

Now Available for Booking:
Blues and the Empirical Truth

(or: Every Other Day I Have the Blues)

a program of 21st century blues by:

*Allen Lowe and The New Creole
Orchestra/Hubert's Museum*

special guests available:

**Darius Jones/Roswell Rudd/Ray
Anderson/Matthew Ship/Lewis Porter/Randy
Sandke/Matt Mottel**



"Lowe's CD has become my go-to album when I can't decide if I am in the mood for the Art Ensemble, the Minutemen or Blind Willie Johnson." - Internet comment



**a new approach to old blues forms; from punk rock to
bebop to Albert Ayler**

"I was absolutely astonished - it's hillbilly music but it's trans-national. Allen Lowe is one of the few musicians doing anything new today. He *is* the tradition. I'm a big fan of Allen Lowe." - **Anthony Braxton**

"Allen Lowe has made a crucial contribution to American culture, and all those who want to see our musical history whole are in his debt." - **Greil Marcus**

"So much of today's boldest and most piquant jazz is being made by a radical fringe of men and women in their late thirties or early forties...Lowe suggests both Sonny Rollins at his most jocular and Jimmy Giuffre at his most rustic...his music reflects a fullness of experience missing from the etudes of those who have made jazz the sound of no surprise."

-**Francis Davis, *The Village Voice***

"Anyone preferring live mind to dead mind (I think the phrase is Ezra Pound's) will welcome Lowe's work. "

- **Stuart Broomer, *Signals to Noise***

(Allen Lowe) extracts the most soulful sounds out of a synthesiser since Steve Wonder, composes ambient-evocative instrumentals, and songs with vernacular lyrics that stick in the mind like those of Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie, Mose Allison or Lou Reed. - **Mike Gerber, from the book *Jazz Jews***

**email: allenlowe5@gmail.com
phone:(USA): 207-899-2669
www.allenlowe.com**

...this blues project arose from jazz musician/music historian Allen Lowe's personal researches (he has just mastered and curated a 36 CD history of the blues, 1893-1959) and performance history (with Roswell Rudd/David Murray/Don Byron/Doc Cheatham/Julius Hemphill; several projects recording at the old Knitting Factory), and a brief encounter he had in 2008 with Wynton Marsalis in which Marsalis defined all minstrel/medicine/travelling show music of the early part of the 20th century as simply "racial degradation", and accused Lowe of being an academic, of viewing all of this music as merely sociology. It later occurred to Lowe that just the opposite was true - that Marsalis saw all of this (little of which he had actually listened to), from the blues to the various minstrel offshoots, in simple and schematic social terms, whereas the actual music was a much more complicated and mixed affair: of blackface, whiteface, pieces of Africa, pieces of America, and the great sonic/racial mix of American culture,

The result was *Blues and the Empirical Truth: Every Other Day I Have The Blues*, an ongoing series of compositions and recordings by Lowe and his bands, in which Lowe has tried to come face to face with not only the blues and related forms, but the deeper musical meaning of those forms. So his compositions reflect (his interpretation of) the recorded sounds of old Baptist meetings, gospel tunes, gospel tunes written for the minstrel stage, rhythm and blues and both the Delta blues and the early electrified blues that came out of Memphis and Sun Records; also, 1960s rock and roll, various strains of American poetry, punk and thrash rock, Henry Mancini, Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus, and Lennie Tristano, the related innovations of Albert Ayler, Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane; the idea of the street preacher, the field cry, the funk of James Brown, the free-form versification of Captain Beefheart, as well as the street musicians of Chicago's Maxwell Street/Jewtown section. And a few odd strains like the contemporary Heavy Metal/shredder/big-haired guitarist who so-occupies the American musical imagination; not to mention the remnants of Lowe's slightly off-kilter and largely uninformed and third-hand idea of the musical emphases of hip hop.

MORE ON BLUES AND THE EMPIRICAL TRUTH:

"I've been aware for some 20 years of Allen Lowe's multi-faceted career as a musician and scholar of American music, which has given us two unique, valuable books -- "That Devilin' Tune: A Jazz History, 1900-1950" and "American Pop: From Minstrel to Mojo On Record: 1893-1956" -- as well as two vast and lavishly annotated anthologies of recordings, also titled "That Devilin' Tune" and "American Pop," and a new and similarly vast annotated anthology of blues recordings, as well as some four recordings of his own work as bandleader, saxophonist, guitarist, and composer. While I knew that Lowe's work as a scholar and as a musician were more or less one thing, I was not fully aware of until now that his indefatigable exploration of the highways and byways of American vernacular music had fueled a remarkable explosion of personal musical creativity on his part.

Having stepped away a decade or so ago from what had long been his primary instrument, the tenor saxophone, Lowe found himself inspired to pick up the alto saxophone (and the out-moded but poignant sounding, in the right hands, C-Melody saxophone as well). Further, and inseparable from this, his scholarly work on the blues made it clear to him that the blues tradition in any number of ways was potentially quite alive and that he as a musician had great deal to say within (or perhaps better, "with") it.

The proof is Lowe's new blues project, on which his alto, C-melody and guitar work is paired with such partners as trombonist Roswell Rudd, keyboardists Matthew Shipp and Lewis Porter, and guitarist Marc Ribot. In my view, Lowe has found his instrument in the alto -- his at times near speech-like tone and phrasing is to some extent inspired by the example of Ornette Coleman but is also quite personal, commanding in its intensity, and with a to my mind undeniable sense of story-telling wit, mordant humor, and irony. The same is true of the pieces themselves, some of them communally improvised. And while one might think that 46 pieces that are blues, or are to some degree offshoots of the blues, would lead to a certain sameness, I hear a remarkable variety of moods -- which speaks of the living quirky richness of this strain in American music and of the way it has kicked an already gifted musician into another, very high gear. I feel sure that much more lies ahead for him."

-- Larry Kart, author of "Jazz in Search Of Itself" (Yale University Press, 2004)

"Allen Lowe, distinctive composer/saxophonist, put together a cross-generational instrumental ensemble made up of musicians from the New York City area and Maine. To me the core quality in the sound of this band is the result of the integration of inventive amplified guitars and synthesizer atmospheres (provided by the gifted young players from Maine) with resourceful brass and reed wind components from the Gotham scene. Lowe's writing ranges from traditional-sounding monolithic themes to quirky collaging on more recent American pop and jazz hits. This material is both familiar and challenging to players and listeners alike: its grounding as well as edgyness results from the improvised interactions of the performers. I certainly look forward to hearing more from this ensemble; the integration: fertile and positive; the potential huge."

-Roswell Rudd, jazz trombonist

ALLEN LOWE

ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT

ALOWE5@MAINE.RR.COM

207-899-2669



(Lowe with David Allen Grier)

"Angular, sly and funky, Lowe's new CD is a bona fide wake up call from the avant garde."

- Jonathan Lethem

www.allenlowe.com

"Allen Lowe has made a crucial contribution to American culture, and all those who want to see our musical history whole are in his debt." - Greil Marcus

"Allen Lowe is an American master.

I was absolutely astonished by the new CD. The CD blew me away – the compositional transitions, the liner notes – Allen Lowe is a great writer. It's hillbilly music but it's trans-national. Allen Lowe is one of the few musicians doing anything new today. He *is* the tradition. I'm a big fan of Allen Lowe and I think as a musician and a scholar he is very important and I think he is deeply misunderstood because he doesn't hate himself."

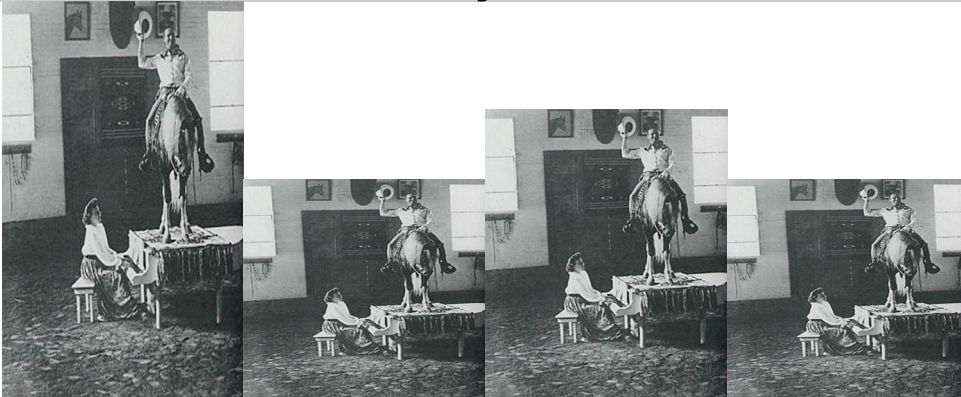
-Anthony Braxton

(Lowe) is a superb wide-ranging saxophonist, but he also plays laconically blistering blues, folk-roots and garage rock guitar and

electric banjo. He extracts the most soulful sounds out of a synthesiser since Steve Wonder, composes ambient-evocative instrumentals, and songs with vernacular lyrics that stick in the mind like those of Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie, Mose Allison or Lou Reed. Intellectually, Lowe's up there with Artie Shaw; - Mike Gerber, the book JAZZ JEWS

Lowe's CD has become my go-to album when I can't decide if I am in the mood for the Art Ensemble, the Minutemen or Blind Willie Johnson.

-Internet post on the Organissimo jazz discussion site



So much of today's boldest and most piquant jazz is being made by a radical fringe of men and women in their late thirties or early forties...Lowe suggests both Sonny Rollins at his most jocular and Jimmy Giuffre at his most rustic...his music reflects a fullness of experience missing from the etudes of those who have made jazz the sound of no surprise.

-Francis Davis

"Lowe writes great, elegant songs and than cuts the band loose inside their wild parameters...with gonzo arrangements...Lowe prods the old-school trumpeter, Doc Cheatham - who worked with Bessie Smith - schooling him as much as he's schooled by Cheatham's dignified

persona...a challenging, nurturing bandleader is a great thing to be."

-Mike Doughty



by Clifford Allen

Art critic Clement Greenberg once offered a useful explanation of the task of modernism. To paraphrase rather liberally, Greenberg wrote that a modernist work must engage and self-criticize its own basic tenets and those of its chosen medium—not as an affront to its place in the art world, but as a way to “entrench [it] more firmly in its area of competence.” In other words, the emphasis on two-dimensionality as qualities of paint and canvas are both an affirmation of and a criticism of the nature of painting.

Understanding what a painting is (not what it is “about” or “contains”) is crucial to the art of painting. Greenberg’s modernist self-criticism didn’t come out of nowhere though. It can be related to the long tradition of Jewish self-criticism, rooted in intellectualism; the study of what it means to be a Jew in order to understand one’s place in the culture and to be better-equipped to move that culture forward. Like modernism, Jewishness is a constant process of self-understanding, re-evaluation and regeneration.

What’s particularly interesting about this take on Jewishness vis-à-vis modernism is that, for guitarist, saxophonist, composer, engineer and author Allen Lowe, Jews are the first post-modernists. The idea of Jews as a rootless people, since time immemorial without a true homeland but, in spite of it all, with a strong sense of community in disparate surroundings (whether the suburbs, Brooklyn, or Maine), begets a “post-modern” ethos. In being uprooted, one also finds that, in order to continue culturally, new materials must be engaged and new connections made.

If such an idea is self-criticism on a shoestring, so be it. For example, saxophonist John Zorn’s fusing of free jazz, no-wave punk energy, film music and traditional Jewish melodies is a radical and post-structural approach to creating art while maintaining ties to one’s cultural idiom. Is this rootless condition for self-criticism one reason that jazz has had an attraction to Jews? Is the work of Zorn or Lowe that different from the Art Ensemble of Chicago’s “Great Black Music” ethos?

Questions like these might make it seem like Lowe’s *Jews In Hell: Radical Jewish Acculturation* is a concept record meant more to be thought about than listened to. Rather, this record, Lowe’s first since 1994’s *Woyzeck’s Death*, might better be thought of as his own self-criticism and summation of experiences thus far, told through the lenses of free jazz, bluesy skronk, and punk abandon.

Lowe's guitar style is itself extraordinarily fragmentary, a disjointed and dissonant, non-linear approach that seems to creep out of nowhere on the solos of "Lonesome And Dead" and imbues the bent notes and wide intervallic relationships of "Tsuris In Mind." It's not the square-wheel rhythms of Robert Pete Williams or the perverse Company-weaned antics of Eugene Chadbourne, though Lowe's musical landscape surely includes such precedents. His solo on the (sub-) title track may display a bit more logic, building from loose, raunchy blues to detuned Arto Lindsay-esque DNA madness, though the tension of escaping bar lines and rhythmic constraint is present from the beginning.

In a more jazz-based setting, there's an entirely different side of Lowe's music visible than punk-folk-blues would belie. The loose rhythms and broadly shifting cadences of his alto suggest an Eric Dolphy/Anthony Braxton approach, though his tone approximates earlier Charlie Parker disciples. In trio with Randy Sandke's trumpet and Scott Robinson's contrabass clarinet, there is a kinship with the AACM's drummer-less swing and bright, swaggering melodies.

There is a quiet honesty on the delicate "film version" of the title track ("Soundtrack Theme From The Film Jews In Hell") and "I Come From Nowhere" that makes me look forward to hearing Lowe in a purely improvisational context. Though *Jews In Hell* offers settings for improvisers like pianist Matthew Shipp (including a piano-guitar duo with Lowe on "Shiva I") and guitarist Marc Ribot, it would've been interesting, for example, to hear Lowe's own take on multi-instrumentalist Jaki Byard's post-modernism, despite the excellence with which Shipp approaches such work.

As the song titles suggest, and because there are experiential as well as philosophical underpinnings to the music, Lowe's lyrics are of major importance. However, the vocals are frequently off-mike and in some cases are hard to decipher ("Suburban Jews," an important track, is a perfect example). Sometimes, as on "Oi Death," muffled and primal atmospherics make the point clearly, but at other times one wishes for a bit more vocal clarity. Then again, Charley Patton isn't all that easy to decipher, either, though you get the *feel* of it.

Coupled with the broken rhythms, isolated phrasing and distant-thunder twang of Lowe's guitar ("Other Bodies Other Souls"), a clear psychological picture of alienation emerges—but it isn't without the affirmation of humor and wry, life-giving musicianship. Allen Lowe has, with *Jews In Hell: Radical Jewish Acculturation*, created a complex musical landscape through a summation of experiences and meditation on their integration. It's self-criticism amid satire, applied both to the musician and the craft of music making, and a vision well worth sharing in.

SIGNAL TO NOISE

...the same iconoclastic wit and intelligence that shape *That Devilin' Tune* are evident in Lowe's latest work as a musician, *Jews in Hell: Radical Jewish Acculturation*. Lowe is an accomplished saxophonist who has previously

populated his CD with performers like Roswell Rudd and Doc Cheatham, and his interests in musical history manage to inform his sometimes abrasively contemporary work. In 2001 Lowe took up guitar, and it's as a guitarist and singer of a rough-cut post-modern blues that he primarily appears here. It's raw music, a kind of alienation-celebration of the acculturation suffered by baby-boom Jews growing up in America in the 1950s and 1960s. For Lowe, no ax is too small to grind. The liner booklet has him referring to his high-school vice principal "a cretin named Floyd Kenyon." One sub-title is "All the blues you could play by now if Stanley Crouch was your uncle," while the other refers to a local Portland, Maine venue called the Space Gallery that won't give him work. The Velvet Underground are a central theme and influence, with songs about Nico and Lou Reed: "Walk on the Wild Side" turns up in "Where's Lou Reed?" with "And all the white girls go...LouLouLou LouLou..." Elsewhere Frank Zappa's "Peaches en Regalia" gets referenced in "Failure"—"Failure is my face in the mirror." Lowe summons up real power on songs like "Goyishe World," a rock-driven tune on the hoary subject of Christ-killing, and his themes and music possess more power than the petty grievances might suggest. It's a compound world populated by Doc Boggs, Blind Willie Johnson, Doc Pomus, Lenny Bruce and Delmore Schwarz—at times it feels like *Trout Mask Replica*, but done by a vastly inferior lyricist and a much better saxophonist. Marc Ribot is a guest, turning in a couple of superb unaccompanied solos on Lowe compositions, but he's also a key to the Lowe guitar style, a blues-rooted sound, but full of sudden surprise, whether it's a bend, a note choice or a sudden key shift. Matt Shipp appears as well to contribute unaccompanied piano, while there's a fine wind trio composed of Lowe on alto saxophone, Randy Sandke on trumpet and Scott Robinson on contra-bass clarinet. Their "I licked Bird's Blood" (the background description of Joe Albany might have made its way into *That Devilin' Tune*) sounds like a Dophy tune. Lowe's extended alto solos overdubbed over minimal keyboard accompaniments are sweetly luminous interludes, though the liner booklet provides darkly comic film treatments for them to accompany (the most beautiful playing occurs on "Soundtrack Theme from the Film Jews in Hell"). The liner notes possess the same interest as the end-notes to "That Devilin' Tune," managing at one point to connect Bix Beiderbecke and Dadaist word games. Anyone preferring live mind to dead mind (I think the phrase is Ezra Pound's) will welcome Lowe's work.

-Stuart Broomer

allmusic

Guide

Allen Lowe is one of the most astute jazz musicians on the planet in that he understands something primary about music: that it is part of culture, the grit and grime of it as well as the elegance and charity it can supply... Lowe's band, which includes the late trumpeter Doc Cheatham (who was in his late eighties at the time this was

recorded) and the late vanguard composer and saxophonist Julius Hemphill, have recorded a suite that employs not necessarily tango thematics, but its drama and melodic sensibilities. Lowe's saxophone playing has been deeply affected by the bandoneon of Astor Piazzolla, in addition to his many and varied jazz influences. This is not an academic suite, folks, this is some stomping, fine music played by a big band which understands more than a little about groove and rhythm. There is so much here, so many funky, gritty bumps, grinds, and shouts and so much lyrical and intervallic invention and harmonic rabble rousing, that it's useless to talk about the individual compositions. It is important to say that this is a major work, one that will hopefully continue to be performed long after the emissaries of official culture have retired to their big houses with armed guards at the gates to protect them from real-life music like this. Gritty, real, and full of humor and even an occasional vulgar note or three, is the antidote for the American malaise.

-Thom Jurek



If this period of jazz history really does belong to the repertory mavens, classicists and eclecticists, then there should be room made among these solemn culture cops for a blithe, whimsical spirit like saxophonist-bandleader Allen Lowe.

-New York Newsday

Cadence Magazine

For those unaware of Allen Lowe, it is safe to say that Lowe wears a lot of hats. Known best for his exploits as a musician, writer, composer, and engineers, he is truly someone who marches to his own beat. (In) Jews in Hell, Lowe presents his take on the Jewish experience with a broad musical program of jazz, blues, country, rock and punk.

...the main focus here, other than a few tracks, is Lowe's prickly, off-kilter attack that is definitely more D. Boon (of the rock band The Minuteman) than Jim Hall. There is a great deal of music to digest here (38 tunes over 2 cds), a stylistic potpourri with its common theme focusing on Lowe's conceptual musings both in terms of lyrics and musical content. Best yet, Lowe's lengthy libretto provides insight into his thoughts, as well as to serve as an instructive track-by-track overview.

...compositionally speaking, the program is infused with Lowe's incredible knowledge of American music history, a mix of instrumental and those containing his off-center, pitch-challenged vocalizing (which is not meant as a put down, though, as Lowe's ruminative lyrics, rather than technical prowess, is what matters here). A biting country blues, "Lonesome and Dead," opens the record, while the gorgeous murder ballad sung by Erin McKeown, "Blood on the Mountain," offer just two examples of Lowe's folk leanings. The influence of gospel is also

considerable here, with the best representation being “Gwine to Heaven (Gwine to Hebben),” though the blues are also a vital wellspring.” Instrumentally the clever madness is also potent on “Jews in Hell,” with its hockey rink organ, or the cowboy funk of ‘G Major Simplex (Cowboy Tryst-ano),” a perfect calling card for Lowe’s wooly guitar stylings.

Lowe’s incredibly varied program is all over the place, and will certainly appeal to those with a wide-open mindset. Some might call it a sloppy, disjointed mess that is rather charming after all; others might call it a compelling portrait, a soundtrack to a non-existent movie; still others might not know what to think. All things being equal, with *Jews in Hell* Lowe has given the world a document with plenty to chew on. In other words, a record that makes you think.

-Jay Collins



Lowe (with *That Devilin' Tune*) is perhaps the most rational writer to attempt a project of this subject and scope.

The personal, the political, the musical—there it all is in a package that is not so tidy as to be smug, but tight enough to withstand the jostlings and prying of dissent and rebuttal. Incorporating historical investigation (sometimes impertinent, but most questions are), discographical detective work, personal interviews, and, most crucially, often pithy and memorable musical analysis, Lowe combines the best features of the musicological and jazz critical traditions.

That Devilin' Tune is criticism of the best sort. It does not evaluate, rank, or taxonomize—it elucidates and makes relevant to the way we perceive the totality of the music, the way we recreate these sounds in our own imaginations. It is a perhaps the first real jazz morphology; in *That Devilin' Tune*, jazz is a musical attitude, a loose alliance of very different kinds of information, that manages to cohere and flow through any available circuit, and across any geographical and anthropological borders.

Perhaps the most notable aspect of this book is that Lowe returns to the notion that jazz is a popular music, with all the wonderfully fascinating and difficult complexities that entails. His consideration of the music's growth and transformation during the first half of the 20th Century yanks jazz out of its isolation as "art music", an aesthetic phenomenon only, without confusing the music's socio-historical context for its actual and sole meaning.

-Joe Milazzo



No one has ever attempted anything like (*American Pop From Minstrel to Mojo*) before . . . these are the streams and tributaries that have fed the river of American music in this century,

and it is an amazing experience to sit back and listen to them as they flow together.

- Elijah Wald

Slate

These nine CDs (*That Devilin' Tune*) represent just one-quarter of a monumental four-volume compilation curated by music historian Allen Lowe, which seeks to recontextualize early jazz history, and with it the history of American pop music. (And, come to think of it, the history of America, period.) Lowe's bumptious, delightful, danceable mix of early pop, ragtime, jug band, and blues recordings presents a vastly expanded and more complicated picture of American musical roots, discovering hot rhythm and jazz-style improvisation in some unlikely places, like 19th-century marching bands and the "coon song" performances of vaudevillians like Stella Mayhew and Len Spencer. An essential historical document; also, a party-starter.

Jody Rosen

YALE UNIVERSITY Dept. Anthropology

The Center for Jazz Studies at Columbia University

I am truly astonished. When I first heard Lowe's previous collection, American Pop from Minstrel to Mojo, I thought that it was the finest body of American pop music that I'd ever heard – both in terms of sound quality and choice of music. But now (with *That Devilin' Tune*) he's exceeded himself. This new collection is even richer and sounds even better. I know that I'm parroting Francis Davis but he's right: Allen Lowe has "forced us to rethink everything we 'know' about jazz" - but I'll add that he's also forced us to question what we know about pop, country, and the blues as well. He has historicized pop music brilliantly...and the fact that he did it, and not one of the "big" recording companies who are sitting on treasures of American music, is all the more astonishing. This collection should be in every household, or at the least in every library and school. Bravo! Encore!"

-John Szwed, *Yale University*, author, *Space is the Place: The Life and Times of Sun Ra* and *So What: The Life of Miles Davis*



(in *That Devilin' Tune*) the discs and prose complement each other brilliantly...Lowe does such a good job dealing with the popular music that jazz came from and sorting out the various genres...he never lets you forget the big picture...that jazz and pop are constantly in a state of flux. Lowe's choices are ...invaluable...(and of) interest to followers of...blues, R&B, Western Swing, in addition to mainstream jazz. Let's hope he can find an audience to support his admirable efforts.

-Harvey Pekar

Allen Lowe
allenlowe5@gmail.com
207-899-2669

BIO

Who is Allen Lowe, and why is he doing all these projects and why have you never heard of him?

Allen Lowe grew up in Massapequa Park, New York in the late 1950s and early 1960s. He started playing saxophone in jazz groups at age 15 and had some of his first jazz experiences, as a teenager, at the legendary Lower East Side Slugs, seeing Ornette Coleman's band and Charles Mingus, among others. Coming of age at the end of the 1960s he also saw groups like Super Session (Mike Bloomfield, Al Kooper), the Grateful Dead (at their first Central Park concert in 1967), the Mothers of Invention (at Columbia University, 1968). Not to mention Louis Armstrong at Freedomland, circa 1964. When his young band (with guitarist Joel Perry) was booked for a festival in Bedford Stuyvesant circa 1968, they turned out to be one of the opening acts for the comeback appearance of Eubie Blake.

After he dropped out of college in the middle 1970s Lowe returned to New York City, at a time when jazz was in something of an eclipse. He befriended a few veterans of the bebop era, like Al Haig, Curly Russell, Bill Triglia, Percy France, Dick Katz, Dave Schildrkaut and Tommy Potter. He even spent an odd afternoon with Lenny Tristano at Tristano's house in Jamaica Estates, became good friends with Barry Harris and Bob Neloms, got to know Jaki Byard while writing for a Boston music publication, and, in this same capacity, had some strange adventures one afternoon in Boston with Art Pepper.

Lowe had long since stopped performing, and by the time he picked up the saxophone again in the early 1980s he was living in New Haven Connecticut (by way of a brief attendance at the Yale School of Drama), where he became active in the local jazz scene with musicians like the bassist Jeff Fuller and drummer Ray Kaczynski. Originally an unreconstructed bebopper, he gradually became more and more interested in what was then known as "new music," and began composing, performing and recording more actively in the new idiom. He was in contact with musicians like Julius Hemphill, Don Byron, David Murray, Doc Cheatham, Roswell Rudd, Loren Schoenberg, Jimmy Knepper, Randy Sandke, and others, all of whom subsequently played or recorded with Lowe's bands. During this time Lowe recorded 2 compact discs at the Knitting Factory (with Murray, Cheatham, Hemphill, Schoenberg) as well as sessions for Enja and Music and Arts (with Ben Goldberg, Randy Sandke, Roswell Rudd) - and on the Music and arts Album he performed what turned out to be the first jazz interpretation of Blind Willie Johnson's **Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Ground**.

In 1990 Lowe began working for the Mayor of New Haven, and became Director of Jazz New Haven, the yearly summer free outdoor festival held on the New Haven Green. He ran the festival for three years, booking musicians like Tony Williams, Max Roach, Jaki Byard, Tito Puente, Freddie Hubbard, Joe Lovano, Randy Brecker, Ray Barretto, and James Moody.

In 1996 he moved to South Portland Maine, and what followed was a period of involuntary musical retirement. There was little musical work, no interest in his music, and a local arts scene dominated by folk music, retro-Indie Rock, and people under the age of 30. Out of sheer boredom he took up the guitar and began composing again, and also taught himself the technique of sound restoration. During this time Lowe wrote 4 books - ***American Pop from Minstrel to Mojo*** (a survey of American music from 1896-1946, published by Cadence and issued with a 9 CD set); ***That Devilin' Tune: A Jazz History 1900-1950*** (published by Music and Arts and issued with a 36 CD set); ***God Didn't Like It: Electric Hillbillies, Singing Preachers, and the Beginning of Rock and Roll, 1950-1970*** (unpublished); ***The Lost Generation: Jazz of the 1950s*** (unpublished); and then, most recently, ***Really the Blues? A Blues History, 1893-1959*** (with a 36 CD set and 80,000 words of notes). For all of these that were issued with compact discs sets Lowe did all mastering and sound restoration, and also began doing freelance sound work, for Rhino, Shout, Rykodisc, Sony, Michael Feinstein, Terry Gross (Fresh Air), Venus Records, and others. The last two historical reissue projects he has done (***That Devilin' Tune*** and ***Really the Blues?***) remain as two of the largest independent projects ever done on the history of American music, and were completed without any outside, institutional support.

As a result of all of this one reviewer called Lowe "the Harry Smith of the 21st century." Greil Marcus remarked that "Lowe has made a substantial contribution to American culture, and all of those who want to see our musical history whole are in his debt." John Szwed commented that "Allen Lowe has forced us to rethink everything we 'know' about jazz - but I'll add that he's also forced us to question what we know about pop, country, and the blues as well. He has historicized pop music brilliantly...and the fact that *he* did it, and not one of the 'big' recording companies who are sitting on treasures of American music, is all the more astonishing. This collection should be in every household, or at the least in every library and school. Bravo! Encore!"

In the meantime, Lowe began doing yearly lectures on various musical topics and moderating panels at the Rutgers Institute of Jazz Studies and the annual EMP Pop Conference in Seattle, Washington. He also lectured for the United States Information Agency in Europe. His books were used in courses at both Harvard and Yale, and entries appeared on him in the New Grove Dictionary of Jazz and The Penguin Guide to Jazz on Compact Disc. There is also an entire chapter on him in the book *Bebop and Nothingness*, by Francis Davis (Schirmer:1996).

Finally, around 2001, Lowe began playing and recording again, on both guitar and alto saxophone. In 2007 he recorded a disc with Matthew Shipp, Lewis Porter, Randy Sandke, Marc Ribot, Scott Robinson, and Erin McKeown. A mix of jazz, punk rock, and American roots music, it received little national notice, but high praise from the likes of Anthony Braxton ("Allen Lowe is a great writer. It's hillbilly music but it's trans-national. Allen Lowe is one of the few musicians doing anything new today. He *is* the tradition. I'm a big fan of Allen Lowe and I think as a musician and a scholar he is very important and I think he is deeply misunderstood because he doesn't hate himself") and led to Lowe's inclusion in a book called *Jazz Jews* (Mike Gerber, Five Leaves Publications) in which it was advised that Lowe "extracts the most soulful sounds out of a synthesizer since Steve Wonder, composes ambient-evocative instrumentals, and songs with vernacular lyrics that stick in the mind like those of Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie, Mose Allison or Lou Reed." An internet fan commented that "Lowe's *CD* has become my go-to album when I can't decide if I am in the mood for the Art Ensemble, the Minutemen or Blind Willie Johnson," and writer Jonathan Lethem commented that "angular, sly and funky, Lowe's new CD is a bona fide wake up call from the avant garde."

An uncomfortable encounter in 2008 with Wynton Marsalis led to Lowe's current project/obsession, the reissue ***Really the Blues? A Blues History 1893-1959*** (see above) as well as a recording project and New York concert of his own music based on the blues and its various related forms. He has been recording in the last year with Matthew Shipp, Marc Ribot, Lewis Porter, Randy Sandke, and Roswell Rudd, and is currently rehearsing a new Portland-based group in a series of blues and blues variations that also touch on gospel and other forms of street-music.

