

Machine-Gunning Butterflies

by Daniel Harris

My career was stalled at the journeyman level. Any fame I had was based on my first album, *Pieces of Eight*, for jazz octet. It was a minor hit in 50's Chicago, especially the cut *Machine-Gunning Butterflies*. Back then I was a protégé of the legendary Al Fine.

I was making good bread as a New York studio musician and jingle writer, anonymous back-room jobs. It was about the time Gerald Ford told New York City to drop dead, when I received a call from an old Chicago musician friend who was organizing a New York 90th birthday celebration concert for our late teacher, Al Fine. Would I like to participate? It would also be the twentieth anniversary of *Pieces of Eight*. More specifically, would I put together a group to play *Pieces of Eight* for that concert? He was going to put together a group to play Al's epic jazz tone poem: *A Day in the Life of Miss Teasdale*.

Fast forward a couple of months and the day of the concert arrives. Things are going well and the music sounds great in rehearsal. I am excited to play and hear the music live for the first time in twenty years.

The venue was a loft-cum-art gallery in SoHo. Since Al was a Chicago guy, I didn't expect much in the way of attendance, even though I did radio interviews at KCR and BAI where we played cuts from *Pieces of Eight* and Al's *A Day in the Life of Miss Teasdale*.

The gallery was packed, with more people pressing to get in than could be accommodated. We're standing around waiting to begin the concert when Lew, the trumpet player, sinks his teeth into my shoulder.

-Dig that babe in the second row.

-What a bod! That dress couldn't get much smaller.

-All class, man. Beautiful like a butterfly. Rich man's lovins.

Well, we play the concert and the audience is wild for the music. We repeat *Machine-Gunning Butterflies* as an encore.

During the concert, I would try to catch the eye of the woman in the second row between tunes. It seemed she smiled at me a few times, but I was probably just wishing she had.

After the concert we are putting away our horns and people are walking around the gallery looking at pages from Al's scores and his paintings. The woman from the second row comes straight up to me.

-Hello, my name is Claudia. I very much enjoyed your music.

-Well, thank you and thank you for coming to the concert. The guys played great.

-Listen, I am having a little gathering later tonight, and I would love it if you could attend.

-Well, I have to treat the guys to dinner and beer for playing the gig. We didn't have a big budget for salaries.

-That's Ok; it's *hora latina*. Here's my card.

It wasn't until after two in the morning, when I gave the cab driver the address. He seemed to know it as a party place.

The doorman was drunk and the elevator man asleep in his cage. I gave sleepy the apartment number. He was as responsive as a subway token-booth clerk.

When I arrived at the apartment, there was a small Latin band playing and probably fifty people dancing, talking and enjoying a punch bowl full of blow. Being no stranger to these scenes, I snorted a good nose full and took a tall glass of single-malt from the barman.

It was a mostly Latin crowd. There was no sign of the hostess. Someone must have said something to the band because they began a very funky salsa rendition of my *It's About Time, Mama*.

People came up to me and started talking about music in the all-knowing way of the drunk, stoned and buzzed. My coke and alcohol stoked brain was in high feather. I was mister snappy repartee.

Finally, Claudia appeared and air-kissed her way through the gathering to me. She was wearing the most sexless outfit in the room. No cleavage, no leg, no hips, no ass. Total bag. It was a major metamorphosis from the concert.

-I loved your music. It was absolutely thrilling.

-Well, thank you.

- Come. I want to introduce you to someone.

Cut ahead a few hours. Claudia and I are making it for the third or fourth time. Her orgasms are thunderous and kinetic. I had never experienced sex like this. I'm feeling pretty good about myself.

-I think I could love you.

She put her fingers on my lips.

-Don't confuse sex with love, mister music man. You just machine-gunned a butterfly.

