



DelRay Ballroom could be Lincoln music stop

By Tom Ineck

In Lincoln's venue-starved environment, it is especially exciting to witness the emergence of the classy DelRay Ballroom as a possible site for local, regional and even national music acts.

Located at 817 R St. in the historic Haymarket District of downtown Lincoln, the DelRay has offered occasional live music for more than two years, but only recently was the former storefront coffee house transformed into a swank jazz lounge with full bar service and appropriately hip décor, including abstract paintings by Lincoln artist Bob Hall.

The dreams and aspirations of the DelRay owners and managers go well beyond even these improvements.

Further back in the huge former warehouse are a dance studio and a full-sized ballroom. A pastry and catering service add to the eclectic mix. The team of business associates includes Shelley Brackhan, owner and instructor of the Dance Directive studio; Michael Galloway, the operator and manager of the front area; and Richard Sullivan,

sound engineer, deejay and resident music expert.

In a recent interview, Sullivan and Galloway spoke enthusiastically about the DelRay's potential as a live music venue.

Best known to Lincolnites as a longtime musician and songwriter, Sullivan speaks with authority and personal knowledge of the business of making (and selling) music to the public. From the mid-1970s to the mid-'90s, he was active in local bands that included the South Street Shakers, Pinky Black and the Excessives, The Gears and Blonde Waltz.

Raised on Elvis, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, The Beatles and The Rolling Stones, he describes himself as "an old rock 'n' roller," but he's also dabbled in the blues and country music.

Sullivan's still writing songs for some future recording, but lately he spends much of his time and energy at the DelRay Ballroom and dance studio, where he is sound engineer, deejay and music archivist

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Photo by Tom Ineck

Richard Sullivan in DelRay



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Prez Sez

Happy man celebrates marriage, gains family

By Butch Berman

My dear readers,

Of all the “Prez Sez” letters I’ve written to you within the last eight-plus years, this is the first comin’ at ya from a truly happy man. As stated in our last publication, yes, I did get married on May 30 to the most beautiful, wonderful woman I’ve ever known. I’m speaking, of course, of my lovely, newly wed bride, Grace Gandu.

After being single for more than 20 years, we tied the knot at Grace’s house with as many of our loved ones, family and friends as we could muster on that hot, blustery afternoon. Besides the abundance of love between us, the real main event of the whole affair was reuniting Grace many members of her family from Nigeria. Considering the difficulty of such a task (we’re talkin’ eight brothers and sisters, assorted nieces, nephews and cousins) with the world in such a mess these troubled times, we had our doubts. Still, her sisters Ruth and Lois, Lois’ young son, Shayet, and brother, Simon, got visas to make their long journey to the United States. Happy happy joy joy big time, and HEY...I gained an incredible family, too.



Photo by Rich Hoover

Butch Berman and Grace Sankey Berman

My dear friend and head legal consultant from the Cline Williams law firm, Dan Stogsdill (a lay minister to boot) married us in a very jazzy ceremony, with even a jazzier reception to follow. Jimmy Akpan, who introduced me to Grace, and my legal right-hand man and great confidant Tony Rager (also from Cline Williams) were groomsmen, and two BMF consultants were on hand—New York City Latin percussionist Norman Hedman stood up for me, and San Francisco record store maven (Jack’s Record Cellar) and old

time best pal Wade Wright did himself proud as my best man.

Lincoln’s finest jazz duo, John Carlini on piano and saxophonist Bill Wimmer provided the non-recorded music, and a beautiful recorded piece sung by Grace’s youngest sister, Kaniyang, was brought from Africa. After the ceremony, everyone attending munched hungrily at the great spread laid out at Grace’s by our dear mutual friend, Monica Schwarz. Now onward to the beautiful Hazel Abel Park, where our wedding fotogs Roger and Nikki Bauman snapped away, creating a magnificent collage of photos, ranging from the bride and groom getting ready to the ceremony itself and the reception. Nikki did a grand job all day just helping to direct traffic.

The reception itself was a work of art, a totally jazzy affair at the lovely Fireman’s Hall with a handpicked band of dear friends, all from KC except Norman Hedman. Dig this...Ahmad Alaadeen, Gerald Spaits, Russ Long, Stan Kessler, Joe Cartwright, Ray DeMarchi and Norman. Swinging,



Photo by Rich Hoover

Simon Sankey and Butch Berman



Photo by Rich Hoover

*Ruth and Lois Sankey
with Grace and Shayet*

man, swinging! My good buddy, and numero uno wine guy, Kevin Meier, turned us on to the best caterer we've ever experienced. Many thanks to Kim Morock and her husband, whose business Tastefully Yours simply rocked. Everyone's girl Friday, Kay Davis from Cline Williams coordinated it all, making our wedding a splendid, heart-warming experience for Grace and me, her family and the 350 guests who showed up from all over the world and coast to coast.

We feel very fortunate to have such great friends. Help us relive some of these memories with our photo gallery included in this issue. Also check

out Nebraska's former First Lady and current scribe Ruth Thone's heart-rending story on us in the Neighborhood Extra section of the Lincoln Journal Star dated Aug. 24. Truly poignant.

We got married on a Friday, and we started up with this year's Jazz in June series the following Tuesday. No rest for the wicked, but remember jazz will always follow love. Even though Tom Ineck has covered the whole festival in this edition of *Jazz*, please let me ruminate on the proceedings for awhile.

The BMF has been getting more involved with Jazz in June since we showcased the wunderkind Russian piano marvel Eldar Djangirov and his trio (bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Todd Strait) three summers ago. We've been involved with the presenting and booking of the various jazz acts and other musical matters ever since.

This year my longtime friend and groomsman Norman Hedman brought his fabulous Latin group Tropique to Lincoln to kick off the season. Norman gave the throng of jazz fanatics a preview of his upcoming CD "Because I Can" that the BMF is helping to produce. One of the Hedman tunes, "Angel of the Night," was inspired by the romance that Grace and I ignited

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Photo by Rich Hoover

Emissary for Ephraim Sambo family of Nigeria, Wade Wright, Butch Berman, Dan Demuth, Tony Rager, Patti Demuth, Norman Hedman and Jimmy Akpan.



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Trustee: Butch Berman
Consultants: Dan Demuth, Norman Hedman, Steve Irwin, Gerald Spaits and Wade Wright

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nearly two years ago while Norman was in town. Sung on the CD by James "D-Train" Williams, who was unable to appear, Sting's backup vocalist Ada Dyer tore the place up with her rendition. Grace's sister Ruth Sankey, who operates an African dance studio for children called Space 2000 in Nigeria, performed a traditional native dance behind Tropique's infectious rhythms. In all, it was a grand night to behold.

The second week's performance was the return of saxophone wizard Greg Abate and his multi-talented quartet. Greg's a swell guy, and killer player. His band, consisting of my former Jamey Aebersold piano teacher and pal Phil DeGreg on keyboards (admirably filling in for James Will-



*Monica Schwarz and
Ruth Ann Nahorny*



Grace and Butch with Jim Russell of Holdrege, Grace's surrogate father

iams), the totally unique and one-of-a-kind cat, bass powerhouse Harvie S and legendary percussion master Billy Hart, wowed the crowd. My enjoyment of the whole affair was, unfortunately, slightly marred by the crass behavior of Mr. Hart, who bullied, put down and treated all those who tried to assist him like crap. I publicly apologize to drum wrangler Tom Brogan for Mr. Hart's cruelty towards him. I still respect his knowledge and extraordinary chops and will always treasure Hart's recorded work.

The university's fab trumpeter and educator Darryl White booked his own band from Denver with KC

reedmen Gerald Dunn and one of my personal faves, Bobby Watson. They knocked me out with their exquisite sets for our third concert.

Last, but definitely not least, local musician and part owner of Dietze Music House, Ted Eschliman, introduced a new act to me. I'm speaking of jazz mandolin virtuoso, Chicagoan Don Stiernberg and his terrific "jazzgrass" foursome. They are super pickers and great guys who endeared themselves to all present. Ted, by the way, was added to the Jazz in June mix this year as a helpful liaison between me, the musicians and the Jazz in June staff.

Head honcho, Martha Florence passed her torch to the new Mr. Big, Doug Campbell. He seems like a nice chap, and we all wish him well. The momentum behind this festival the past few years is mounting, and the plans for 2004 are underway even as we speak. The BMF is proud to announce that we will be sponsoring Eldar Djangirov again to spearhead next year's really big show. Eldar is 16 now, and his incredible musicianship keeps rising and rising. He'll bring plenty copies of his new CD, "Handprints," to sell and autograph for his multitude of fans. Again, many thanks to Martha for her hard work



Grace, Butch, Tom Taylor and Blade Wiederspan

Photo by Gayle Ebel

Photo by Gayle Ebel

Photo by Gayle Ebel



Doug Campbell, Ted Eschliman, Martha Florence, Tony Rager, Butch Berman and Grace Sankey Berman

Photo by Rich Hoover

and efforts. I hope she'll stick around as special consultant for years to come.

Well, with Jazz in June behind us, Grace and I readied ourselves for our traveling Midwestern jazzy honeymoon with stops in Chicago, Kansas City and Council Bluffs, Iowa, in that order. With the massive heat wave plaguing our usual hot spots, we shelved our original plan to visit the famed Canyon Ranch in Tucson, Ariz., and "stay cool" closer to home.

Other memorable moments to mention included co-producing and playing piano on Lincoln's own fabled punk-rocker Jim Jacobi's upcoming CD release; fun, exciting gigs at the Zoo Bar with my old bandmate Charlie Burton and his Dorothy Lynch Mob; and starting a house band duo with former band mate from the Roadside Attraction days, Richard Sullivan, at the new DelRay Ballroom. More news on all of this in our next edition of *Jazz*, in January, as everything evolves. To find out more about Richard and his partner, dance instructor Shelley Brackhan, see Tom's story.

I've acquired a couple of new jazz cat buddies within the past few months. Thanks to New York trumpeter and pal John McNeil (see Tom's CD review) I had a ball with Frank Tafuri, whose new jazz label, OmniTone, is based in his hometown of Brooklyn, N.Y. He has a marvel-

ous catalog of players like Mr. McNeil, the pianist/vibe duo of Frank Kimbrough and Joe Locke, and saxophonist Mike Lee to name a few. (See Tom's piece on OmniTone).

Next, KC keyboard expert from the Westport Art Ensemble, Roger Wilder, turned me on to his lifelong friend, Rob Scheps. Rod now lives his Portland, Ore., also has much history with our fave drummer in Portland, Todd Strait, and is a mean reed artist in his own right. Rod was artist-in-residence with the Lied Center in Nebraska City, rang me up, and we had a gas, too. Besides putting finishing touches on his upcoming CD, Rob appeared at the Blue Room in KC Sept. 17. He will perform here with BMF sponsorship at P.O. Pears on Jan. 22. Don't miss it.

While on the subject of Pears, I hope you caught KC's out-of-sight supergroup Interstring there Oct. 16. It consists of guitar dudes Danny Embrey and Rod Fleeman (these guys are always ON FIRE!) and long-time killer rhythm section featuring bassist Bob Bowman and drummer Todd Strait. This is the BMF's first P.O. Pears event to kick off another season working with Dean Haist's fine musical enterprise, Arts Incorporated, and Pears' excellent staff.

Like a solo that goes on too long, I'm nearly outta here. Oh yeah, recommended reading for you true jazz

buffs: "Good Vibes" by veteran vibraphone pro Terry Gibbs with Cary Ginell (Studies in Jazz, No. 44). You can order this through your favorite bookseller or Scarecrow Press Inc. toll free at 1-800-462-6420. You'll laugh out loud, cry and swoon through every chapter and not be able to put this book down.

A little bit of late-breaking news has occurred since I started this letter. I got a sweet call from one beautiful dame the other day. Jane Jarvis, one of the great, world-class musicians (her specialty is piano...of course), has moved back to the Big Apple from her home in Cocoa Beach, Fla., for permanent residency. She sounded great, sez hello to everyone she knows here and is keeping very busy. A former organist for the Mets, she recently was asked back to play at Shea Stadium. I love that woman.

Another female I'm very fond of (and also a grand pianist and educator) is New Yorker (the Bronx) Dr. Valerie Capers and her crackerjack quintet. On Sept. 21, they performed their third concert in the last few years at Heckman Hall on the Doane College campus in Crete, Nebraska, about 20 miles from Lincoln. (Read Bill Wimmer's account of this swinging evening.) They were so good the first time I saw 'em, and they keep getting better each and every time. The BMF has pledged its efforts to support an artistic endeavor with this talented lady at the start of 2005. I can't wait!!

Last, but certainly not least is the return of Lincoln's own saxophone star, Andrew Vogt, who now lives in Denver and has just put out his first CD (read Tom's review). There's lots of cool stuff to look forward to, and best wishes to all.

Have a great holiday season, God bless you all, and...later,

Butch Berman

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for the dance instruction.

Galloway, who recently moved back to the Midwest from Seattle after 22 years in the Pacific Northwest, once worked at Lincoln's famed Zoo Bar and managed McGuffey's, a local pub known for its serious jazz policy, with weekly jams and occasional appearances by Jay McShann and other big-name artists.

During a five-year period during the 1980s, Galloway operated a 1,400-seat rock club in Portland, Ore., featuring everyone from Iggy Pop to Miles Davis.

"It was kind of the advent of MTV and the one-hit wonders, so we had a lot of those come through," he recalled. He also operated a couple of clubs in Seattle's Pioneer Square district.

Galloway was attracted by the DelRay's location, in Lincoln's most celebrated retail and pedestrian district and next door to the new Haymarket parking garage.

He has installed a baby grand piano in the DelRay's front lounge

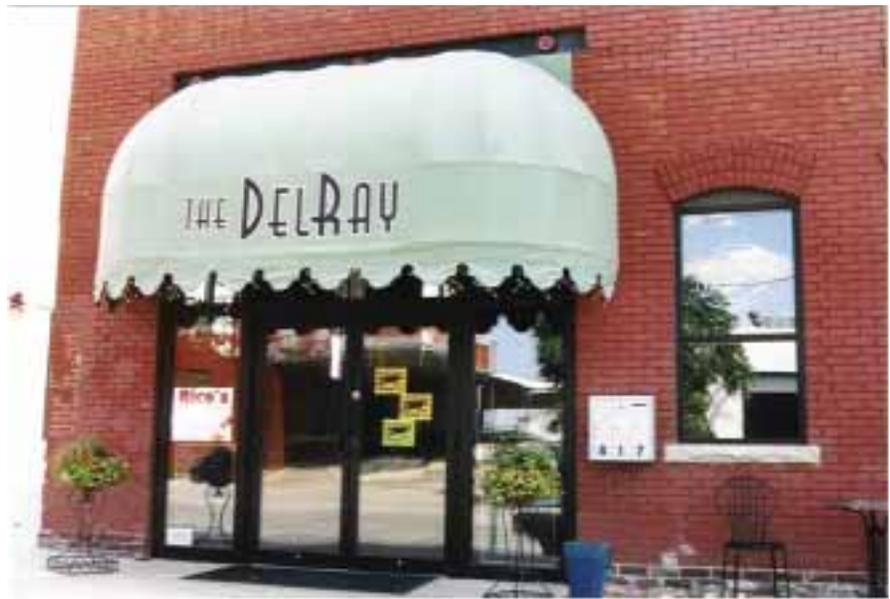


Photo by Tom Ineck

The DelRay Ballroom, 817 R St., promises great things for live music scene.

and hired Lincoln jazz pianist John Carlini to play several nights a week.

"Eventually, we've talked about possibly bringing in some nationals, and it won't be just jazz, but jazz is probably one of the ways we're leaning," he said. The ballroom capacity is around 325 seated and 700 standing, making it large enough for a successful run at some

big-name artists.

Midwest Sound designed the six-speaker DelRay sound system, with individual volume controls to fit any occasion. The lighting also is totally adjustable by rheostats.

Initial plans are to have Carlini play solo from 6-8 p.m. most weekdays, with occasional local groups performing later in the evening, probably 9-11 p.m.

"It's great to have Richard here to know all the musicians," Galloway said. "That learning curve can take you quite a while when you go into a new town. I'm counting heavily on Richard to help me find those gems that you have here in Lincoln."

BMF president and longtime Lincoln rock guitarist and keyboard player Butch Berman is among the musicians who Sullivan has tapped to perform in upcoming weeks and months, as the DelRay builds its clientele and shapes a music policy that can lead to success.

It's a success that all Lincoln music fans should anticipate and support with their patronage.



Photo by Tom Ineck

Lincoln favorite John Carlini plays the new DelRay Ballroom piano in the lounge several nights a week. Owners hope to expand the evening schedule with local and regional music artists.

Travel Story

Chicago inspires Windy City musings

By Butch Berman

CHICAGO, Ill.-I hadn't flown the not-so-friendly skies in more than eight years, and after 9/11 I thought to myself, "No way!" I guess I didn't know Grace Gandu then.

After marrying my gorgeous bride May 30, I figured I might have to eat those words. With the Southwest undergoing the worst heat wave of the summer, we changed our minds about Canyon Ranch and decided to make that a winter excursion. I didn't want to disappoint Grace and ruin our honeymoon plans by not flying somewhere else, so we opted on Chicago as a perfect choice for lovers (like us), jazz fans (like us), food and wine connoisseurs (like us) and baseball fans (well, me). So, I dusted off the rust from my wings and...up, up and away!

Usually the ride to and from airports is the scariest part of flying, and our cab experiences in Chicago were no exception. The neatest thing about all of the drivers, hotel bellhops and maids this trip is that most of them were from Nigeria (Grace's home country), Ethiopia or neighboring areas, so Grace could talk about their native homelands and in some cases speak in her tribal tongue (Hausa).

In the old days I used to love to stay at the Blackstone Hotel on South Michigan Drive because Joe Segal



Photo by Grace Sankey Berman

Butch Berman in Chicago

housed his famed Jazz Showcase there. Well that establishment is now used as permanent dwelling condos, so due to location we opted for the Chicago Hilton right next door. When built in 1927, it was either the world's or the United States' (I forget which) largest hotel. We're so used to the likes of KC's Historic Suites, or the Embassy Suites anywhere else, that the Hilton's rather small room could have been confining to us. However, since it was our honeymoon...you get the picture.

Cozy's cool, too, and we had a beautiful lakeside view. The Hilton is ran like a city unto itself with all of our needs handled perfectly and professionally including speedy and tasty room service, complete post office service, great gym, pool and massages available and the best concierge I've ever dealt with. Donald Crossley is "De Man" of the hour, making me want to consider staying there again just to utilize his fab connections and

expertise in getting the most out of what's happening in the Windy City. He copped us eighth row center tickets at a decent price for "The Lion King," booked the historic Chicago's First Lady Architectural boat tour down the Chicago River, and got us reservations at one of Chicago's best five-star restaurants, Speggia's, in a

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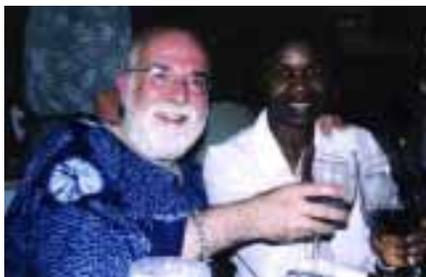


Photo by Cory Biggerstaff

Butch and Grace toast Chicago.



Photo by Butch Berman

Cory Biggerstaff



Musicians Mike Kocour, Kelly Sill and Joel Spencer

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flash. (Thanks to my dear friends Daniel and Elizabeth Nelson for telling us about this spectacular eatery.) He also provided us with city maps and tips to make our trip even more enjoyable. What a guy!

Other top-flight places to dine are Trader Vic's at the Palmer House Hotel, the Cape Cod Room at the beautiful Drake Hotel, and Pete Miller's steak house (with great live jazz and an incredible wine list consisting of many of the finest California cabernet sauvignons of 1997). Pete's joint is located in Evanston, Ill., near DePaul University, where our host for the evening, former Lincolnite and bassist Cory Biggerstaff now resides, gigs and attends classes. He introduced me to the excellent piano trio playing that night. Pianist Mike Kocour, bass player Kelly Sill and drummer Joel Spencer are a terrific group and super nice cats to hang and chat with. Maybe I'll try to bring them in to P.O. Pears sometime down the line.

We also dug the amazing Blue Man Group, performing at the Briar Street Theatre on North Halsted Street near where the old Chess Records studio stood. I can't say enough about this over-the-top, rockin' performance



Roy Haynes and Terence Blanchard at Joe Segal's Showcase in Chicago

art organization and their stellar show. If you can't catch them here, they have a road show touring the country right now, as well as semi-permanent "homes" in New York City, Boston and Las Vegas. Don't miss this rather unusual super-group!

Another point of interest to recommend is going to Wrigley Field. I'm a die-hard Giants fan, but seeing the Cubbies at this real grass ballpark is totally worth it. By the way, San Francisco kicked their butts when we were there.

Chicago has many world-class museums. We took in the breathtaking Art Institute of Chicago, marveled at the "Eternal Egypt" at the Field Museum and loved every minute of attending the Shedd Aquarium.

Photo by Butch Berman

This story is taking on epic proportions, so I'd best get back to the jazzy stuff, and you can't get any jazzier than dropping in at my favorite Chicago haunt, Joe Segal's Jazz Showcase. Now relocated on Grand Avenue between Deerborn and Clark, the Showcase has been a Chicago landmark for many years. Similar to New York's Village Vanguard, the room carries mucho jazz history, has excellent acoustics and has housed every main-event bebopper in the biz that you'd ever want to hear and see.

Joe just won Downbeat magazine's lifetime achievement award, and deservedly so. He can be a bit of a crusty character at times, but his heart is in the right place. This man truly lives and breaths jazz, and his club almost serves as a shrine for his beloved hero, Charlie Parker. If you've spent nearly 50 years in the bar business, you might get a little grouchy at times, but I really dig this hip old cat. Let me tell you all about the two super-groovy shows we attended on our vacation.

First of all, way before our trip, I got on Joe's web-site to check out the calendar. I smiled to myself when I discovered that we'd be most fortunate to catch the immortal talents of drummer Roy Haynes and bebop clarinetist Buddy DeFranco with their respected bands back to back. Wow!

So Grace and I popped in, said hi to Joe at the door and proceeded inside. It seems the air-conditioning

Photo by Butch Berman



Joe Segal at the Showcase

Photo by Butch Berman



Buddy DeFranco at the Showcase.

unit that evening was on the blink, but even when Roy kidded the audience about the heat, he and his band simply smoked. Backed most admirably by piano player Martin Bejarama, (the only name from his group I'm not sure about as we forgot to cop a poster on the way out) bassist John Sullivan, and the remarkable saxophonist Marcus Strickland. They played their asses off behind the one-and-only percussion king, Mr. Haynes, who at age 79 could

pass for a man in his 50s. He was, and still is, one of the all-time great rhythm machines in the business.

The big surprise of the night was the addition of genius trumpeter Terence Blanchard. It seems film guru and my current favorite living director Spike Lee was showing clips from his wonderful flicks the next night at the beautiful Symphony Hall (yup, we went to that tremendous concert, too) with a 20-piece orchestra led by Blanchard, along with the extraordinary vocalists Mavis Staples, Gerald LaVert and newcomer Belai.

Anyway, Terence was in town, hanging at the club, and set in to play a few pieces with the band the second set. The frontline work between him and Marcus was truly superb. By the way, the relocated Showcase is stunning with perfect sightlines, decent lighting and a great sound system. If I remember correctly, the cover charge is only \$20 or \$25 a person nightly with a no-minimum-drink clause.

Joe also has a decent dinner plan with a fairly new Italian restaurant chain based, I think, in Chicago called Maggiano's. We loved the food and service and it's just across the street from Joe's. For \$70 a couple, you get

reservations at the club and dinner for two, excluding alcohol. What a deal!

So, that's what we did for the DeFranco show when we returned a couple of nights later. We were joined at the Showcase that night by my new friend, jazz mandolinist Don Stiernberg, and his wife for another grand evening of jazz, and Buddy didn't let us down.

I've been a huge Buddy DeFranco fan since I found my first LP by him (an early '50s MGM). At first, listening to his stellar bebop phrasing, I thought to myself it's like hearing Charlie Parker, but on the ole "licorice stick" instead of the sax. Nevertheless, Buddy, now at 80, was one of the nicest and charming men I've ever met for the first time. He too had a top notch band that night.

A true Chicago legend, piano stylist Larry Novack was in top form manning the keys behind Buddy. I remember seeing him play at Mr. Kelly's when I was only 10, and like most of these older gentlemen, his chops only seem to get better with age.

Veteran players John Kohout on bass and Robert Shy on drums performed flawlessly, and Buddy is just brilliant. I also got to meet his lovely wife, Joyce, who said they'd love to play in Lincoln sometime in the near future. That possibility got my wheels turning.

Also need to mention that if you want to buy a coffee table-sized history of jazz, crammed with a vast array of rare photos, run, don't walk to your book store of choice, and order "A Life in the Golden Age of Jazz: A Biography of Buddy DeFranco" by Fabrice Zammarchi and Sylvie Mas from Parkside Publications Inc. You can reach them at (206) 839-1191. This book is a work of art, and should be in every true jazz fan's collection.

That wraps up our whirlwind jazzy honeymoon in one of my most endearing places to visit, Chicago.



Don Stiernberg and his wife, Eileen, at Joe Segal's Showcase

Photo by Butch Berman

Photo by Butch Berman

Travel Story

Reflections of a continuing honeymoon

By Butch Berman

KANSAS CITY, Mo.-Still reeling with the feeling of our wonderful time in the “windy city,” Grace and I were eagerly looking forward to our post-honeymoon excursion to our true “home away from home,” Kansas City, Mo. True to form, this trip was no exception. As a matter of fact, it might have made it to our top three faves.

It certainly wasn’t because of the weather (in the 100s every day) or the fact that my lovely bride and I love to be together wherever we are. No, this time it was all about love, good friends, great food, and of course, excellent music. This time, however it wasn’t only jazz that propelled us southward on I-29 but some godly gospel, and soulful r&b. Well, here goes.

Since the sad decline of our old favorite haunt—The Savoy Hotel (hey, the Grille next door is still tops, especially if you get KC’s coolest old-time male waiter, Bob, but that’s another story—our new abode, thanks to Karrin Allyson’s recommendation, is the Historic Suites at Sixth and Central. It’s only one block off the Highway 169 (formally Broadway) exit, and within walking distance of the Phoenix Bar and Grill, the Majestic Steakhouse and the Folly Theater, as well as a 10-minute drive to either Crown Center, Westport, the Plaza or the famed 18th and Vine section. Thanks to their new guy on the go, Rico, they have now added van service to all guests for just whatever you can tip. No searching for how to get there or parking. One of their drivers, Nelson Thomas, used to play sax with Sun Ra, so it’s jazz, jazz, jazz 24/7.

You get a beautiful two-bedroom



Photo by Rich Hoover

Ahmad Alaadeen and Fanny Dunfee

suite with living room and kitchen with everything you need for comfort (TVs, phones, iron), free hot breakfasts, workout room with sauna and whirlpool and a outdoor pool with off-street parking. All this is \$149 a night, with discounts available. Tell Rico the Bebopman sent you, and he’ll take care of business! Call (816) 842-6544 or go to www.historicsuites.com. Enuff of this travelogue and onward to music.

The total triple threat weekend started with dinner at the Fairmont with Joe Cartwright for dessert. Joe, a good friend and marvelous pianist has been the main cat at the Fairmont’s Oak Room for quite awhile. This month he was showcasing different players each week on Thursday night free of charge. This date was a must for Grace and me as Joe hosted the one and only alto saxophonist Bobby Watson along with Bob Bowman subbing on bass, as my BMF consultant and pal Gerald Spaits and his wife,

Leslie, were on a much-needed vacation in France. As always, Joe’s drummer Ray DeMarchi kicked butt.

Note to all that it took us two trips to figure out to ask for dinner in the lounge so we could get a good seat for the players. After sitting behind a pillar across from a couple of cigar-smoking yuppies for the first set, we’ll get it right the next time. Bobby sounded gorgeous with the boys knocking my socks off on every tune especially with his rendition of Strayhorn’s “Chelsea Bridge.” Bobby looked healthy and happy and seemed to be more at-home back in his old stomping grounds than the Big Apple these days with his teaching at UMKC and steady gigging. I’ve literally caught his stuff from coast to coast for over eight years and have never heard an off night.

We also sat with my old friend from the Rich Hill days at Larry’s Showcase, bassist and vocalist Brian Hicks, who was going to play with my

dear friend, Ahmad Alaadeen at The Blue Room on Saturday. To top it off, I officially met KC Star jazz scribe Joe Clopus for the first time. What an evening, and we're just getting started.

We kicked back most of the day Friday, looking forward to a home-cooked meal of fried chicken prepared by none other than Alaadeen, veteran KC saxophonist and one of the dearest, hep-cat gentlemen I've ever met. He and his out-of-sight manager, Fanny Dunfee, welcomed us into their warm and inviting home in Overland Park, Kan., for a perfect experience of great food, chatter, music and the pure joy of two diverse couples who love each other and their spouses and have a ball together. The night ended much too soon, as our anticipation for our last segment of this continuing saga awaited us.

I've adored the stirring soul stylings of Al Green since the early '70s, but never was able to see him live. When I discovered he was going to be playing the Uptown in downtown KC, I acted fast, checking the 'Net daily for when tickets went on sale and being on top of it. My homework and persistence paid off big time as I snared front-row center seats for this very special event. Mr. Green, all decked out in a three-piece white suit,

did not disappoint us. His vocal prowess totally intact, he smoked, and his back-up band, singers and dancers were simply killer.

He walked the front isle, stopping to greet each member of the blessed first row with a handshake or a hug, and presented my lady Grace with a beautiful red rose which she'll cherish for life, I'm sure. The opening act, Forgive, an incredible 17-piece vocal choir with their own musicians behind them, sang like angels, but Al stole the show.

The 3,000-plus crowd gave the hall an almost revival atmosphere as the Reverend did more than 10 songs, including most of his major hits, some gospel and a little blues. After a rousing "Love and Happiness," we all expected an encore, but it seemed that Al Green had left the building. Nevertheless, little ole Jewish me got a good taste of Jesus that night, and it felt good. Still, there were more groovy moments ahead waiting for us at the Blue Room on 18th and Vine.

The hotel doesn't run its van on weekends, but Rico had us covered. A genuinely suave older black dude named Lloyd, former cop for 15 years and now operating a taxi service besides being a Pentecostal minister, took the best care of us. We ate an-

other fab meal at one of our first choice KC eateries called Zin on 1900 Main. My old pal bassist Bob Bowman's darling wife, Sondra, waited on us with expertise. Next, it was the Uptown, and finally the Blue Room. Lloyd kept us enchanted with many stories of his family and KC history in general. Between Rico, Nelson and Lloyd wheeling us around, the rides were just as entertaining as our destinations.

Arriving at the Blue Room was like old home week, as we sat with Alaadeen's manager, Fanny, his charming son (also named Ahmad Alaadeen) and our old comrades Steve Irwin and his better half, Jo Boehr, from the famed KC International Jazz Festival. We were greeted so warmly, and then things really got hot when Alaadeen took the stage with his stellar band consisting of Jason Goudeau on trombone, Brian Hicks at the bass, Donovan Baily pounding the skins like a jazzy Buddy Miles, and newcomer (to us) Chris Clark, who just wowed us with his amazing piano virtuosity.

Still the main event belonged to Alaadeen, as he led his group with style and grace and displayed his brilliant chops to the throng of followers with every selection. He debuted his new "African Suite," that jazz-drenched night inspired by Grace and my relationship, and dedicated it to her. Hopefully, this splendid piece of work will be recorded soon for the world to hear and appreciate. His heartfelt rendition of "What A Wonderful World" seemed so appropriate during these troubled times, and moved everyone in the room to a better space. He ended the evening calling up a new young piano player named Harold O'Neal to sit in. His Tynesque performance fit the groove perfectly. My dear friend and BMF fotog, Rich Hoover, was filming the entire show for a possible future documentary. More on that later.



Photo by Grace Sankey Berman

Butch and Ahmad Alaadeen are ready to cook during a visit in Kansas City.

Concert Review

Marillac benefit is KC jazz milestone

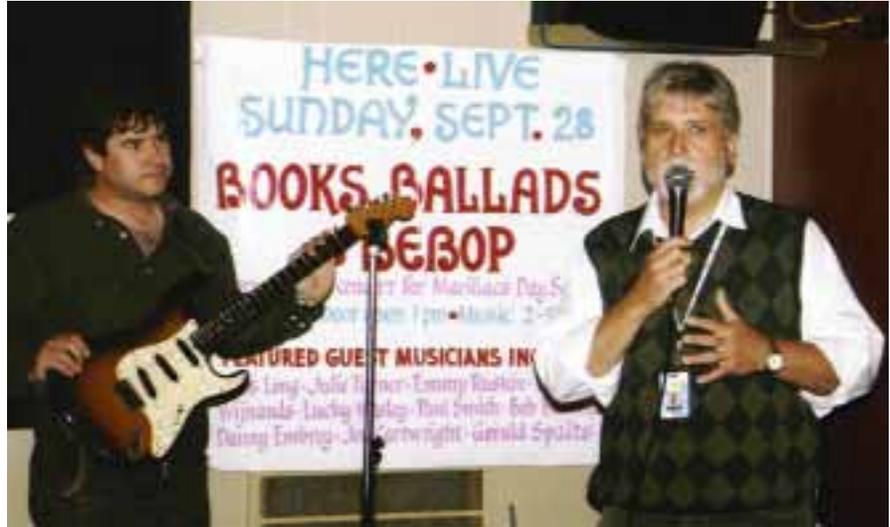
By Tom Ineck

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—September 28 marked a rare occasional, a milestone in the long and storied history of Kansas City jazz. Nearly 30 of KC's finest musicians gathered to perform a daylong benefit at The Piano Room, a small club at 8410 Wornall Road in the city's Waldo district.

The players donated their talents for the cause, to help raise a needed \$21,000 to replace obsolete textbooks for Marillac Center's therapeutic day school. "Books, Ballads and Bebop" was expertly organized by Steve Irwin, Marillac's community relations director and the former co-director of the late, lamented Kansas City International Jazz Festival.

Also playing important roles at the benefit were Irwin's jazz fest co-directors, the witty emcee John Jessup and the effervescent Jo Boehr, Irwin's wife.

Festivities began modestly at 2 p.m. with vocalist Julie Turner and Turner's son, Brian Ruskin, on guitar. As the day progressed, musicians wandered in to take the stage,



Brian Ruskin and Steve Irwin, Marillac community relations director

Photo by Rich Hoover

reaching a crescendo of formidable jazz expertise by the early evening and continuing until the final jam had played out at 10 p.m.

For this avid fan of Kansas City jazz, Ruskin was the first of several surprises throughout the day. I suspect that many listeners had similar feelings of good fortune, as an embarrassment of riches revealed the talents of musicians not often heard together.

Ruskin is an outstanding guitarist, in both jazz and blues styles, and a sensitive accompanist to his mom on such tunes as "Out of Nowhere," "Alone Together" and the samba "How Insensitive," which was an excellent vehicle for Turner's throaty vibrato.

Pianist Russ Long joined the duo for "All the Things You Are," and drummer Tommy Ruskin (Brian's dad and Julie's husband) later added the shaded rhythmic pulse to "One Note Samba." Long regaled the crowd with his hilarious take on "My Old Kentucky Home."



Rusty Tucker

Photo by Rich Hoover

Mike White, another pleasant surprise, added his soulful tenor saxophone to a fast blues shuffle. Turner capped the performance with "I Love Being Here with You."

Even before he took the stage to perform, traditional jazz pianist-singer Bram Wijnands was enthusiastically documenting the historic event on his video camera.

His duo set with Scamps drummer Rusty Tucker was a joy, pitting the young Dutch marvel with one of the elder statesmen of Kansas City jazz. It was a hoot to hear Wijnands deliver a Dutch-inflected "She's my ding dong baby and she knows how to ring my bell," then join Tucker



Bram Wijnands at the piano

Photo by Rich Hoover



Mike White

Photo by Rich Hoover

also dedicated a sensitive version of “Sentimental Journey” to club owner Dean Weiss, who generously contributed the day’s profits to Marillac.

Pianist Paul Smith fronted a marvelous quartet also featuring guitarist Danny Embrey, bassist Bob Bowman and drummer John Doubleday. Tunes included an uptempo “Yesterdays,” “O Pato (The Duck),” and a reprise of “All the Things You Are.”

Embrey was loath to leave early, but he was due to board a flight the next morning to join singer Karrin Allyson for a European tour that included stops in Rome and Paris.

The momentum continued to build with the arrival of pianist Joe Cartwright, bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Ray DeMarchi, a very compatible trio of veterans. Never satisfied with conventional interpretations, Cartwright and company chose a samba by trumpeter Claudio Roditi and the underappreciated standard “Whisper Not,” before putting a definitive blues tinge to the timeless ballad “September Song,” building to the astonishing piano

for some raunchy, blues tinged scat singing.

Tucker turned in a pair of warm vocals on “All of You” and “What a Wonderful World,” but it was Wijnands’ Fats Waller-inspired playing and singing on Waller’s “Honeysuckle Rose” that was most impressive. His rollicking, wide-open keyboard attack had feet tapping and fingers snapping. The duo



Ray DeMarchi

Photo by Rich Hoover

crescendo and the soulful climax for which Cartwright has become known.

Kansas City legend Pete Eye replaced Cartwright at the piano for a stunning rendition of Paul Desmond’s “Take Five.” Eye’s affinity for Dave Brubeck was immediately evident in his classical constructions and syncopated phrases.

Backed by Cartwright, Spaits and DeMarchi, Ahmad Alaadeen delivered one of the highlights of the day was a set that included a spirited romp through Juan Tizol’s “Caravan,” featuring Alaadeen on soprano sax.

Trumpeter Stan Kessler, alto saxophonist Kim Park and drummer Doug Auwarter joined the fray with Cartwright and Spaits on a special request from Irwin, the lively “Lester Leaps In.” The classic bop changes received a round of exemplary solos by Kessler, Park and Cartwright, each one building in intensity and innovation and ending with Park mimicking Lester Young’s famous sideways stance and Kessler valving the trumpet *upside down!*

Joe Zawinul’s funky anthem, “Mercy, Mercy Me,” was taken at a slow and soulful tempo, punctuated by moving solos by Park and Kessler. Park closed the set with “Centerpiece,” taking the vocal chores and delivering a bluesy alto solo, segueing into stop time and an exhilarating double-time finale.



Paul Smith, Bob Bowman, Danny Embrey and John Doubleday

Photo by Rich Hoover

Continued on page 14

Continued from page 13

In the wake of this electrifying performance, Jessup took the microphone to remind us again that this was “a singular day in Kansas City jazz.” No one could argue with that assessment.

As the evening began to wind down, pianist and singer Mike Ning took the stage with bassist Tim Brewer and drummer Mike Shanks for yet another version of “All the Things You Are,” followed by “Everything Happens to Me.” Sherry Jones capably vocalized on the uptempo “Ornithology/How High the Moon,” on which Ning’s solo cleverly referred to “Surrey with



Photo by Rich Hoover

Joe Cartwright and Ahmad Alaadeen



Gerald Spaits

The Fringe on Top.”

Young aspiring drummer Timothy Ning made it a family affair when he joined dad Mike and mom Sherry for a rhythmic run through the Herbie Hancock favorite “Watermelon Man.”

It was a hipster’s holiday when David Basse joined vocals with pianist Greg Richter and bassist Brian Hicks for Bobby Timmons’ “Moanin’” and another rendition of

“Centerpiece,” which also featured Park on alto sax.

The distinguished and gentle presence of pianist and singer Luqman Hamza brought the proceedings to a close. The local legend caressed the keys as he gave new life to the lyrics of “Falling Love with Love,” “My One and Only Love” and, best of all, “I Will Understand.” It was a display of grace and class that could serve as a lesson to all jazz musicians.

The day’s events stand as a remarkable example of artistic camaraderie and might serve as a model for Marillac’s vision statement: “To see at-risk children and families become contributing members in their communities by modeling a caring, nurturing and learning environment and by providing innovative, professional treatment and support.”

“Books, Ballads and Bebop” certainly created a caring, nurturing and learning environment for the hundreds of jazz fans who turned out to support a very worthy cause.

To learn more about Marillac Center and how you can help the cause, call Steve Irwin at (816) 508-3311 or write to Marillac at 2826 Main St., Kansas City, Mo. 64108.



Stan Kessler valves his instrument upside down as Kim Park blows a bebop line on “Lester Leaps In.”

Photo by Rich Hoover

Photo by Rich Hoover

Dance Review

“Sierra Latina” is Latin dance at its best

By Tom Ineck

KANSAS CITY, Mo.-Latin dance, by its nature, is a colorful, sensual and exhilarating expression of emotions. At its best, it is poetry in motion and a panoramic parade of life's joys and sorrows.

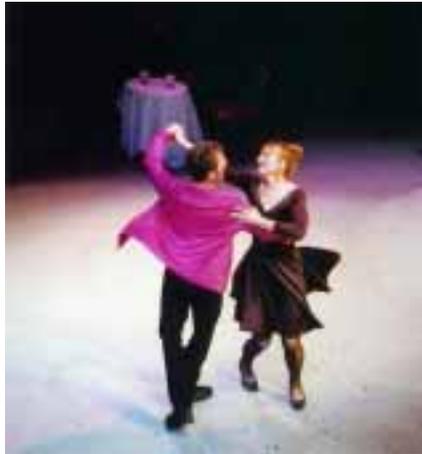
Latin dance was at its best Sept. 27 at the Kansas City Music Hall for “Sierra Latina: A Latin Evening of Dance.” The performance was presented by Rite of Danse, a local non-profit arts organization whose goal is to create and present dance productions that utilize multiple art forms and honor cultural differences.

Artistic Director Liz Jeans of Rite of Danse organized the event, bringing together various groups to perform dance and music from Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Spain and the United States. Cultural differences were most obvious as the medley of costumed dancers, in turn, took the stage to the music of salsa, samba, flamenco, folkloric dance, tango, Latin jazz dance and modern dance.

Fiesta Mexicana took the lead with “Nayarit,” a traditional folkloric presentation with choreography by the group's director, Rose Marie Mendez. The flair of colorful skirts and the flash of machetes in a sort of “sword dance” combined to create a stunning opener.

“Hoy Es Adios,” by the Signature Dance Company with choreography by Loren Whittaker, was a typically sensual display with lacy scarves serving as enticing props.

“Sevillanas to Bulerias” was a multimedia flamenco tour de force by Ole Music and Dance of Spain, choreographed by Tamara McIntosh, artistic director of Ole. The colorful music of guitarist Raul Gomez accom-



Dancers in a “Sierra Latina” program

panied dancers, some in stark black-and-white costumes and others in bright dresses. Castanets and double-time flamenco clapping added to the excitement.

Jeans and her partner, Michelle Powers, choreographed and danced the interpretative “Nuestra Contribucion Con Carina,” with a passionate and impressionistic flair. With legs that seem to go on forever, Jeans seems to project her body in several directions simultaneously, reacting instantly and dramatically to unseen rhythmic impulses.

The American influence on Latin dance was most apparent in the “Latin Ballroom Suite,” performed by a passing array of male-and-female partners, from Louis Barr and Rebecca Rodriguez doing “Paso Doble” to Frank Gillitzer and Mallee Morris illustrating the “Cha Cha” to Rafael Labrado and Anya Berdichevskaya with “Rhumba.”

Barr returned with Laura Cantu for “Tango,” followed by Labrado and Berdichevskaya with “Samba,” Gillitzer and Morris with “Rhumba” and, finally, three couples dancing a

live version of “Fever.”

“Neo Tango” was a bravura display of modern dance by the Wylliams/Henry Danse Theatre Company. Inspired by the music of Argentine tango composer Astor Piazzolla and choreographed by Dee Anna Hiett and Dwight Rhoden, it was a breathtakingly acrobatic performance.

The Latin Rhythm Dance Company, with choreography by Denisse Elise and Josue Hernandez, danced “Where's the Salsa?” a dazzling exhibition of style and technique. Lighting designer Jim Primm created the appropriate dramatic and atmospheric settings for each performance, and stage manager Beth Byrd overcame the daunting logistical challenges of segueing from one dance group to another.

The evening's irresistible capper was a public dance across town at the beautifully restored, Spanish-style Madrid Theatre, where we amateur hoofers were allowed to share the floor with the professionals, to the spirited music of jazz trumpeter Stan Kessler and the Sons of Brasil.

“Sierra Latina: A Latin Evening of Dance” was billed as a tribute to Jose Gonzalez, founder of the annual Hispanic Fiesta at the Barney Allis Plaza, started in 1985, and creator of “Sierra Latina.” Gonzalez recently died, but his huge influence on Kansas City dance and the city's Hispanic culture remains obvious.

“Sierra Latina” also is a tribute to Jeans' dedication and organizing skills. She gathered together some of the best Latin dance ensembles available, and the sheer volume and degree of talent was remarkable, even for a city of Kansas City's size. Bravo!

Photo Courtesy of Liz Jeans

Artist Profile

Liz Jeans is mover and shaker in KC dance

By Tom Ineck

KANSAS CITY, MO.-Liz Jeans is a mover and a shaker—on the dance floor, in her community and around the world.

Her Kansas City-based, non-profit Rite of Danse organization—through the magic of dance—attempts to break down the barriers that separate people of different ethnic groups, while celebrating their diverse cultural heritage. Productions have combined fashion and dance at an exhibit of photographs by Herb Rits, blended social dancing and staged choreography to the Latin jazz sounds of Sons of Brasil and performed poetry and dance for a “Victory over Violence” festival.

Rite of Danse also is the umbrella organization for Signature Dance Company, a youth jazz dance company for dancers ages 12 to 21.

Very early in life, Jeans was inspired by Latin culture, and it left a lasting impression on her dance styles, her choreography and her whole philosophy of life.

“I was always drawn to that, and no one else in my family was. It was probably from the time I was 12 or 13. It was just part of me,” she said in a recent phone interview. “I enjoy being outside of my culture. I have no Latin blood. I’m as Caucasian as it gets. I’m a white girl who appreciates other cultures a lot. I feel our limitations and our fear of expressing passion, that I find much more a part of Latin culture.”

Her Latin love affair extends well beyond the confines of the dance floor.

“I appreciate the passion and rhythms that you hear in Latin music and all Latin art. I like Latin



Michelle Powers and Liz Jeans

movies. I like Latin literature. I like Latin music, and I like Latin dance.”

Latin dance, she found, helps to express emotions that are usually kept hidden in the more reserved traditions of northern Europe. It also honors life’s mysteries without trying to reduce everything to a scientific equation.

“We have every emotion, and we have things we can’t explain,” she said. “We have things that aren’t concrete, and you’ve got to learn how to integrate all of that.”

Raised in St. Louis and Kansas City, Jeans has a master’s degree in dance from the University of Oregon. In Eugene, she developed a community center for the performing arts program and co-directed Powers & Jeans Dance Ensemble.

After a debut in Los Angeles, she began an international dance sojourn in Baghdad, during the Iran/

Iraq war. She moved to Paris, where she danced at the historic Moulin Rouge. Based in Paris, she danced with Soho productions in Tokyo and at the Friedrichstadt Palast in East Berlin before the fall of the Wall.

In 1988, Jeans returned to Kansas City and taught dance in the KCMO Visual and Performing Arts School for seven years. She remains a freelance choreographer, teacher and performer as the founder and artistic director of Rite of Danse.

Jeans’ colleagues in Rite of Danse are out-of-town consultant Michelle Powers and Loren Whittaker.

Powers and Jeans have a long history of working together. They met as colleagues, directing separate community dance programs, and later formed and directed Powers & Jeans Dance Ensemble. Their adventures took the Eugene, Ore.-based company to Los Angeles and Baghdad. Years later, they ran a spa in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, under Powers’ direction.

Powers recently moved back to Oregon after living in California for the last 10 years. Despite the distance, Powers and Jeans still consult and support each other on projects such as “Sierra Latina.”

Loren Whittaker is director of Signature Dance Company, sponsored by Rite of Danse. Her choreography and support was a major part of “Sierra Latina.” Now an adjunct professor of jazz dance in the UMKC dance department, she has been a lead dancer in Las Vegas, Nev., and assisted with choreography and direction of two TV programs in Rome.

Photo Courtesy of Liz Jeans

Concert Review

Interstring defines jazz group dynamic

By Tom Ineck

As jazz combos come and go, few are allowed the longevity to form a cohesive group dynamic. One of the rare exceptions is the Kansas City-based quartet Interstring, whose compatibility and chemistry is increasingly evident as they approach nearly a decade together.

That group dynamic was in full play during an Oct. 16 performance at P.O. Pears in downtown Lincoln, funded by the Berman Music Foundation. It was their sixth and final gig in a brief series of Midwestern appearances, occasioned by the return visit of essential drummer Todd Strait from his home in Oregon.

The other essentials in this fearsome foursome are guitarists Danny Embrey and Rod Fleeman and bassist Bob Bowman. Over the past decade, they have created and maintained a totally unique sound, whether playing as a quartet or in support of singer Karrin Allyson, who appeared frequently with them during her formative years in KC.

It didn't take long for the band to start cooking at its recent Lincoln show. Taking the first solo in the opener "You Stepped Out of a Dream," Embrey left the starting gate running with a dazzling display of fretwork. Bowman followed with an authoritative and imaginative solo before handing it off to the fleet-fingered Fleeman. Strait employed the full range of his extensive percussion vocabulary, including a brief press roll.

Embrey's composition "Samba 88" is always a joy to hear, but seemed especially inspired and inspiring on this evening. It had the open, breezy resonance of a Pat Metheny tune, with Strait's polyrhythmic mastery of the drums establishing an irresistible groove over which Fleeman, Bowman and



Photos by Beverly Rehkop

Interstring (clockwise from upper left) are Bob Bowman, Todd Strait, Danny Embrey and Rod Fleeman.

Embrey soloed with increasing intensity. Strait's hand-drumming interlude gave the piece the appropriate Latin tinge.

Even "One Finger Snap," the dauntingly up-tempo Herbie Hancock composition, seemed to flow with ease in Interstring's polished rendition. The guitars made the opening statement in unison, and Strait followed with another astounding drum solo and continued to push the beat during alternate solos by Embrey and Fleeman.

Jimmy Rowles' lovely ballad "The Peacocks" seemed to gradually emanate from the musicians with impressionistic flourishes as they constructed the tune from Fleeman's initial statement of the haunting melody. Embrey entered with a solo combining single-string runs and unusual chords. Finally, Bowman and Strait—on brushes—completed the group rapport. Bowman's subsequent bass solo was especially impressive.

Ending the set was the bassist's own good-time tune, "The Hebgen Happy Hour," inspired by a lakefront bar in the wilds of Montana. With ele-

ments of funk, blues and country twang, anchored by Strait's brush-stroked backbeat, it conjured an appropriately laid-back ambiance.

The popular Jean "Toots" Thielemans samba "Bluesette" was highlighted by an adventuresome Fleeman solo. Bowman announced the debut performance of a tune called "Notes and Chords," featuring solos by Embrey, Fleeman and the bassist. "Willow Weep for Me" was given an unconventional, funky treatment that included some imaginative Fleeman variations and a brilliant guitar exchange.

Bowman's pen also yielded the night's final piece. Named for the family pet, the tune's Spanish title is translated "Dog of the Devil." The opening bass solo was ominous, setting up intricate, weaving guitar lines and a marvelous Latin rumble of a drum solo.

Despite the small audience turnout, Interstring performed at the highest level of art, never failing to deliver on its many years of promise and hard work.

Concert Review

Marsalis proves drawing power and talent

By Tom Ineck

In the jazz world, only a handful of artists have the drawing power to fill the 2,200-seat Lied Center for Performing Arts with an enthusiastic and multigenerational audience.

Wynton Marsalis, fronting the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, did just that on the evening of Oct. 14, and the 15-piece ensemble did not disappoint.

In its 10-year tradition of keeping alive some of the important works of jazz history, as well as performing and recording its own compositions, the Lincoln Center band began with the Charles Mingus bopper called "Dizzy Moods." It has a typically intricate, polyrhythmic construction, with shifting tempos reinforced by the masterful drumming of Herlin Riley.

Turning to John Coltrane, the orchestra played the "Resolution" section of the suite "A Love Supreme." After a beautifully organic bass statement by Carlos Henriquez, Wess Anderson delivered an alto sax solo that aspired to profound musical expression in the same way that Coltrane's version aspired to spiritual expression. Pianist Eric Lewis followed with a powerful solo reminiscent of McCoy Tyner, with left-handed block chords and blazing right-hand runs.

They returned to the Mingus songbook for "Los Mariachis (Street Musicians)," a showcase for trumpeters Seneca Black and Ryan Kisor, who delivered an astounding solo. Kisor, at 30, has come a long way since his teenage years as guest soloist with the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra.

Ending the first half of the two-hour program was Thelonious Monk's "Four In One," arranged for the or-



Wynton Marsalis

chestra by Chuck Israels. Marsalis made a bravura opening trumpet statement with the rhythm section only. Suddenly, the rest of the band launched into a rousing New Orleans street-parade version of "Happy Birthday."

Their leader's 42nd birthday is Oct. 18, but this was the final stop on the current tour, so they paid their respects a few days early. Marsalis good-naturedly responded by soloing in grand style.

For the second half, eight members of the ensemble took the stage

for a piece constructed around a lilt-ing phrase repeated in a circular motion and featuring brilliant solo statements by Marsalis, Victor Goines on tenor sax, Walter Blanding Jr. on tenor sax and Lewis on piano.

The full orchestra played a piece from "Victoria Suite," commissioned by a festival in the Basque region of Spain. Trombonists Ron Westray, Andre Hayward and Vincent Gardner each took solos, but it was Riley's constant rhythmic underpinning that most impressed.

George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue," as arranged by Billy Strayhorn for the Duke Ellington Orchestra, was perhaps the evening's highlight. As just six minutes, it was less than half the length of Gershwin's original, but it packed a wallop from the opening passage by Joe Temperley on baritone sax to Kisor's plunger-muted melody line. Near the end, Goines on clarinet played the famous slurred run that usually opens the Gershwin classic.

"Big 12" was an original composition with elements of both the blues and flamenco structure.

On the town

Jazz clubs around the U.S.

Sambuca Jazz Cafe

1320 15th St.
Denver, Colorado

The Green Mill Jazz Club

3030 West Diversity Parkway
Chicago, Illinois

Jardine's

4536 Main St.
Kansas City, Missouri

Murry's

3107 Green Meadows Way
Columbia, Missouri

Dakota Bar & Grill

1021 East Bandana Blvd.
St. Paul, Minnesota

Caravan of Dreams

312 Houston
Fort Worth, Texas

Concert Review

Mahogany fronts Nebraska Jazz Orchestra

By Tom Ineck

“Standards, Scat and Soul” was the theme of the program, and the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra with special guest vocalist Kevin Mahogany, provided plenty of each Oct. 1 at the Lied Center for Performing Arts.

A Kansas City, Mo., native with a sonorous, full-bodied tone in the tradition of Joe Williams and Billy Eckstine, Mahogany wraps his deep-throated voice around a lyric with warmth and blues-drenched emotion.

He was in his element, working his way through a set of charts he brought along for the occasion.

Performing for an audience of 350, the NJO showed its quick-study skills with capable accompaniment and on-the-spot solos.

Before Mahogany took the stage, the band shifted into high gear for Toshiko Akiyoshi’s fast blues shuffle “Tuning Up,” a favorite warm-up piece that puts the brass through the paces.

At a similar up-tempo, Mahogany began his set with “There Will Never Be Another You,” launching into a heated scat interlude after the first verse. In the same spirit, Darren Pettit contributed a fiery tenor sax solo.

Best known for its association with Frank Sinatra, the ballad “One for My Baby” received a sensitive reading by Mahogany in a Frank Mantooth arrangement that also featured muted trumpet statements by Brad Obbink and a baritone sax solo by Scott Vicroy.

With just the rhythm section, Mahogany turned his attention to the Ellington songbook, with a mid-tempo rendition of “Don’t Get Around Much Anymore” and a rollicking “Take the



Kevin Mahogany at recent recording session in Kansas City

A Train.” On the former, he displayed his vocal pyrotechnics over a several-octave range, and the latter featured more amazing scat-singing and some percussive trades between the singer and drummer Greg Ahl.

The orchestra closed the first half of the program with “Lester Jumps Out,” a swinging variation on Lester Young’s classic “Lester Leaps In.”

Dizzy Gillespie’s “Tanga” got

the second half off to a rousing start, and guitarist Peter Bouffard’s imaginative arrangement of “Danny Boy” received another fine reading by the orchestra.

Mahogany paid homage to Joe Williams with “In the Evening,” a bluesy swinger highlighted by the singer’s swooping upward flight from the bottom to the top range without a fault. “Fools Rush In,” a nod to Billy Eckstine, got a Latin treatment.

Once again fronting the rhythm section, Mahogany deftly motored through an uptempo version of “Route 66,” followed by the ballad “When I Fall in Love,” and the Miles Davis burner “Four.”

After the full orchestra returned to the stage, Mahogany’s lyrics were put to the music of Paul Hoffman for the lovely, Latin-tinged “Three Little Words.”

Finally, Mahogany and company barreled through Charlie Parker’s “Yardbird Suite,” with Ed Love taking Bird’s role on alto saxophone.



The Nebraska Jazz Orchestra

Photo by Rich Hoover

File Photo

Concert Review

Capers and companions keep tradition alive

By Bill Wimmer

CRETE, Neb.-Valerie Capers performed with her jazz quartet Sept. 21 at Doane College's Heckman Auditorium. Capers, who's played at Doane before, was capping off a short residency and workshops with students with a concert for a very enthusiastic crowd.

Her quartet included Alan Givens on tenor sax; John Robinson, bass; Earl Williams, drums; and Mark Marino, guitar. This veteran group, sans Marino, has been together for years and it showed from the first note. While Capers is a really fine pianist, she spends much time promoting and featuring her excellent companions.

Opening with "Take the 'A' Train," Givens led off, quoting "Exactly Like You" and displaying a great sound and wealth of ideas. Guitarist Marino followed with a Wes Montgomery-inspired, octave-building flight of his own. The leader showed her command of the jazz piano lexicon by incorporating bop, boogie woogie and much in between, all anchored by her tasteful chords from a very solid left hand. The bassist and drummer Williams each made their own statements as the song was brought to a rousing end.

Horace Silver's "Sister Sadie" was taken at a slower, funkier tempo than the original. Givens soloed first, followed by bluesy Marino, Capers and Robinson. The song ended with an interesting arrangement that showcased Givens at the finale.

The trio of Capers, Robinson and Williams then played "Everything Must Change." Although I was a little hesitant at the announcement of this really overworked number, it took on



Photo by Rich Hoover

Valerie Capers and quartet perform at Heckman Auditorium at Doane College.

a whole new life with Capers' great version. Moving from a Bill Evans feel on the theme, she took it into an up-tempo modal section interlude after the bridge that was really refreshing.

Paying tribute to Ellington most of the evening, "Caravan" was up

next, with drummer Williams taking the spotlight. He started on high hat and then snare, using space and dynamics to great effect, without losing the feel of the tune. Building up to a great climax, he worked the solo and the student-heavy crowd into a frenzy.

Next up was seldom heard



Photo by Rich Hoover

Earl "Boom Boom" Williams

Ellington's "Circle of Fourths," which featured a whirling Givens on tenor and culminated with a nice cadenza. Givens, who received a standing ovation, is a real entertainer who seems to have a bit of Sammy Davis Jr. to him.

Guitarist Marino was given the honors on "Prelude to A Kiss," and he made the most of it with a finger-picking intro and melody. Switching back to a pick for his solo and going back to a beautiful chordal ending and a pretty ending and cadenza, Marino is a welcome addition to this group.

More Ellingtonia commenced with a medley of "C-Jam Blues," "Cottontail" and "It Don't Mean a Thing." "Cottontail" featured a two-beat stride piano section, taking off up-tempo at the bridge. "It Don't Mean a Thing" ended the first set with great statements from Marino and Givens.

The second set started with Capers, seated on a stool out front, singing an up-tempo "From This Moment On." She then sang Strayhorn's melancholy "Lush Life," followed by "Nature Boy," two ballads that picked up slightly during a rich Given's solo on the latter.

The combination of Caper's rela-



Photo by Rich Hoover

Valerie Capers sings.

tively small voice, the slower tempos and the lack of her fine piano playing made this a really slow part of the evening after such an energetic first set. I think three numbers from someone of her vocal ability is a bit self-indulgent.

She settled back in the piano chair for a breakneck ride on "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning." This one was so fast that Marino, a chopsmeister, still turned the time around playing himself into a corner on his second chorus.

Bassist Robinson was featured on "Mood Indigo," and he wasted no time displaying his complete mastery of the instrument. Bowing, picking, slapping, playing chords and double stops to great advantage-not just for technical effect. This guy is solid as a rock.

Finishing with "I Got Rhythm," Givens quoted Blue Mitchell's "Funghi Mama" and it was good naturedly picked up by the rest of the band. It wasn't the first time they'd played it this way, but the group responded to each other so naturally that it could have been. A quote from the "Flintstones" theme brought down the house again, and only my fatigue kept me from sticking around for the encore.

Valerie Capers presents a world-class jazz group that achieves its goal of keeping the tradition alive. Not having seen the group before I was very impressed by all members and by the nice crowd at Doane. The addition of Marino has added a lot to an already fine group, and it's not every day that Butch Berman gets blown away by a jazz guitarist. This was a very enjoyable show and I would recommend seeing this group if you get a chance.



Photo by Rich Hoover

Reviewer Bill Wimmer, Grace and Butch at Valerie Capers concert

Concert Review

Tropique launches 2003 Jazz in June series

By Tom Ineck

Since the mid-1990s, the Jamaica-born composer, bandleader and percussionist Norman Hedman has been captivating audiences with the warmth and insistent rhythms of his tropical jazz juggernaut, Tropique.

This summer, the New York City-based ensemble again ventured out to America's heartland for a Jazz in June performance sponsored by the Berman Music Foundation. The June 3 show was the first in this year's series of outdoor concerts at the Sheldon Art Gallery's sculpture garden on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's city campus. It drew an estimated 2,200 people on an unseasonably cool evening.

Tropique's sound remains consistent, despite the departure of a couple of its longtime members, a tribute to Hedman's vision and leadership.

From the BMF-funded 2000 release "Taken By Surprise" came the concert opener, the irresistible "Pa' Bailar," with strong solos by Sam Furnace on alto sax and Craig Rivers on piccolo. Hedman led the percus-



Photo by Rich Hoover

Norman Hedman's Tropique arrives with BMF consultant Wade Wright (right).

sion tour de force on congas, and music director Willie Martinez poured on the heat with an exciting workout on timbales.

"Rudy's Mambo" was a showpiece for new vibes sensation Alexei Tsyganov, brother of longtime Tropique pianist Misha Tsyganov. The young vibraphonist contributed



Photo by Rich Hoover

Singer Ada Dyer

a lightning display of melodic improvisation. "It's Just Not the Same" began with a repeated piano vamp, leading to a combined alto sax and flute lead line and a stunning flute solo by Rivers. With strong support by bassist Ron Monroe, pianist Tsyganov dug deeply into the theme for some exemplary keyboard variations.

From the 1996 CD "Healing Hands," the ballad "Forever" proved its timeless quality. Again, it utilized a doubled melody line of alto sax and



Norman Hedman leads the band on congas.

Photo by Rich Hoover

flute, providing the basis for solos by both Tsyganov brothers. Special guest vocalist Ada Dyer joined the group for "Closer." Renowned for her work with pop artist Sting and in the musical "The Wiz," Dyer brings a huge voice—with soul and gospel influences—to the stage, a nice contrast to Tropique's lighter approach.

Dipping again into his lengthy songbook, Hedman pulled out "Shades of Magenta" from his 1999 BMF-funded CD "One Step Closer." After a remarkable piano solo, Rivers sounded especially inspired on a flute solo and cadenza before turning it over to Furnace on alto sax.

Among the new material that Hedman unveiled was a piece of his inspired by a "food frenzy," a festive gathering of gourmands. Entitled "Feeling My Way," it exemplified the group sound that defines Tropique and sets them apart from the often self-indulgent ramblings of other Latin jazz groups.

"Flight of the Spirit," also from "One Step Closer," featured bassist Monroe on the African kalimba, or "thumb piano," and introducing Nigerian dancer Ruth Sankey, sister of Grace Sankey Berman, Butch Berman's new wife. With the newlyweds in the audience, it was a lovely

tribute by a very talented member of the Sankey family. Congas, timbales and vibes added to the percussive nature of the tune and the dance.

But the tribute to Butch and Grace had only begun. Dyer returned to sing the beautiful "Angel of the Night," written by Hedman in honor of the Berman nuptials. Hedman announced that it will be included on his next CD, to be called "Because I Can."

Tropique brought things to a close with "Hed-Theme," the band's infectious theme song from "One Step Closer," with an especially fiery display of timbales pyrotechnics.

Concert Review

Abate quartet puts the edge on hard bop

By Tom Ineck

Saxophonist Greg Abate brings a sharp edge to his hard-bop style, with biting upper-range flights that stretch the limits of improvisation. For his complex compositions and intense performances, he requires a group of like-minded players, capable of listening closely and performing at the upper reaches of technique.

Such was the trio of musicians who accompanied Abate for a June 10 Jazz in June appearance in Lincoln—versatile pianist Phil DeGreg, bassist Harvie S and drummer Billy Hart. Several thousand listeners turned out to hear the fireworks.

Hart set the tone with a drum introduction to Abate's burner "Evolution," the title track from his most recent CD. Abate's alto, soaring into the stratosphere during his solo, was brought to earth by DeGreg's lyrical keyboard work and an inventive bass solo. Hart returned with explosive statements from his drum kit.

DeGreg kicked off the next tune, "K. T. Blues," with a powerful rubato. Abate and Hart traded licks, with Hart



Greg Abate

establishing his trademark with unconventional phrasing and percussive accents.

The tempo slowed for the evergreen "I Can't Get Started," most memorable for DeGreg's flowing and imaginative piano lines. "Kerry's Bossa" led off with a bass cadenza and ended with a series of exhilarat-

ing double-time alto sax runs by Abate. Ratcheting up the intensity even higher, the quartet launched into "Bebop." Abate set the fierce pace on alto as Hart added sizzling cymbals and crackling rim shots. DeGreg's propulsive piano solo segued into a final series of drum breaks.

From the book of standards came a mid-tempo version of "Joy Spring." After a lilting alto sax lead statement, DeGreg and Harvie S took energetic solos, as if to illustrate the title's irrepressible mood. Abate dedicated the romantic ballad "The Nearness of You" to newlyweds Butch and Grace Berman.

Abate shifted into waltz tempo for his composition "Angelic," a tribute to his daughter, Jessica. In his sensitive piano solo, DeGreg deftly interpolated a quote from "Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise." Closing the performance in fine fashion was the very fast "The Little Men," dedicated to Abate's sons, Gregory and Anthony. Again, the alto sax and the piano took the spotlight and the accolades.

Photo by Rich Hoover

Concert Review

Darryl White Sextet features special guests

By Tom Ineck

The June 17 appearance of the Darryl White Sextet for a performance at Jazz in June had been long anticipated for the inclusion of some very special guests.

Professor of trumpet at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, White brings a considerable reputation to the table with his distinguished Denver-based group of sidemen. But add Kansas City sax masters Bobby Watson and Gerald Dunn, and you know you're in for a treat.

White's long-time associates included Denver pianist (and Nebraska native) Jeff Jenkins, bassist Kenny Walker and drummer Matt Houston. Those who have been listening to White's CDs and performances over the last few years are familiar with their talents, but Watson and Dunn changed that equation.

With a respectful nod to his deceased father, White began with a solo trumpet introduction of "The Tree Has Fallen," segueing into "A Cord of Three Strands." Watson demonstrated his unerring, powerful phrasing in an alto sax solo utilizing a circular breathing technique to create a long, intense passage. White's own solo was followed by a very progressive keyboard excursion by Jenkins.

John McNeil's composition "Abercrombie" featured White on flugelhorn in a restful, meditative mood. Sensitive to that mood, Watson followed with a moving alto solo and Jenkins delivered a searching piano foray. Gerald Dunn's brawny tenor solo contrasted nicely with Watson's lighter, lyrical touch.

The title track from White's latest CD, "In the Fullness of Time," had the ensemble stating the melody, leading to solo statements by White on



Photo by Rich Hoover

Darryl White Sextet (from left) is Jeff Jenkins, Bobby Watson, Kenny Walker, Darryl White, Gerald Dunn and Matt Houston.

trumpet, Watson on alto, Jenkins on piano (who came up with some ingenious variations) and Dunn on tenor. Wayne Shorter's "United" had White back on flugelhorn, Dunn delivering another big-toned solo and the three horns combining on a climactic coda.

Watson was placed directly in the performance spotlight for a stunning rendition of "Easy Living," backed only by the rhythm section. After taking the first solo, Watson was visibly impressed by Jenkins piano solo, returning for an alto cadenza that reached inspired heights of creativity.

The sextet returned to earth and some very earthy sounds with Eddie Harris' funky "Cold Duck Time." Its simple riffing structure and good-time feel makes it a perennial crowd-pleaser.

White's composition "Nanpet (The Called of God)" is a platform for legato phrasing by the ensemble and another notable piano solo. The funk returned with the Mingus classic "Nostalgia in Times Square." White, on flugelhorn, joined with Watson and Dunn for a series of three-



Photo by Rich Hoover

Bobby Watson

way trades.

From his debut CD "Ancient Memories" came the title track, which has the timeless sound of a future standard. As is his wont, White ended with a powerful performance of "When the Saints Go Marching In."

Concert Review

Don Stiernberg delivers mandolin swing

By Tom Ineck

Backed by a superb jazz trio for his June 24 Jazz in June performance in Lincoln, mandolinist extraordinaire Don Stiernberg proved once and for all that his instrument is not just designed for bluegrass music.

Of course, that was never in doubt after hearing his CD "About Time," reviewed in the last issue of *Jazz*. But the message came across loud and clear in live performance. Never straying too far from the standard jazz repertoire, the Don Stiernberg Quartet was as comfortable with the changes as any conventional bebop combo fronted by a saxophonist or trumpeter.

"Where or When" got things off to a flying start at a fleet tempo, with sparkling solos by Stiernberg on mandolin and Kirk Morrison on guitar. The Windy City-based group even interpolated a quote from "Chicago" in the coda just to remind the audience where they are from.

"It Might as Well Be Spring," taken at a medium tempo with a Latin tinge, took Stiernberg and Morrison through the paces, and they displayed marvelous dexterity. Bassist Jim Cox and drummer Kevin Connelly maintained a bedrock rhythm for the Brazilian ballad "Estate (Summer)."

They drove the band on "Take Me Out to the Ballgame," described by Stiernberg as a "blues" number,



Kirk Morrison and Jim Cox



Don Stiernberg Quartet

Photo by Rich Hoover

especially for Chicago Cubs fans. Stiernberg deftly traded fours with Cox, proving that rapid, single-note runs on an instrument ordinarily used for percussive chording are no problem for someone who knows his way around the mandolin this well.

Hoagy Carmichael's "New Orleans," with vocal by Stiernberg, got a reading as languid, lazy and luscious as the city for which it is named. The band returned to the Latin tinge for a very sprightly version of "Brazil," complete with mandolin and guitar solos and imaginative drum breaks. The standards kept coming with a mid-tempo "Let's Get Lost" and a ballad take on "Polka Dots and Moonbeams."

The unlikely "Theme from Mannix" actually made a perfect vehicle for mandolin and guitar improvisation. Even the hip-hop beat imaginatively applied to the obscure Django Reinhardt tune "Sweet Atmosphere (Doux Ambiance)" failed to do irreparable harm, and the band's version of Harold Arlen's "My Shining Hour" was flawless.

A serious musician, Stiernberg is



Don Stiernberg

Photo by Rich Hoover

not without a sense of humor, listing some of his favorite foods while singing "I Don't Want Love," as though gorging one's appetite could distract the mind from more romantic endeavors. On the other hand, "Beautiful Love" was interpreted as pure romance.

Nearing the end of the well-received performance, Stiernberg turned to Ellington for "Happy Reunion" and "Perdido" before returning to Reinhardt's songbook for the bopper "Belleville."

Jazz on Disc

OmniTone takes a chance on jazz artistry

By Tom Ineck

With its slogan, “All the tones, all the shapes, all the time...,” the Brooklyn, New York-based OmniTone Records takes well-deserved pride in producing advanced and adventurous music, like that exemplified by trumpeter John McNeil, pianist Frank Kimbrough, saxophonist Steve Slagle, trumpeter Ron Horton and guitarist Joe Morris.

Such music has suffered from a dearth of American labels willing to provide a forum for its creativity. Since its inception in 1999, OmniTone has been a beacon for such artistry, despite some financial risk in a tough commercial market. Its first release was Kimbrough’s collaboration with vibraphonist Joe Locke called “Saturn’s Child.”

The key to OmniTone’s success is Frank Tafuri, who not only serves as executive producer, but also writes liner notes, conducts interviews with the artists and shoots artists’ photos.

One of Tafuri’s innovations is the OmniTone First Edition Club. For dues of just \$5 (you get a \$5 credit toward your first purchase), you get an e-mail newsletter telling you about upcoming releases and giving you a chance to buy them a month or two before official release.

For more on the multitude of artists and recordings in the growing OmniTone catalog, visit the label’s website at www.omnitone.com.



JOHN McNEIL This Way Out OmniTone Records

John McNeil, a trumpet stylist with an edgy, modern approach to the horn, has met with some resistance from the arbiters of jazz fashion. It is fashionable to favor improvisers who adhere to certain prescribed ways of composing a tune, playing a line or constructing a solo. Meanwhile, jazz originals like McNeil follow their own muse.

For his debut on OmniTone, McNeil chose to work with two relatively unknown Spanish musicians, tenor saxophonist Gorka Benitez and bassist Giulia Valle. In conjunction with a series of quartet dates arranged by drummer Joe Smith, they recorded in Barcelona in June 2002. The result

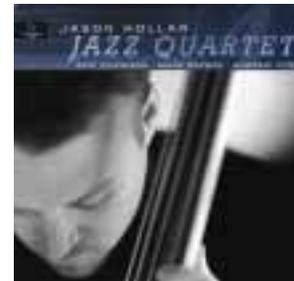
is a vibrant, adventurous and totally captivating glimpse into McNeil’s creative mind.

Infectious Spanish rhythms leap out of nearly every track, especially the opener “Mi Tio (My Uncle)” and the gentle tango-influenced “A la Orilla.” African polyrhythm is the inspiration for “My Taxi,” while “Last Minute” is a bebop puzzler with an insistent, walking bass line. The repetitive 5/4 meter of “Know Your Limits,” stated explicitly by Valle on bass, creates an hypnotic feel. McNeil himself describes the brief “West Coast Memories” as “Chet (Baker) and Gerry (Mulligan) on acid.”

“What Comes After,” however, may be the best of the bunch, with its spooky, funereal tone. Valle bows the bass in harmony with Benitez on sax, and then McNeil enters with the somber, but beautiful melody. Smith tastefully accompanies the piece on cymbals and occasional tom-tom punctuations. A masterpiece.

Benitez, in his explorative, keening sound, is a perfect foil for McNeil’s odd meters, understated melodies and skillful use of silence, while Valle and Smith hold it all to-

gether with impeccable taste and timing. The saxophonist also contributed three tunes, the disjointed, impressionistic “Picasso View,” the lovely “Because of You,” and “Flor de Viento.”



JASON HOLLAR JAZZ QUARTET Featuring Eric Gunnison, Mark Raynes & Andrew Vogt Cadillac Jazz

Technically speaking, bassist Jason Hollar fronts this session, but saxophonist Andrew Vogt makes such an awesome entrance with his debut recording that his significance in the project cannot be overstated.

Vogt, who spent several years impressing Lincoln jazz fans with his early ability as an improviser, plays alto, tenor and baritone saxophones and clarinet

in a tour de force display. He also penned four of the 10 tunes. Hollar composed five tunes and arranged the lovely "How Odd of Love," with a melody written by his mother, Evelyn Hollar, in 1940.

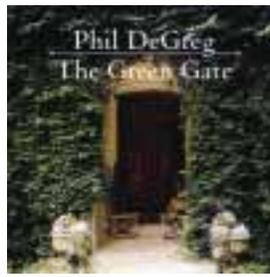
Besides Vogt's formidable playing, it is the quartet's soulful rapport that sets this recording above so many others. It is playing with a heart and not just a serious set of chops. That becomes apparent from the opener, "Beam Rocks," Hollar's funky variation on Eddie Harris' "Cold Duck Time." Pianist Eric Gunnison and bassist Hollar create a churchy groove with drummer Mark Raynes keeping the infectious rhythm while Vogt wails over it.

Hollar's "Blues for Abner" places the bassist in a prominent spotlight, but Vogt and Gunnison also contribute well-developed solos. "Apmonia" is a somewhat melancholy Vogt composition bursting with energetic and imaginative sax statements. Never too far from the roots, the quartet turns to Hollar's "Mo' Money Blues" for a swinging workout.

"Daeyada" is a clever Vogt tune with a bouncy melody stated by the composer on clarinet. It then settles into a bluesy shuffle groove perfect for Vogt's endless variations. Gunnison also delivers an inspired solo on the changes. More subtle, but still bluesy, is "A Little Pick Me Up," Hollar's mid-tempo romp.

Switching to baritone sax, composer Vogt returns with "Viola's Groovy Fruit Stand," a whimsical tune set to a raggedy reggae beat. Hollar's waltz, "Like We Used To," is the hands-down winner for most beautiful ballad on this set. Vogt and Gunnison play it pretty straight in their solos, never straying too far from the lilting melody.

But Vogt returns with a vengeance on his quirky tune "Heavy Gravy," with solid support from the rhythm section. His audacious performance throughout this recording begs the question, "How soon will Andrew Vogt have a recording as leader of his own group?" It's only a matter of time.



PHIL DeGREG
The Green Gate
J Seven Records

Cincinnati-based pianist Phil DeGreg was a pleasant surprise at this summer's Jazz in June series, sitting in for James Williams in the Greg Abate Quartet. This 1998 recording further strengthens the conviction that Phil DeGreg is a major player deserving wider recognition.

DeGreg is an associate professor of jazz studies at the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, and his prodigious knowledge of jazz piano history serves him well.

His arrangement of Bud Powell's daunting "Bouncin' with Bud" puts a clever twist on the bebop classic. Even Irving Berlin's "How Deep is the Ocean" is transformed into a jazz vehicle of even more depth with help from tenor saxophonist Tim Ries, who plays on five of the 11 tracks.

Also lending able and sensitive support are bassist Drew Gress, who works extensively with pianist Fred Hersch; and drummer Steve Davis, like DeGreg an instructor at the Jamey Aebersold Summer Jazz Workshops.

At least five tunes can be considered familiar standards, including Charlie Chaplin's ballad "Smile," Randy Weston's "Hi-Fly," and Johnny Mandel's "Close Enough for Love."

But it is the unfamiliar title track that appeals most to this listener and confirms DeGreg as a serious composer. "The Green Gate" has all the elements of a jazz classic—a lovely melody, challenging changes and a forward motion that propels it and the listener to a very satisfying place.



THE JOHN CARLINI QUARTET
The Game's Afoot!
FGM Records

It's no accident that the John Carlini Quartet has the same potential to wow an audience that the Don Stiernberg Quartet exhibited before several thousand people at a Jazz in June concert this summer.

This good-time jazz has the same lively bounce, the same level of talent and same sense of humor as the Stiernberg foursome. Oh, and it also has Don Stiernberg on mandolin. In addition to guitarist-leader Carlini and mandolinist Stiernberg, there are bassist Brian Glassman and drummer Steve Holloway. Expanding the quartet in a prominent way—and emphasizing its bluegrass leanings—is special guest Pat Cloud on banjo.

Sometimes this recording has the feel of a progressive collaboration between popular mandolinist David Grisman and eclectic banjo picker Bela Fleck. Carlini himself describes the opener, "Kook Kitsch," as "bluegrass bebop." With a title inspired by a classic exchange between Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, "The Game's Afoot!" has the feel of a chase scene through the streets of London in a black-and-white movie.

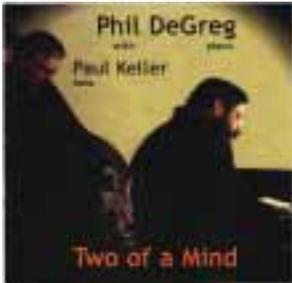
The timeless folk dirge "Poor Wayfaring Stranger" is a beautiful tribute to Carlini's late brother, Peter, who also was a musician. In fact, the entire recording is lovingly dedicated to him and serves as a monument to his memory and the music.

It is likely that the Carlini quartet will appear at the 2004 Jazz in June series, so plan to attend.

Discorama

DeGreg and Keller like Mantle and Maris

By Butch Berman



Phil DeGreg w/ Paul Keller Two of a Mind

Success in today's music biz is no sure thing. Talent, of course, is required but we all know it seems to take a whole lot of luck, good karma and decent connections to really "break out" and "make it."

Anyway, since this is a review of a duo let me remind you of some twosomes who did "hit it big." Let's see, Abbott and Costello, Burns and Allen, Astaire and Rogers, Mantle and Maris and maybe someday...DeGreg and Keller.

One thing in common among duos in comedy, dancing, sports or music is a shared passion for their gifts, and the ability to communicate between each other, and their audiences. The minute you hear the first few notes of Miles' "No Blues," the first track on "Two of a Mind," you get the picture. This deep, wondrous 2003 release on Strugglebaby Records is a success story just waiting to be discovered.

I first "discovered" Phil DeGreg when I was a budding student at Jamey Aebersold's jazz camp near Chicago around 1996 or '97. Phil, a respected member of that fine faculty, was one of my instructors. We hit it off, and he's performed twice for me here within the past few years with

saxophonist Greg Abate.

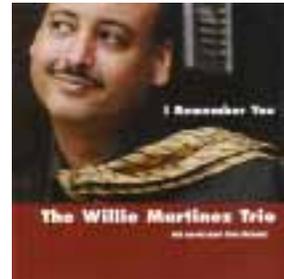
Phil, a master educator and player, can play any song in any key at any tempo on the spot. Try that one at home, jazz fans. His use of space, richness of tone and lovely romantic lyricism caught my attention and touched my heart, not unlike the late Bill Evans, but with a definitive style of his own that makes him a first-call sessionman.

I'd neither heard nor met bassist Paul Keller before receiving this CD, but his credentials in the liner notes and his astute technique entwining with Phil's outstanding keyboarding revels in a swirl of magical music that delights the ears. These cats at times blaze along with thunderous aplomb, making you feel there is a drummer present. On ballads, the delicate interplay between them will hush the room and make you sigh with delight.

Phil's only composition, "82 Hundred Brill," named for the address where this all was recorded live, is a gas, and the dozen other well-chosen standards come from a wide array of composers who would have all dug these gentlemen's clever and elaborate renditions of their masterpieces.

Produced ever so well by Stan Hertzman and David Hall, this CD can be ordered through Hal Bernard Enterprises Inc. at 2612 Erie Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45208, or by phone at (513) 871-1500.

Like the Lerner & Loewe tune covered on track four, I, too, have grown accustomed to this extremely decent recording, and you will, too. Add "Two of a Mind" to your jazz collection, and you can thank the Bebopman later.



The Willie Martinez Trio I Remember You

Musicians seem to enjoy wearing a variety of hats. I, approaching 55, recently laid down some keyboard work on a punk rock project, strum lead semi-regularly in a rockin' country swing unit, and just started doing some "lounge" work as part of a duo. Ya know, I'm actually having the time of my life.

Now, I bet if you asked Willie Martinez, another man of many mindsets, he'd feed you the same answer. Willie, one of the craftiest timbale players in the Latin jazz world, also holds down the right-hand man/musical director spot for Tropique, Norman Hedman's amazing NYC-based band.

We first met when the Berman Music Foundation was covering Tropique at the Wichita Jazz Festival around 1997 or so. After the gig, most members from all the acts involved in the WJF would converge in the hotel's lobby. They just happened to have a nifty baby grand piano sitting there, so we all took turns playing and singing old '50s doo-wop tunes. Let me tell you, when Willie opened his mouth to sing an angel flew out.

"What a lovely voice," I thought, and told him so. It was only

slightly a secret that he had the vocal chops to equal his timbale work... and could swing, bebop or shuffle with the best of 'em on traps as well.

It only makes sense that nearly eight years later, this dreamy, bouncy, jivey and totally groovy new CD, "I Remember You," comes out featuring his golden throat and outta-sight drumming.

Willie's got his own thing goin', but you can't help hearing shades of Mel Torme, Billy Eckstine and Johnny Hartman channeled through his vocalizing. As far as his drumming ability goes, Mr. Martinez can DRIVE any group to the brink of madness, whether it is on Latin claves or straight-ahead jazz.

He's backed by Tropique's keyboardist, Misha Tsyganov, a Russian-born musical genius just on the cutting edge of being recognized eternally for his lush piano prowess. Bassist Donald "Spider" Nicks rounds out this super trio, locking it in the pocket at every turn, thus providing the perfect rhythm section to showcase Willie's beautiful voice.

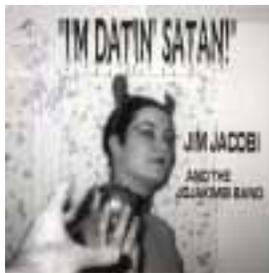
Also featured is trumpet, flugelhorn and cornet player Steve Gluzband, who shines on my fave track, "Cheek to Cheek," the album's opener, as well as others.

Arrangements throughout are uniquely significant, depending on the varying styles presented within this most enjoyable 39 minutes of soulful and ever-so-swinging jazz. Willie's production work is on the mark as well as the sublime sound created by Joseph Salerno at Mimic Studio in Brooklyn.

You can check out all the action at www.williemartinez.com or obtain copies of "I Remember You" by calling (917) 314-3480.

Spread the word. It's Willie Martinez time!

Special Assignment



Jim Jacobi & the Jojakimbi Band I'm Datin' Satan!

During my hey-daze with Charlie Burton and Rock Therapy, we were all very aware of our competition. Even though our combo was at times labeled as a member of the "punk generation," we really weren't. Jim Jacobi's Crap Detectors, however, definitely were! Our bands never actually rivaled each other, and the main ingredient shared was we both rocked our asses off.

Now, nearly 25 years later, I still gig occasionally with Charlie (with his country swing-tinged rock 'n' roll group The Dorothy Lynch Mob) and Mr. Jacobi, too, still rocks on—and hard. This is most apparent with his newest release, "I'm Datin' Satan!" Fourteen self-penned, true-life tales of love found, love lost, hate found, hate resolved and delivered with Jim's undeniable stamp of savagery, tongue-in-cheek humor and amazing energy for this 52-year-old punk rock master who's vocal and guitar work simmer and burn with the best of 'em.

I must admit that when I first encountered Jimbo in the old days, he scared the hell out of me. Now, both of us are a bit older and maybe just a bit mellower, and we have gotten to know and respect each other with a more mature attitude. As a matter of fact, I'm going to play some piano on his

next CD, along with Charlie Burton, Dave Robel and Brad Kreiger, all mutual friends from our past. The Berman Music Foundation is even helping to produce this upcoming work of art, and it will be on our Foundation Blues label. Anyway, back to "Satan."

Under Phil Shoemaker's deft engineering and production work in his Shithook Studios, Jim's current exorcism of his brilliant, but slightly twisted demeanor is a true work of art, and the trio kicks total butt. Drummer Dave Robel, as always, makes more of the right kind of noise with less of a drum kit than anyone; bassist Craig Kingery is always on the money and in his prime; and Jacobi with his searing axe work just tears me up. There's no doubt his nine-year stint in Seattle didn't hurt him a bit. With Phil's keen ear behind him, I was amazed at what an accomplished, gun-slinging guitar player Jim has evolved into.

Of course, his pained, tortured, manic delivery is still intact with megatons of passion, and the lyrics—pure fuckin' Jacobi. Nuff said. Get it, dig it or hate it..."I'm Datin' Satan" is de bomb.



Photo by Rich Hoover

Butch Berman, Jim Jacobi and Phil Shoemaker relax in the studio during a recording session for Jacobi's next release, "Get Out!" The CD will be reviewed in the next issue of Jazz.

Memorial

Trombonist Jimmy Knepper dies at age 75

By Butch Berman

I first became acquainted with jazz trombone legend Jimmy Knepper quite by accident. I think you'll get a kick out of the story. I know Jimmy would have dug it.

In the early days of the BMF in 1995, with since-departed (not dead, just split) ex-partner, Susan Berlowitz, who actually started this jazz rag, we brought some great players to Lincoln. The Zoo Bar was an early venue until former owner Larry Boehmer and I also parted ways. Our first projects to try to indoctrinate ourselves into the art community were presenting these mini-jazz concerts at anyplace that would have us. We also hosted events at the now-defunct Huey's, the 7th Street Loft and Ebenezer's.

Susan and I had just returned from a trip to NYC where we for the first time caught our old friend Claude "Fiddler" Williams backed by an all-star band for his 85th birthday at the also-no-more Metropolis. We thought how Lincoln had only heard Claude being backed by our local cats, and how cool it would be to let the folks hear this amazing musician with a real top-notch group behind him.

We had recently befriended the leader of the famed Duke's Men, trombonist Art Barron, who promised to put together a similar bunch of players to make the trip, and he'd help keep things in order. Taken from the guys we had heard was bass player Earl May (still a dear friend to this day) as well as drummer Jackie Williams. We couldn't obtain pianist Junior Mance, but were thrilled to get the wonderful Jaki Byard instead. We also had just become acquainted with newcomer, singer Kendra Shank, who we thought would be the perfect extra to augment this killer bunch to back the "Fiddler."



Photo by Rich Hoover

Jimmy Knepper at the Zoo Bar in 1995

Well, to make an already long story a bit shorter, just days before the show, Barron pulled out for a better-paying job. He said we should get used to this kind of situation, but in nearly nine years only one other jerk has pulled that song-and-dance on us. Nevertheless, he said he'd found a replacement for us—who else but Jimmy Knepper.

So, on my way to the airport I'm thinking to myself, "How cool is this to have the two remaining living gentlemen from the Mingus dynasty hanging out at my pad?" Only problem was, I never had seen a picture of Mr. Knepper, whom I was just about to greet. So while scanning the people filing off the plane, looking for an older black dude carrying a trombone case, here comes this rather disheveled, funky-lookin' old white guy wearing a beat up old cap. Yup, that's Jimmy, but looks are usually deceiving. As soon as we met, I felt an immediate connection with this brilliant, totally lovable man.

Even then, you could see he was in the early stages of the Parkinson's disease that later took his life. His slow, stumbling gate made me wonder if he could still cut it, but he played his ass off all weekend. He fell once getting on the Zoo's high stage, and I caught him twice as he nearly fell backward just standing around. Still, however, he and Jaki (who was murdered a few years later in his NYC home, unsolved to this day) had a ball sharing tales of the old days with me, Susan, and the multitudes of fans who came over to our house that weekend to pay homage to these great people. I still get a kick out of how Jimmy couldn't get over the fact that he and I had both been sent to military schools.

The boys and Kendra sounded great, playing three sets over that swinging weekend. The videos of their practice session at my house, as well as the gig, will remain prized possessions in my vast collection of jazz artifacts.

As soon as everyone went home, I started a search of as many Knepper albums and CDs that I could find. I wasn't the least bit surprised to discover how everything he recorded was simply fantastic. I once proclaimed on my old KZUM show "Reboppin'" "Knepper is Jazz, Knepper is Jazz, Knepper is Jazz," and to this day I still feel he exemplifies the true essence of jazz. By the way, he of course used his old cap for a plunger, and I will cherish his memories forever.

Jazz scribe Whitney Balliett called Jimmy "the first original trombonist in the modern idiom since J.J. Johnson." Amen to that, and may his soul rest in peace forever.

I'll never forget my old pal Jimmer Knepper. Recommended listening—everything he ever recorded.

Memorial

Saxophonist Don Lanphere dies Oct. 10

By Butch Berman

I lost a friend today, a friend I never met face to face, but a true friend indeed. Don Lanphere, revered bebop saxophonist, master educator, devoted husband to his beloved Midge, and devout Christian, died Oct. 10.

He was living at the Group Health Eastside Hospital in Redmond, Wash., near his home in Kirkland.

We met on the phone, introduced by Seattle jazz record store owner and noted deejay and music historian Bud Young. It was my first trip to Seattle, on an early BMF biz trip when I wandered into this totally cool old record shop in downtown Seattle—Bud's Jazz Records. I was greeted warmly by Bud himself, and we shared our stories about our passion for jazz or great music in general.

There was some incredible sax work coming through his store speakers. I asked who it was, and he said

Don Lanphere. The next thing I knew, Bud picked up his phone, dialed, chatted for a minute and handed me the receiver. Yup, it was Don. That's how it all started.

As time went on, Don and I talked many times over the phone. It wasn't long—between his generosity and my constant record hunting—that I acquired most of his beautiful, inspired recorded work, which I'll treasure for a lifetime.

Don kindly consented to be my guest on my old radio show, "Re-Boppin'," on KZUM Community Radio in Lincoln. It turned out to be one of my most rewarding and favorite interviews. His candid recall of his life could be made into a movie—so real, at times tragic, but with a most happy ending. After years of not only playing with the likes of Charlie Parker, but living the lifestyle as well,

Don was reborn into Christianity. With his rejuvenation, his musical genius and opportunities soared.

The "old" Don's past efforts, making records and gigging with most of the great ones—Fats Navarro, Max Roach, Woody Herman and Artie Shaw, to name a few—will stand the test of time. His more recent music, often working with the Origin Records house band New Stories, is tremendous and mostly still in print. Some of the earlier works on Hep Records are hard to track down, but worth it.

I would have loved to have seen Don play in person, and met and hung with this dear, talented man. I feel fortunate to have known him as I did. Don is survived by his wife of more than 50 years, Midge. Rest in peace, my old friend. You were one of the very best in your field and will always be remembered fondly.

Letters to the editor

A wedding dance

Hey Butch, thanks so very much for including Alaadeen (and me) in your wedding celebration. It was truly wonderful, and I danced with Alaadeen for the first time in public (16 years). He's always performing. I like the foundation's site. We got the card in the mail about it. Peace.

*Fanny Dunfee
Overland Park, Kan.*

Tribute to Santy Runyon

Hey Butch,

I met you when the Flippers played

Lincoln and some of us stopped by your house. I enjoy your publication and, for Santy's sake, want you and/or your associates to know that they buried Santy Runyon today (April 8, 2003) in Lafayette — the day of his 96th birthday jam, but the party went on. This site will give you a little info about him (<http://www.runyonproducts.com/santy.html>). What it doesn't say is what a fine gentleman he was and loss he will be.

Gary Claxton

Carns fan appreciates coverage

Thanks for your article on Jean and

Doug Carns (Jazz Spring/Summer 2002). I have spent some nice evenings listening to "Infant Eyes" and "Blue & Green." I'm so happy to hear that Doug Carns resides in Savannah, being an old Georgia boy myself. My roommate and I first heard them somewhere around 1972 or '73. I have been in love with them ever since. Jean Carns sings on an inspirational music group called Jeff Majors. I currently reside in Raleigh but if I'm in Savannah I will definitely try to catch up with Doug Carns.

*C. Hand
Raleigh, N.C.*



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The Lounge Hounds

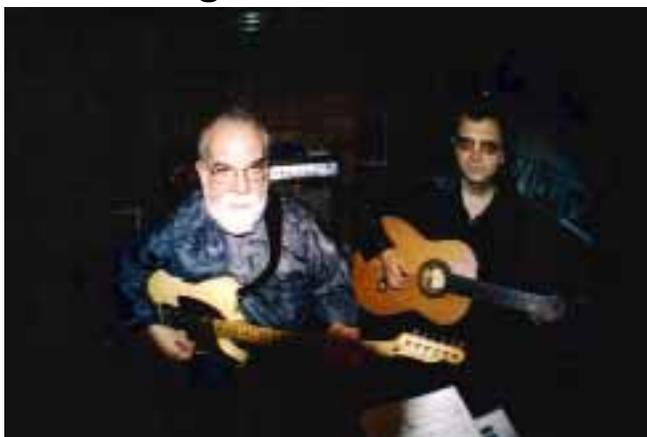


Photo by Rich Hoover

Butch Berman and Richard Sullivan work up tunes for their DelRay Ballroom gig as the Lounge Hounds.

Visitors brows BMF museum



Photo by Rich Hoover

Members of the Don Stiernberg Quartet are among recent visitors to the Berman Music Foundation museum.

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