

Title: John "Zoot" Sims Papers

Creator: Sims, John Haley

Dates: 1940-2011, bulk 1974-2006

Collection Number: JC.2015.02

Extent: Four feet (one box, one oversize box, one oversize folder)

Language of Materials: English

Repository:

Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection

Kemp Library

East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania

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Date Published: March 2016

Author: Finding aid written by Kelly J. Smith, CA

Abstract

Born in Inglewood, Calif., John Haley Sims (b. October 29, 1925 – d. March 23, 1985) began his professional music career at a young age playing drums and clarinet in a group with three of his five brothers: Bob on trumpet; Gene on guitar; and Ray, who later became a well-known trombonist, on tuba. He went on to play saxophone in his own groups, and with others, notably Benny Goodman, Woody Herman, and Al Cohn. The John "Zoot" Sims Papers primarily documents his professional career as a musician, and his legacy. The materials include contracts, sheet music, photographs, correspondence, newspaper articles, and periodicals.

Historical/Biographical Sketch

Born in Inglewood, Calif., John Haley Sims (b. October 29, 1925 – d. March 23, 1985) began his professional music career at a young age playing drums and clarinet in a group with three of his five brothers: Bob on trumpet; Gene on guitar; and Ray, who later became a well-known trombonist, on tuba. Their parents, Pete and Kate, were vaudeville performers.

Sims got the nickname Zoot at random at age 15 while playing in Kenny Baker's group. He later toured with Bobby Sherwood's orchestra before playing with Benny Goodman, with whom he would play frequently over the years. Sims served in the Army stateside from 1944 to 1946. After the war, he played again for Benny Goodman before playing with Woody Herman's Second Herd in the saxophone section known as Four Brothers. After leaving Herman's group in 1949, Sims played with the Benny Goodman Sextet. In 1962, Sims played again with Benny Goodman as part of Goodman's Russian tour and as part of his Australian tour in 1973.

While playing with Herman, Sims met Al Cohn with whom he would later form a long friendship and partnership. Cohn and Zoot formed a group in 1957 and played together frequently until Sims's death.

Sims married Louise Choo in 1970. He died in New York City on March 23, 1985.

Scope and Content Note

The John "Zoot" Sims Papers primarily documents his professional career as a musician, and his legacy. The materials include contracts, sheet music, photographs, correspondence, newspaper articles, and periodicals. Most of the correspondence concerns release rights, and requests for information about Zoot's relationships with musicians, such as Joe Venuti. The Zoot Sims Scholarship and his continued legacy at The New School in New York City are documented by news clippings and programs. Photographs include shots of Sims alone, with other musicians, and with family. Of note are manuscript lead sheets of Johnny Mandel compositions. Some of the materials in this collection were collected by Sims's wife after her husband's death.

Arrangement

The John "Zoot" Sims Papers are arranged into three series: Personal and Professional Papers, Photographs, and Oversize. The Personal and Professional Papers series is meant to show that there is no clear distinction between his personal and professional life as represented by this collection. When provided, folder titles probably created by Louise Sims, were retained.

Access and Use

Restrictions: None

Statement of Acquisition

Donated by Louise Sims in 2011

Preferred Citation

John "Zoot" Sims Papers, 1940-2011, JC.2015.02, Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection, Kemp Library, East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania

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Related Materials

John "Zoot" Sims Audio Recordings, JC.2016.04

Separated Materials

A collection of books was transferred to the library

Container List**Series I: Personal and Professional Papers (1940-2011)**

This series primarily documents Sims's professional life. Materials include correspondence, newspaper clippings of articles about Sims, contracts, and periodicals. Most of the correspondence concerns release rights, and requests for information about Zoot's relationships with musicians such as Joe Venuti. Some of the correspondence is from a friend in Japan, who Sims probably met when the Zoot Sims Quartet toured Japan in 1979. The Zoot Sims Scholarship and his legacy at The New School are documented by news clippings and programs. The personal papers folder contains Sims's diploma, Army discharge papers, and other materials. Materials in this series include items that Sims's wife continued to collect after her husband's death.

Box 1

Personal and Professional Papers		
Folder 1	Awards	1978, 1985
	Articles	
Folder 2	1962-1969	
Folder 3	1974-1978	
Folder 4	1981-1989	
Folder 5	1990-1999	
Folder 6	2000-2011	
Folder 7	undated	
Folder 8	Zoot's obituaries	1985
Folder 9	Catalogs	1999, 2007, 2009
Folder 10	Checks (redacted)	1982-1984
Folder 11	Contracts	1962, 1982-1984
Correspondence		
Folder 12	Business	1972-2011, undated
Folder 13	Invitations	1983-2005
Personal		
Folder 14	Personal	1977-2007
Folder 15	Japan	1977-1995, undated
Folder 16	Family Circus book signed by author	
Folder 17	The New School	1974-1999
	Periodicals	
Folder 18	1956-1984	
Folder 19	1985-1995	
Folder 20	2003-2005, undated	
Folder 21	Personal Papers	1940, 1946, 1982, 2010, undated
Folder 22	Press Release	1970
	Programs and flyers	
Folder 23	1961-1982	
Folder 24	1983-2006	
Folder 25	Royalty Statement	1984
Folder 26	Tributes	1979-2008
Folder 27	Unions	undated

Folder 28	W2	1957-1958
Folder 29	Checks (originals)	1982-1984

Series II: Photographs (c1945-1982)

This series includes professional photographs of Sims alone and with other musicians. There are photographs of other musicians, such as Lester Young and Doc Cheatham. This series also includes many candid snapshots of friends, family, and musicians. Folders 5 and 6 contain photographs from two dismantled photo albums.

Box 2	Photographs	
Folder 1	Family	c1950c1980
Folder 2	Japan	c1980
Folder 3	Musicians	c1950-1981
Folder 4	Zoot and others	c1946-c1980
Folder 5	Album 1	c1970-c1980
Folder 6	Album 2	c1970-c1980
	Album	c1945-c1960

Series III: Oversize (1942-2010)

This series includes news and periodical articles about Sims, sketches of Sims, photographs of Sims and other musicians, and sheet music. Of note, are lead sheets of Johnny Mandel compositions. The scrapbook includes fliers and programs related to Sims's career. Materials in this series include articles that Sims's wife continued to collect after her husband's death.

Box 3	Oversize	
Folder 1	Articles	1985-2010
Folder 2	Artwork	undated
Folder 3	Calendar	1982
Folder 4	Photographs	c1950 – c1980
Shelf Volume	Scrapbook	1942-1962
	Sheet Music	
	Manuscript	
Folder 5	Johnny Mandel	
Folder 6	Kate H. Sims	
	Published	
Shelf Volume	Flute	
Folder 7	Miscellaneous	
Folder 8	Zoot Sims	