



'The English Stan Getz'

'The Master' celebrates his 80th Birthday at the Villa

Musician Ray Wilkes celebrates his 80th Birthday in August, why not join in the celebrations with a special tribute gig on Friday 1st August?

Raymond L Wilkes has been teacher to many of the Saxophone players that now grace the British jazz scene. His protégés include the 4shaw music's own Dan Forshaw and award winning musician Russell Van den Berg.

Ray trained initially as a classical clarinetist at Kneller Hall, the Army training centre for musicians and spent time in New York in the 1950's at the feet of legends such as Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins. Jazz pianist Cedar Walton was a fan of Ray's playing and encouraged him to stay on in New York but Ray returned back to Blackpool in the early 60's.

It was Ray's return to Blackpool in

the hey day of the dance bands that set him up as a firm favorite in the North west jazz scene.

Musicians who played with Ray such as Jimmy Thompson, Andy Colquhoun and Terry Reeny recall a man who played the instrument like he lived his life, 'to the max'. A great entertainer Ray frequently performed outrages King Curtis style gimmicks on stage too much acclaim and approval, especially at the Blackpool Mecca.

Ray became increasingly influenced by the recordings of Stan Getz and became one of the best at copying Getz's tone, made famous on the recordings with Bossa star Anton Carlos Jobim.

An inspiring teacher who really brings out the best in his students, Ray has been teaching for over 40 years in and around the Blackpool area and although having been a pensioner for over 15 years he still keeps his passion going with students today!