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They pick it up like it's an extension of their body.

As I have written before, music influences me very much as a person and trial lawyer, particularly jazz music, in that great jazz involves being in the moment, improvising (in a team, no less), performing without any sweat other than the sweat of the brow, and seeing no barriers to great performance other than sweat and more sweat. Miles Davis was one of the most influential jazz musicians, and a fellow trumpeter at that. He identified and brought on some of the most amazing talent, later saying in the above YouTube-broadcast interview that talented musicians "pick [their instrument] up like it's an extension of their body." Similarly for trial lawyers, they need to feel at home with clients, before judges and juries, with opponents, in the investigation field, and, for criminal defense lawyers, in the jails, prisons and lockups. As I googled for follow-up information on what led great jazz pianist Ramsey Lewis to co-host on a so-called smooth jazz radio station -- jazz is not about smooth; it is about expressing the musician's deepest emotions and all five senses -- that has too much fluff and non-jazz music, the station's website showed this great quote from Miles: "Do not fear mistakes- there are none." Of course, that does not mean it is okay to live life like a bull in a china shop, but does mean that the well-lived life involves accepting the possibility of failures along the path of working for success. It is a variation on the theme of t'ai chi master Cheng Man Ch'ing's admonition to invest in loss, which did not mean to seek loss, but does mean, once again, that losses are an inevitable part of the path towards success. Similarly, as my friend Trudy Morse says: "Never an accident;" everything happens for a purpose. Miles, himself, suffered numerous losses on his successful path. He battled heroin, and evidently won his battle. He went into several years of retirement in the late 1970's, from a "combination of bad health, cocaine use, and lack of inspiration," which may help explain why I did not much enjoy his performance in 1975 at a jazz festival in Newport, Rhode Island (but at the same time, I had not yet come to appreciate Miles's mastery in Bitches Brew, which ultimately catapulted him even higher as a positively influential musician). Looking askance at some of Miles's pop music from the 1980's, I did not give him a chance right until today to know if I liked any of his other post-retirement music, but still like just about everything I have heard him play from before his 1970's retirement. I saw Miles Davis a second and final time around 1983, sitting nearby me in the audience of a Broadway musical, with a golden cane, walking regally (in a good sense) with his wife Cicely Tyson. Experiencing Miles and Cicely Tyson that evening meant much more to me than anything happening on the stage below. Jon Katz. ADDENDUM: Correcting the last paragraph above, it turns out that June 1986 was the last time I saw Miles live, at the 1986 Amnesty International Conspiracy of Hope concert at New Jersey's Meadowlands. Here is a video clip of his performance, with Santana. Either I did not recognize Miles from the distance of my seat, or, more likely, I just wanted to forget what would have been a forgettable performance for me, both by Miles and Santana. The concert, overall, was amazing, capped off by the Police, back together, and U2 at the end, with both bands giving it their all. Unfortunately for Joni Mitchell, she was put onstage by surprise -- not even having been listed on the concert lineup -- immediately following the Police and when everyone expected U2. Talk about dashed hopes for so many in the audience, to the point that, pathetically, some audience members on the football field in front of the stage hummed water balloons at her. Back to Miles, see these two "I Remember Miles" clips here and here, including Dizzy Gillespie's fascinating talk about Miles. Beyond talking about music, Miles discusses being harassed at various times in ways he perceived as racist. Streetwise, he advises to walk towards the person about to throw a punch, which will cause the assailant to step back. Miles acknowledged the ugliness in life, while transcending it at the same time.

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