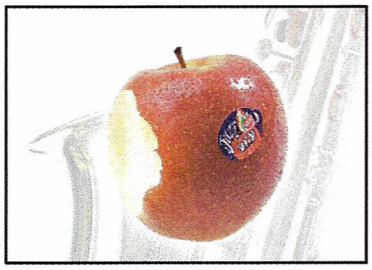
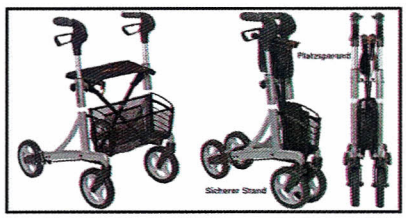
Jazz # 3293

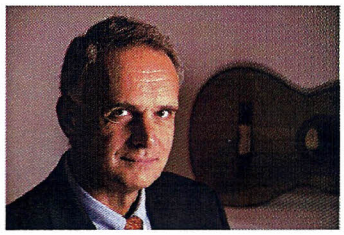
In front of me on the kitchen table is a six-pack. Not six beers but six red and shiny apples in a nicely sealed pack. I bought them in the supermarket today. Six apples for the price of four! Not a bad bargain in these times of economic recession.



I eat at least an apple a day, as long as I can remember. "An apple a day keeps the doctor away", is one of the first sentences I learned in the English language. So I should be happy with my six fresh shining apples but the name of the apples is worrying me. They are not called Raeburn, Pink Lady or Golden Gala but the name of these apples is...Jazz! 'JAZZ TM, fresh and healthy', I read on the cover. Each individual apple has a separate sticker that reads 'Jazz #3292'. What does this strange number mean? I am puzzled. I cannot just simply eat these jazz apples. I feel like I am tested and seduced, like Adam in Paradise. We all know what happened after he ate that apple!

There is something very strange, even awkward and eerie when the name of 'jazz' is given to non-musical products. In most cases is not a lucky choice. You can buy a car called Jazz made by Honda. The new model seems to be better than the old one. The "jazz drive" was a computer memory devise, put out of business as soon as the memory stick came around. Now there is a hard drive by the firm EnerMax called Jazz. Would you put all your critical data on a hard disk called Jazz? And there is more. IBM has developed a software platform under the name Jazz. You can fly in and outside Canada with the airline called Jazz. If you want to feel fresh during the flight use the Yves Saint-Laurant perfume called Jazz and if you go out to a jazz concert use the perfume Live-Jazz. A lot of jazz musicians like basketball. Some are and some are not fan of the team from Utah, USA called Utah Jazz. Maybe the team does not play that well and watching it makes you sleepy. It that case you can you can take Jazz, a narcolepticum that keeps you awake. And if your dearest sometimes forgets to take her anti-conception pill she can better switch to Yazz, a pill you never forget because you have to take it every day. The average age keeps going up but there is no reason to worry since the firm Seniola has brought the light weight four wheel invalid aid called Jazz on the market.





And now there is an apple called "Jazz"? Six jazz apples for the price of four? What to do? Maybe I should be happy and simply start eating and enjoying my jazz apples but I just can't. Now that the word jazz is inflated and diluted by calling almost anything jazz, where does the music remain? What is felt for us jazz musician?

Fortunately there is another side of the coin. Jazz is not only diluted by branding no matter which product but jazz is upgraded as well. In Italy, France and Spain a huge exhibition called 'The Jazz Century' is presented to the public in well known museums that are visited by tens of thousands of people. In March 2009 IASJ Chairman Charlie Miklin has received the very prestigious Karl Böhm Prize 2008 for his entire repertoire and for what he did to jazz education in general and the IASJ in specific. This can be seen as another sign of upgrading jazz. With the Karl Böhm Prize given to the Chairman, the IASJ as an organization and jazz in general have received this important cultural prize of Austria, one of the most cultural powerful countries in Europe, as well. And there are more sign of the upgrading of jazz. IASJ Artistic Director David Liebman has performed with the Ensemble Intercontemporain in Paris in March 2009. Ricardo Del Fra from the jazz department of the CSNMD, the main conservatory in France, made a number of arrangements. Never before has this illustrious chamber music orchestra that is regarded to be the best in the world, performed any jazz.

What I read from these signs is that the distinction between high art and low art does no longer exist for the general audience. The cultural critic John Seabrook has written a book called "Nobrow" some five years ago. In his book he describes that for the present day audience the distinction between the high culture of the High Brow and the popular culture of the Low Brow does no longer exist. What is left is called 'Nobrow' according to John Seabrook. Some institutions, politicians and music critics still think according the old and outdated way: art music up there, jazz music down there. Most of the people and definitively the jazz consumers a long time ago have ceases to think according the old way. The general audience eats an apple called jazz and at night they go to a special ceremony where a musician receives a high cultural prize because he plays jazz.

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