

DUPREE'S

I had to come down here and play some jazz this morning. I couldn't wait another day or, on anybody to come with me. I just had to come... I'm a Jazz Junkie.

I'm headed to a new joint for me, called Dupree's. It's located deep in the bowels of the inner city, right down there where bebop was born.

Even on the way down here I started shaking from the hunger that eats me inside. I live to play, I must play. I cannot.... not play jazz.

When I turned on the radio in my room this morning, I felt some relief, but the hunger intensified. The hip jazz disc jockey, Tollie Strode, said this was the place to jam in the early mornings of the weekend, so I wrote the name and address down on my note pad and headed out the door. I jumped in my car looking for Dupree's.

I had been warned about driving my new Benz down here, a place my friends still call "the ghetto." Tom told me I was an "all the way fool" for even thinking about going down into what was the epicenter of the infamous Watts Riots in the sixties. So, I opted for "Jelly Roll", my discarded Ford Escort, that I promised to my son as soon as he is old enough to drive.

I figured driving "Roll" down here, in the shape she's in, nobody would want her. So, if I lost her, hell, it ain't no big thing.

I hadn't driven my "hudley" since I got my new Benz last year, and it looked like it. Dirty outside, faded blue paint on the sides, rusted banged up back fenders, bald black wall tires, loose wires, where the radio used to be, worn seat covers and a dashboard that looked like it had been beat with a short stick. In a word; "Jelly Roll" is a wreck.

I take a chance when I stop at a red light on Central Ave and asked a cat passing in front of me, where Dupree's is located. He has that "neighborhood" groove about him, and he looked safe enough to ask, so I spoke.

"Say man, where's 42nd and Avalon," I shout out, as he nears the front of "Roll." He stops and looks at me, like I might be the man. After he checked my vibe against his, he walks over, leans down and looks me straight in the eye.

"Uh, go down three more blocks and turn right on 42nd street for about four blocks and hit a left on Avalon. You must be headed for Dupree's right? You look like it. That's the joint, if you want to hear some real jazz. Not this "smooth jazz" crap they

keep pushing on the white stations now, I'm talking 'bout real jazz, like in the old days."

I nod, I'm in agreement with him. He picks this vibe up and quickly gets in his hustle mode.

"Dig I could use a taste, could you spare a "bean." It was like he knew I understood the lingo. I reached in my shirt pocket and took out a five spot, pushed the broken window down a little bit more and handed it to him and thanked him for his directions. He smiled as he kissed the bill, holding it up in front of his eyes as he said; "Right on, my man... me and you."

He flashes a million dollar smile. He had "scored" early in the morning...and so had I. I was headed to Dupree's to play me some jazz, he was headed to the liquor store, for his first taste of the day.

A "nickel" is small change for the lead to where I had to go and I have to get there... soon. Now I knew exactly where I'm headed and the twitches in my hands start to settle down. The cat had recognized that "jazz junkie" look in me. Like they say; "Takes one to know one." I'm headed to being "cool" in a minute, I think silently to myself, as I press down on the gas heading towards 42nd street.