

swinging

er stripe on his arm, one more heavy collar. I tried not to let it bury me. I wasn't happy about it, but I tried to get the best I could out of it when I was there.

"It took me a long time to get back to playing. I finally realized it was either play or pump gas. So I started to get going in the music business again."

Baker remains essentially a lyrical player, but one who would much rather look forward than backward.

"There's no drastic style change," he said. "It's changed slightly, a bit more modern, more sophisticated, for greater materials. I hardly ever play old tunes unless someone asks. If they want to hear 'My Funny Valentine' or something, I try and do it for them. But I'd rather progress to other things. I'm still singing, too. Some people say I sing better than I ever did."

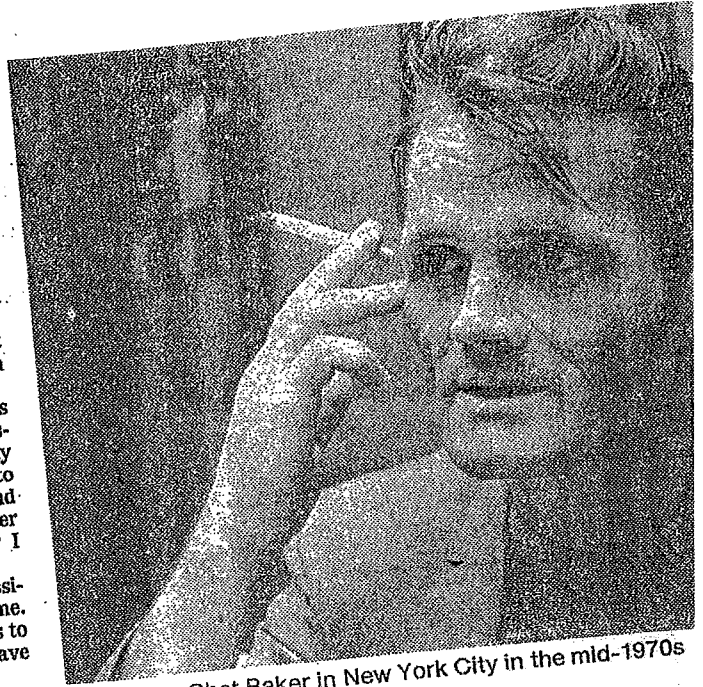
"My attitude is to try to work as much as possible, to save some money, buy myself a home. Hopefully, I can hang in there a few more years to enjoy it. Otherwise, well you know I don't have too much time left."

Baker's reincarnation recently has been documented on several albums on the Steeplechase label of Denmark.

As Chet Baker closes his eyes for another solo, images of the past may flash across his vision — darkness of distant prisons, hoodlums chasing him in the night, his body shaking with the need for a fix.

Somehow, from such an interior, notes of limpid beauty float out. At those moments, one can believe the artistic spirit is worth living for.

— KEVIN LYNCH



Chet Baker in New York City in the mid-1970s

Sat. Aug 8, 1981

Crowd wooed by gentle jazz

By Rich Mangelsdorff

Chet Baker, one of the legends of jazz, delighted a sparse first-show audience at the Jazz Gallery Tuesday night with his wispy and wafflike trumpet and vocal work.

Music

His sunken face, with its plaintive expression, suggests a

man who has been through a lot since he broke into the jazz limelight about 30 years ago in Los Angeles with Gerry Mulligan.

Baker's trumpet work seemed tentative in the early going, but he swiftly rectified that. His range is limited, but his command of that range is near perfect. And his phrasing is knowing and succinct as he spins bittersweet, lightly burnished tales.

Perhaps "Round Midnight" served as the most fitting vehicle for his artistry as he played with wisps of the melody line's inflections, showing himself to be a master of lifting or stretching just a few notes out of context like eyebrows raised for emphasis.

As he proceeded, Baker overblew some notes to add husky overtones to his gentle overall sound.

Long a staple of his act, his high flat voice — like Mose Allison without a message — generates a frailty motif.

The trumpeter will be at the Gallery again Wednesday night for 8 and 10 p.m. shows. You like jazz that wins you over with charm rather than power, you should be there.