

...this was THE most surreal night of my life...even to this day.....sometime in the late 80's I went to see Freddie at what was then Ethel's Place in Baltimore and I got to the club just before the last tune of the first set. Freddie kicked off "Thermo" (which is a very difficult tune in Db) and he sounded incredible. The band finishes the tune and takes a break. They came back and Freddie is (even before he kicked off the tune) obviously high as shit ...I'm talking Himalaya's high okay ☺.....so, he kicks off "What is this thing called love?" really fast, I mean like quarter note equals 527 ☺.....he starts to blow coming out of the head and he's playing total shit....musical gibberish...stuff that has nothing to do with the changes AT ALL...he's looking around at the rhythm section as if it's their fault and then he jumps (yes, jumps) off the stage and goes over to the bar. The bartender fills a highball glass (yes, fills....completely to the top) with vodka and Freddie gulps it down like its water and then comes back up on stage and then starts to mess with Ralph Bowen (Tenor player) by playing at him...in his face....Ralph just stops playing and gives in to Freddie and then Freddie backs off and Larry Willis blows some choruses and they take the tune out. While watching this happen to Ralph Bowen I had no idea of what I was about to experience later on that same night. After they finished the first tune of the second set Freddie says on the mike, "Who IS this Ethel Ennis anyway?"...keep in mind he's playing the gig in HER club.....so, someone in the audience says "She can sing, she used to sing with Benny Goodman's band"....and then Freddie says, "Well, she MUST be good if she sang with Benny Goodman" as he makes this sarcastic, almost Rodney Dangerfield funny look on his face.....the audience collectively goes "ooooohhhh".....and then Freddie proceeds to take his pants off.....yeah, I know...Damn!.....but I'm serious, he pulls his pants down to just above the knees and then he get's a look on his face as if he suddenly realizes what he's doing...he pulls the pants up real quick and runs out of the club. Everyone is just looking around completely flabbergasted...I mean our minds are blown in disbelief of what had just happened. So, the band finishes playing the set and I leave to go over to what was then a jazz club called "The Closet". The great Gary Bartz was back living in Baltimore (where he's from originally) and had a steady gig at the Closet with Bob Butta-piano, Steve Williams-drums and my best friend Geoff Harper-bass. I walk into the club and Gary motions for me to come on up and play. So, I join in on whatever the tune was and I play a few choruses, Bob blows, we do some trading with Steve and we take the tune out. Gary announces to the audience that we were going to play Cedar Walton's "Firm Roots". We get into the tune and I'm blowing when something I had often joked about actually happens. My eyes are closed as I'm playing and I happen to open them and I see Freddie Hubbard standing in the front door of the club (with his arms crossed) staring at me.....I'm thinking "WTF?"...I thought I was freaking out.....but it WAS him...so I close my eyes to try to get back on track with blowing on the tune and when I stopped blowing I opened my eyes and Freddie was gone. Well, the Closet was also KNOWN for the place to get some...ah, medication.....you dig?

Freddie had going to the basement where the...ah, medication was ☺...so anyway, Bob Butta is playing and Freddie jumps up on the stage and he's playing AT ME...no shit, his bell was 3 inches from my nose and he's taunting me...trying to get me to challenge him....I just backed off because...come on, who's going to be stupid enough to try to "cut" Freddie Hubbard?...so, Freddie keeps playing (he was SO wasted at this point that nothing he played made any sense) and he's looking around at the rhythm section as if

THEY were the problem. Then suddenly he disappears again and we end the tune. Gary Bartz starts to announce the next tune and Freddie (from across the room) yells "I WANT TO HEAR THE TRUMPET PLAYER PLAY A BALLAD".....Bartz tries to ignore him but Freddie yells a second time "I WANT TO HEAR THE TRUMPET PLAYER PLAY A BALLAD....DAMMIT"...(I kid you not....this stuff actually happened)....so, I'm all nervous and shit and Bartz says, "Okay, Tom Williams will now be featured on a ballad". So we start playing "What's New", Bob plays an intro and then I come in with the first two notes and Freddie yells from across the room "GET UP IN THE MIKE"....so, I did....closed my eyes to try to keep some concentration going and after I played a couple of choruses opened my eyes and Freddie was gone. This happened sometime around '86-'88. I saw Freddie about 5 years ago at the Birchmere with that New Jazz Composers Octet group that David Weiss leads and after the gig I went up to him to just say "hey" and he actually remembered me....he said "you that mutha' fucka' from Baltimore...I remember your ass".....I'm not kidding...he actually said that really loud at the Birchmere in front of at least 50-60 people who were trying to get close enough to speak to him. Well, there's MY Freddie Hubbard story and it was a hell of a night!!!!