

4-STRING SWING

FOOTAGE: OUTSIDE SMALL'S JAZZ CLUB (NYC) - TRACKING POV THROUGH ENTRANCE, DOWN STAIRS, INTO CLUB WHERE CYNTHIA SAYER AND JAZZ ENSEMBLE PERFORM "THEM THERE EYES"—

CYNTHIA SAYER: I work in this business, I'm a jazz musician. And yet, there's a lack of memory of the banjo in jazz in America. There were so many great four-string players, and it's almost like they never existed.

CYNTHIA SAYER ON CAMERA -

CYNTHIA SAYER: There are two kinds of four-string banjos. The tenor banjo is more familiar to people as the jazz banjo, which indeed it was—it was the original jazz banjo. The tenor banjo has a shorter neck, it's tuned and pitched exactly like a viola. This is a, plectrum banjo, and this is the kind of banjo that many people don't remember anymore. Yet this is the kind of banjo that was played by the great Eddie Peabody.

FOOTAGE: EDDIE PEABODY MAKES HIS ENTRANCE AND ASKS, "What do you want to hear?" "St. Louis Blues" and he starts to play in vaudeville style.

CYNTHIA SAYER: Eddie Peabody emphasized a certain style of playing which came directly from the vaudeville tradition. It's very theatrical, it's very fun. This is a direct line from minstrel-show playing. The minstrel shows set up uh, a kind of theatrical identity for the banjo, and vaudeville continued it, in spades, and evolved it.

As a plectrum banjo player, one of the kinds of work that was available to me was doing vaudeville-style performing—which is exactly what I did when I first started to play. I learned flashy solo pieces. I learned "Flight of the Bumblebees." I learned all these things I felt I was suppose to learn on my banjo.

STILLS AND FOOTAGE OF ELMER SNOWDEN.

CYNTHIA SAYER: When I heard Elmer Snowden, that changed an awful lot. It was Elmer Snowden that opened that door and made me go, "Aha! Banjo can have integrity, it can swing its ass off just like everything" And then I thought, "That's an instrument that I really love."

CYNTHIA PERFORMING WITH JAZZ ENSEMBLE IN SMALL'S JAZZ CLUB
- "THEM THERE EYES."

CYNTHIA SAYER: The plectrum banjo, it doesn't have a strong association in jazz. So, I'm a little bizzare to being playing jazz on this particular instrument, but to me, it has this core-cluster sound, which I like, cause it has a little bit of a modern sensibility to it. Which I relate to because I'm not from the 1920's, I'm from now. To me it makes an ideal vehicle for jazz.

I think the banjo is a legitimate hot jazz instrument...

MUSIC UP FULL AND OUT.