

The Lost Place

by Con Chapman

When Sidney Bechet got to thinking about Manuel Perez, he said first that he was a much better cornet player than Buddy Bolden; not as good a showman, but *sincere*.



He stuck to his instrument while Buddy did things that got him noticed, stomping his foot, waving his hand. Manuel didn't make a spectacle of himself.

When you saw him in a parade, Bechet said, you knew that was a *man* you was seeing. All you knew about him was he was married, while Buddy had women follow him around



in the street, carrying his trumpet, and his watch and his handkerchief, just so everybody knew he had three or four gals living with him. Different as could be, the two men played all their short lives, but ended in the same way; Buddy in the Jackson Mental Institution at the age of 30, Manuel—after a stroke—slobbering at the mouth at 59.

Why, Bechet asked, did that happen so much? Why did the ones who were really great and who really played—when they went, They just went crazy, so many of them.



Was it in the music? Did it empty you out?
he asked. He lay awake nights thinking
about it and decided it was the thing inside
the man himself—he called it “the lost place.”

He's got to go there to make his music.
It tears a man to pieces, he said, maybe
the music makes it worse, maybe not.
There's that sadness; some men can laugh
in the lost place, if they hear the laughing
inside, but the laughing don't
put it out of sight, it goes with the
lost place, he said—laughter and madness.

