



– Traipsing Through History –

When Charlie Lourie and I acquired Francis Wolff's photo archive in 1992, we were like kids in a candy store, randomly rifling through manila envelopes brimming with history. Cooler heads prevailed before we could mess it up further and my wife Lisa systematically organized and archived the collection over the next couple of years, storing the negs in acid free sleeves that would hang in file drawers with the corresponding contact sheets.

Then we entered the era of voyeurism, combing through great Blue Note sessions captured by Francis's amazing photographic artistry. Amid the avalanche of brilliant candid portraits and images of classic recordings in the making, it became apparent that Francis was a determined professional who knew what he was looking for in an image. His ratio of great shots versus throwaways was extraordinarily high as evidenced by the contact sheet from Grant Green's *Feelin' The Spirit* date on December 21, 1962, pictured [here](#).

One of my favorite contact sheets is the one of Ornette Coleman, David Izenzon and Charles Moffet in Humlegarden in Stockholm 1965, standing there in the middle of winter for the cover shoot for [The Ornette Coleman Trio Live At The Golden Circle](#). You can see the crop marks for the cover photograph at the bottom of the middle row. I'm amazed that Francis got them to that park. You couldn't have gotten me out of a warm hotel room on that or any pretext.

Speaking of crop marks, all of which were made by the designer Reid Miles in ink or grease pencil on the contact sheets, Reid's eye was impeccable. Pictured [here](#) is the full photo of an image of Lee Morgan at his *Search For The New Land* session. Reid focuses on Lee's intense look, editing out an ecstatic Alfred Lion listening to a playback. The full shots of cover images pictured here with original crop, selected for Hank Mobley's [Soul Station](#) and Don Wilkerson's [Elder Don](#), illustrate Reid's predilection for zeroing in on action and body language that changes the whole feeling of the image.

The archive also provided a number of musical surprises. Who knew that [Clifford Brown](#) was a visitor at Miles Davis's March 6, 1954 quartet session? If only Clifford had brought his horn! Going through the contact sheets on a Dodo Greene date, I noticed that among the three young woman playing tambourine was Dionne Warwick. Other surprises include changes in personnel between a rehearsal and the session. "Philly" Joe Jones is the drummer on the rehearsals for *John Jenkins With Kenny Burrell*, pictured [here](#), and Andrew Hill's *Black Fire* while Dannie Richmond and Roy Haynes respectively were the drummers on the sessions.

There are also interesting artifacts from failed projects. In the summer of 1964, Blue Note went to Philadelphia to record Horace Silver's new quintet with Joe Henderson, Carmell Jones, Teddy Smith and Roger Humphries. One member of the band was having a very bad night and the entire session had to be scrapped. All we are left with is the [photograph](#) of the quintet in front of Pep's Lounge on South Broad Street in Philly. By the time they went into the studio 10 weeks later, Horace had written a new tune, "Song For My Father."

We've scanned more than 2400 black & white images and 300 color photographs, and we are by no means done combing through the 20,000 images in the collection.