



DRAWING BY TONY MUNSLINGER

looking for worthy causes. . . ."

In addition to the writing, Desmond plans to "go back and look at some of the places I ran through with the group, make some records, possibly even work some with a group similar to the one I've been recording with."

Desmond's own recording groups have unfailingly included guitarist Jim Hall, a musician for whom he is full of praise: "Jim, in addition to his other incredible accomplishments, is the world's most perfect accompanist on guitar. His playing on my next album—all ballads—is among my favorite things I've heard him do. Jim is very success-resistant. He is very reluctant to do anything that even remotely approaches being considered crafty or being an operator. He knew all about bossa nova long before anyone here did anything with it, and he plays it so much better than anyone else has done it."

The new album, Desmond said, will not be like an older one, *Desmond Blue*, which had a picture of a pretty girl on the cover. "Then I spent about a month or so locating her after the album had come out," he said. "This time I found the girl first. It's a beautiful cover. No matter what you may say about my records, the covers are great. My notes to the last two albums have been getting better reviews than the music. . . ."

For all his sometimes self-deprecating irony, Desmond is serious about his own playing, and his modesty shields a constant search for self-improvement.

"I don't really know what I'll be doing musically," he said, reflecting on the future. "I still haven't quite gotten myself together on the horn the way I would have liked. I don't know if I ever will, and I don't know if it will make any difference to anybody if I did."

"With our audience today, I could finally put together the perfect chorus, and the only reaction would probably be that someone would come backstage and say, 'Reed went sour on you, eh?', which they usually do when I think I'm playing well. When I think it's terrible, they say, 'Magnificent! I've never been so moved in my life!' I may be totally wrong about what I think I should do; there's always that possibility."

"But nobody else, I think, will bother with it. Everybody else is headed at top speed in the opposite direction, so my little corner of the garden is not going to be trampled down."

And what is Desmond cultivating in that corner?

"There is so much interior room within the limitations of harmonic and melodic playing," he answered, "you don't have to cancel out all the rules to make progress. In some ways, it's more of a challenge to refine one thing and find something in it that hasn't been done."

Chances are that Desmond won't find himself alone in that corner, though the things he will grow will all be his. The company he will have, though, will not be the trampling kind.