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# My New York

By MEL HEIMER



**Rodney Taylor**  
*No Jaguar,  
No caviar.*

**NEW YORK**—Things one New Yorker thinks about:

The other night I dropped into Basin street, the gloomy, cavernous cellar in West 51st street where the hot jazz hermits hole up—and was pleased to note the presence of a gentleman who seems to have slid gracefully and genially into middle age. So few do. This was the now-benign Benny Goodman, who in the old days was known in some circles as "The Ray," because of the icy glare he fixed on trombonists or drummers he thought were not paying attention to business at rehearsals. He was a tough taskmaster, which, of course, paid off in the best big band that popular music has known.

When I saw Benny recently, however, surrounded by a new generation of *aficionados*, who have grown up on the technically interesting but emotionally short modern jazz, he was mellowness itself.

Goodman joked with the cash customers, talked with columnists at ringside tables, stood respectfully by while a couple of the men in his new octet blew some of the interesting but unemotional music—and then, best of all, got in there and played with them, note for note, beat for beat, right down the line. What came out was, naturally, pure gold, as it always has been.

It's strange how age and the years take the indignation and grimness out of a man. I could see the other night that Benny still enjoys wallowing in the luxury of hot jazz played by good men—but it was an easy-going pleasure.

You felt that if the old master hit a clinker on his clarinet, he'd just grin and turn up his eyes and say, "Hey, how about that?" In the old days, you felt he might have shot himself. On the other hand, old days or new, Benny Goodman never was one to hit clinkers at that, was he?

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**IF YOU COULD TAKE** young, on-the-way-up actors to one side and give them one piece of sound advice to remember when they're stars, chances are you would tell them not to forget what real people are like.

Too many young ones hit it big quickly and then immediately begin moving in the lunch-at-Twenty-One, dinner-at-the-Colony, red Jaguar circles. They forget what the guy on the subway feels and likes, and soon their acting becomes, like their lives, a trifle artificial.

Met an Australian actor named Rodney Taylor today who evidently won't fall into that gilded pit. Rod, a ruggedly good-looking soul of 25, who plays Israel Hands in the new film *Long John Silver*, has been around New York a few days—and spending his time as far from the champagne-and-caviar as he can manage.

"Met a guy named Joe in a lower East Side bar named Charley's last night," Taylor started to tell me . . . and I rested easy. When I got pontifical and told him how good it was for his career, not to forget the Common Man, he snorted. "I don't do it for my career," he said. "I hang around with regular Joes because I like them better than the phonies you run across so much in the upper-upper strata."

Rod told me, incidentally, that Australia is quite mad for radio soap-operas (TV's not there yet). He usually does a dozen shows a day on the air and before coming to the States, taped 40 shows in advance. "If I don't go back for quite a while," he said, "they'll just have to have drastic accidents happen to all the characters I play."