

Vibraphone Player and Composer Don Elliott

From Times Wire Services

WESTON, Conn.—Don Elliott, the featured vibraphonist with the George Shearing Quintet at the height of that group's popularity in the 1950s, died last week at his home here. He was 57 and died of cancer.

Elliott, who also appeared and recorded with the Benny Goodman Sextet and Buddy Rich's quartet, wrote musical scores for television commercials and films. His work with Quincy Jones for the films "The Pawnbroker" and "In the Heat of the Night" is considered among the best jazz the movies ever produced.

In those films, Elliott's voice was mixed and dubbed on the sound tracks. In one other recording session (Roberta Flack's "Smiling"), as many as 20 of his multivoiced over-dubs were used.

Elliott also was a skilled electronics technician and operated his own recording studios, where he made several award-winning commercials.

He was featured vibraphonist with the Shearing Quintet at the time of its biggest hit, "Lullaby of Birdland" in 1950, and in addition played the trumpet and mellophone, an instrument similar to a French horn in which the sound is projected to the front. Elliott invented the fluegelbone, a cross between a fluegelhorn and a trombone.

On Broadway he composed and arranged for the musical "A Thurber Carnival," in 1960.

He was president of New England Jazz Society and, although ill, appeared at the Westport Town Hall in a special concert on June 10.