIANO
New York, 1952
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 11

18. MAUDE MILLS
New York, 1952
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 12

19. GLORIA LYNN
New York, 1960
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 13

20. BILLIE AND HAZEL AT PARTY
New York, 1957
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 14

21. BILLIE SINGING
New York, 1957
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 15

22. BILLIE AT THE APOLLO
New York, 1952
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 16

23. BILLIE
New York, 1952
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 17

24. BILLIE AT PARTY #20
New York, 1957
13 x 10

25. BILLIE, MAHALIA AND TONY
New York, 1957
8½ x 13

26. BASIE AND LENA
New York, 1957
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 18

27. MAHALIA JACKSON, SINGING
New York, 1960
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 19

28. MAHALIA JACKSON, CLASPED HANDS
New York, 1957
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 20

29. JIMMY SCOTT, HANDS
New York, 1956
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 21

30. R & B SINGER, BABY GRAND
New York, 1954
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 23

31. R & B GROUP, APOLLO
New York, 1956
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 24

32. SARAH VAUGHN
New York, 1956
13 x 9

33. JOE WILLIAMS PROFILE
New York, 1962
13 x 10

34. PIANO PLAYER AND TRUMPET, CONNIE'S
New York, 1953
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 27

35. HORACE SILVER #42
New York, 1963
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 28

36. MILT JACKSON
New York, 1956
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 29

37. ROY HAYNES
Ellenville, NY, 1956
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 30

38. BOBBY TIMMONS
New York, 1963
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 31

39. LEFTY SIMMS
New York, 1955
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 32

40. ERROL GARNER, JOE BENJAMIN
Ellenville, NY, 1956
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 33

41. ERROL GARNER
Ellenville, NY, 1956
13 x 10

42. MONK AT PIANO
New York, 1955
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 34

43. MAN IN STRIPED SHIRT AT PIANO
New York, 1954
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 35

44. MARYLOU WILLIAMS
New York, 1952
10 x 13

45. BASSIST, SMALL'S
New York, 1956
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 36

46. PERCY HEATH
New York, 1960
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 37

47. GEORGE MORROW
New York, 1956
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 38

48. CALLO SCOTT AND TONY SCOTT
New York, 1957
13 x 10

49. CALLO SCOTT, CELLO
New York, 1956
13 x 9¼

50. EDNA SMITH
New York, 1952
13 x 10

51. EARL MAY
New York, 1960
13 x 9

52. TOMMY POTTER
New York, 1956
13 x 10

53. FOUR BASS PLAYERS

New York, 1956
9½ x 13

54. TRUMPET PLAYER AT CONNIE'S

New York, 1953
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 39

55. OLIVER BEENER

New York, 1956
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 40

56. MILES, MOBLEY

Washington, D.C., 1963
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 41

57. ELDRIDGE AND GILLESPIE

New York, 1956
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 42

58. GILLESPIE DANCING AT THE APOLLO

New York, 1956
13 x 9

59. LOUIS ARMSTRONG, HENDERSON'S FUNERAL

New York, 1952
10 x 13

60. HENRY RED ALLEN

New York, 1956
10 x 13

61. ORAN PAGE AND HIS MOTHER

New York, 1952
13 x 9

62. QUINCY JONES

New York, 1957
13 x 9¾

63. LAWRENCE BROWN, ADDISON FARMER

New York, 1956
13 x 8¾

64. KENNY DORHAM AT PIANO

New York, 1956
10 x 13

65. TRUMPET PLAYER, SEATED

New York, 1953
13 x 9

66. LESTER YOUNG #6

New York, 1956
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 43

67. LESTER YOUNG #37

New York, 1956
13 x 9

68. BOOKER ERVIN AND LISTENER

New York, 1961
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 44

69. COLEMAN HAWKINS, BACKSTAGE

Ellenville, N.Y., 1956
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 45

70. COLEMAN HAWKINS

Ellenville, N.Y., 1956
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 46

**71. HENDERSON, FARLOW, PETTIFORD, SCOTT,
ETC. AND GILLESPIE**

New York, 1956
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 47

72. BASSIST, McLEAN AND HARDMAN

New York, 1956
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 48

73. ZOOT SIMS

New York, 1957
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 49

74. ORNETTE COLEMAN

New York, 1960
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 50

75. PAUL DESMOND

New York, 1956
13 x 9

76. JACKIE McLEAN

New York, 1956
10 x 13

77. DANCERS

New York, 1956
13 x 9
Catalog Plate 22

78. HANDS ON

New York, 1955
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 25

79. COUPLE DANCING

New York, 1956
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 26

80. COUPLE DANCING #43

New York, 1955
13 x 9

81. JOE BENJAMIN, CHECKING THE HOUSE

Ellenville, N.Y., 1956
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 51

82. TABLE AT THE BLUE MOROCCO

Bronx, N.Y., 1955
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 52

83. LISTENER

Bronx, N.Y., 1955
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 53

84. NICA

New York, 1956
13 x 10

85. MAN WITH HAND ON WOMAN'S SHOULDER

New York, 1955
13 x 9

86. WOMAN CLAPPING

New York, 1956
13 x 10

87. BEENER GROUP #13

Bronx, N.Y., 1956
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 54

88. HAYNES, JONES AND BENJAMIN

Ellenville, N.Y., 1956
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 55

89. ROLLINS, PETTIFORD AND AMRAM

New York, 1956
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 56

90. BOBBY HACKETT AND FAN

Ellenville, N.Y., 1956
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 57

91. DUKE ELLINGTON

New York, 1967
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 58

92. JOHNNY HODGES

New York, 1954
13 x 10
Catalog Plate 59

93. ELLINGTON #9, SESSION BREAK

New York, 1954
10 x 13
Catalog Plate 60

94. BILLY STRAYHORN

New York, 1954
13 x 10

95. PAUL GONZALES, JIMMY HAMILTON

New York, 1954
13 x 9

96. BEENER AND GROUP, BLUE MOROCCO

Bronx, N.Y., 1955
13 x 10

97. SESSION

New York, 1955
9 x 12¾

98. KENNY BURRELL

New York, 1956
13 x 9

99. ART BLAKEY

New York, 1961
13 x 9

100. SONNY PAYNE

New York, 1956
10 x 13

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