



File Photo

The Russ Long Trio visited the Berman Music Foundation museum in 2002. From left are drummer Ray DeMarchi, bassist Gerald Spaits, Butch Berman and Russ Long.



Photo by Tom Ineck

Seven-piece ensemble performs the music of Russ Long Dec. 3 at Jardine's.

Seven-piece ensemble does justice to Russ Long music at release party

By Tom Ineck

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—The evening of Dec. 3 at Jardine's was an extraordinary experience. For three hours, the music, conversation and general vibes all focused on the guest of honor, although he was too ill to attend.

It was the CD release party for Russ Long's brilliant "Time to Go," a loving tribute to the longtime Kansas City keyboard master. (*My review of the CD appears on page 13.*) The **Berman Music Foundation** helped make this project possible with financial support.

In Long's absence, Paul Smith capably commandeered the house piano. The rest of the combo comprised

the same musicians who make the CD so memorable—longtime Long sidemen Gerald Spaits on bass and Ray DeMarchi on drums, in addition to trumpeter and music director Stan Kessler, the versatile Charles Perkins on alto sax, clarinet, bass clarinet, and flute, David Chael on tenor sax and Paul McKee on trombone.

In faithful and soulful performances of these great Long tunes, the seven-piece ensemble generated considerable warmth on an otherwise chilly December eve. Part of that mood can be attributed to the rather cramped confines of the club.

Russ Long continued on page 5

.

January 2007
Vol. 12, Number 1

.

In this issue of *Jazz*...

Prez Sez.....	2
Photo Gallery: Russ Long CD release.....	6
Russ Long interview.....	7
Karrin Allyson/NJO Review.....	9
Bob Popek & CGS Music.....	10
Tomfoolery: Austin at Night.....	12
Jazz on Disc Reviews.....	13
Discorama Reviews.....	17
Norman Hedman & Tropique Review.....	18
Letters to the Editor.....	19

.

Prez Sez

Music world's loss is heaven's swinging gain

By Butch Berman

I want to wish a happy holiday greeting to all of my faithful fans, friends and readers.

It seems as I get older, I find myself repeating the opening statement of “I come to you today with a heavy heart” unfortunately more and more often in these letters. Today is no exception as we lost three titans in the music world recently—r&b singer Ruth Brown, jazz vocalist Anita O’Day and legendary Kansas City stride piano player and blues and jazz singer Jay McShann, plus a slightly lesser known, but dear man and wonderful bass player, Walter Booker Jr.

Ruth Brown was a pioneer in the early ‘50s, when African-American musicians were undergoing the same racial bigotry their other brothers and sisters shared, even though they entertained mostly white audiences in the rock ‘n’ roll days traveling across the country on tour busses. She was noted for taking care of the other players, helping with sewing, finding suitable lodging and places they could eat and such.

Besides singing r&b and rock ‘n’ roll she could belt the blues, do jazzy standards and was an accomplished actress on both TV and in movies, perhaps best remembered for the role of “Motor-Mouth Mable” in John Waters’ film “Hairspray.” She was a true ambassador whose music will hopefully endure and be enjoyed forever.

I got to meet and hang with Anita O’Day after her performance at NYC’s famed Rainbow



Ruth Brown

Room in 1995. Her chops still pretty much intact, she gave me and my way-former partner Susan a half-hour after the show to talk and inscribe her wonderful bio, “High Times Hard Times.”

Through her manager at that time, she kept in touch with me over the years. She was a classy



Anita O’Day

dame, went through hell and back, and had a cooler, more stylish and hipper song styling and stage patter than most of her peers. Performing into her 80s, she passed at age 87. I really loved her—right up there with Billie, Carmen, Sarah and Shirley Horn for total uniqueness, and she could sing ‘n’ swing her ass off. Check out her stuff backed by the Billy May orchestra doing Rodgers and Hart, and you’ll be in jazz heaven.

I only met Jay McShann once, many, many years ago at a private party held by Russ Dantzler after Jay’s regular gig at Lincoln, the old Legionnaire Club. This was years before Russ moved to NYC to form Hot Jazz Management and help shape the careers of talented musicians like the late Claude Williams and other famous jazz cats who were approaching their senior years, and provide them which much deserved work, recording and touring opportunities and the like. I’m going to defer any more readable stories of Jay to Russ.

I don’t remember if I ever met Walter Booker Jr., but the first time I ever heard jazz in New York, on New Years’ Eve at no less a venue than the current Sweet Rhythm—then known as Sweet Basil’s in the Village—it was the famed Nat Adderley band with Walter on bass, Jimmy Cobb on drums, and a pianist who’s name escapes me. Vince Herring was on sax that night, after being discovered playing in the subways, and he truly launched his fine career with Nat and the boys.



File Photo

Jay McShann

Walter was married to a lovely, talented woman named Bertha Hope (Elmo's ex) who still performs her bebop piano with aplomb in the city quite often.

Yup, heaven is swinging a little harder with these new additions, and we'll miss 'em all. If some of these folks were new to you, go out and buy their stuff, dig it and tell everybody how great they all were. They deserve it, and you'll be better off for checking it all out.

Here's a little cheerier news to brighten your day.

I can't say enough good stuff about Kansas City's own Russ Long. I'm just thrilled that after the wondrous tribute concert at Jardine's we held for Russ a couple of months ago, and covered in our last *Jazz* newsletter, we were able to go into the studio with the same great bunch of cats and record "Time to Go: The Music of Russ Long." The **Berman Music Foundation** put up the dough, BMF consultants and long-time pals Gerald and Leslie Spaits did all the leg work involved in the recording and marketing process, and all the players dug in and made "Time to Go" a most beautiful album.

Special thanks to Ron Ubel and all the folks at Soundtrek Studios, photo work by Matthew Peake, Keith Kavanaugh's BauWau Design, trumpeter Gary Sivils for all his heart and soul and last, but not least, guitarist Pat Metheny for donating his time and talents to make this work of art a real treasure. For all the facts, photos and review of this timely project please enjoy Tom Ineck's fine coverage in this issue.

While mentioning Tom, I sent him out to do a piece on Bob Popek's dynamite new, all-purpose music shop called CGS Music. Bob's been keeping my axes in line for over a quarter of a century and is a mater craftsman. It sounds like his new venture is taking off in leaps and bounds, and we wish him the best. Check out the story, and then go and check out this groovy establishment—a must for guitarists, and they cover almost all the other musical bases as well.

My good friend and killer reedman Andrew Vogt popped in from his home in Fort Collins, Colo., to spend an evening with me around Thanksgiving. His newest CD, and the first under his leadership, called "Action Plan," just came out. It is, of course, a total gasser, a must have for all jazz lovers. My Discorama review will fill you in further.

I guess I just can't get enough of that good ole radio stuff, as besides my beloved "Soul Stew," which airs Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to noon CST on our own community radio station, KZUM 89.3FM, I'm doing jazz again from 1-3 p.m. the same day with my new show entitled "Reboppin' Revisited." After Bill Wimmer's "Jazz Journey" reached its final destination, I was hot to bop again, and the time slot

Prez Sez continued on page 4



Jazz is published online at: www.bermanmusicfoundation.org
The office of **The Berman Music Foundation** is at 719 P St., Studio G, Lincoln, NE 68508.

Editor and Designer:
Tom Ineck

Contributing writers:
Butch Berman, Tom Ineck and Harry Maisonette

Photographers: Butch Berman and Tom Ineck

For inclusion of any jazz or blues related events, letters to the editor or suggested articles, mail them to the office, phone (402) 476-3112, fax (402) 475-3136 or e-mail bmusicfoundtn@neb.rr.com.

To be added to our mailing list, call (402) 476-3112, fax (402) 475-3136 or e-mail bmusicfoundtn@neb.rr.com.

The Butch Berman Charitable Music Foundation is a non-profit, tax exempt, 501(c)(3) private foundation recognized by the Internal Revenue Service and the Nebraska Department of Revenue. It was established in the spring of 1995 to protect and promote unique forms of jazz music.

Trustee: Butch Berman

Consultants: Grace Sankey Berman, Russ Dantzler, Dan Demuth, Norman Hedman, Gerald Spaits, Leslie Spaits and Wade Wright



Photo by Tom Ineck

Butch and Pat Greene at museum

Prez Sez continued from page 3

seemed to be made for moi. Please tune in, and tell your friends the bebop man is back in the building.

Also, major kudos to the fine job my old buddy and BMF photographer Rich Hoover is doing as the interim program director at the station. I sincerely hope it works out for him to stay on there fulltime.

I want to send a worldwide thanks to all the folks from Oakland, Neb., that had my rock band The Cronin Brothers play at their most recent holiday get-together, which has been going on for more than 20 years. It was Dec. 16 at the ever-so-cool WSI building in one of Lincoln's oldest neighborhoods, the "Russian Bottoms." The party rocked, we rocked and for me, it was maybe the best party I've played at since the legendary Preston Holder (now deceased) mid-'70s New Year's Eve basharoo with the fabled Megatonnes. Nice job, Oak Creek Plants, for the beautiful decorations and mostly to all the Oakies for their generous outpouring of

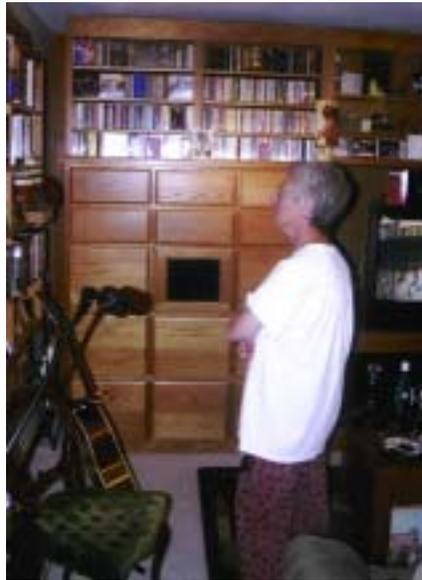


Photo by Tom Ineck

Mary Logan at the museum

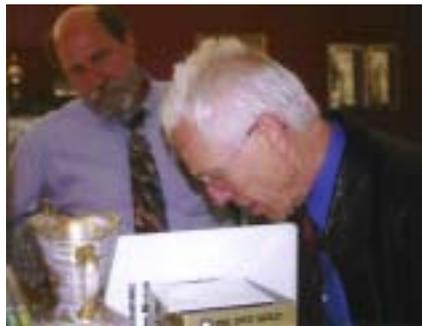


Photo by Butch Berman

Roy Nifoussi and Dan Beckwith at the museum

love, devotion and unbridled energy towards rock 'n' roll—and the food... delicious!

My home pad is legally listed as a museum, but because I live here, tours to strangers seem a little risky. Still, by special appointment (call 402-475-3112 if interested) I do enjoy having folks over to check out my vast collection of Americana from the late '40s to the present—mostly music and lots of classic and not-so-classy flicks of all kinds, plus a bunch of sports memorabilia.

Anyway, when one day I was trying to contact my local TV cable station to order the BET jazz channel, I ended up talking to a Pat Greene. Sadly, the station wasn't

hip enough to carry what I wanted, but Pat was, and we chatted about jazz.

To make a long story short, after much rescheduling I had Pat, her partner, Mary Logan, and juvenile probation officer Roy Nifoussi (turns out he's a big Cronins fan) over for a tour. A few weeks later, Roy brought Dan Beckwith, a retired judge from Fremont who was in town for some legal biz. Both encounters were a blast, and I'll let the pix tell the rest of the story.

This story is coming to a close. I'm looking forward to the Democratic persuasion to move things ahead as we turn the year over. Let's all pray for more peace, love and understanding... and a lotta hot bops.

P.S. One of my oldest pals in the music biz is former Lincolnite Bill Dye. He's a true demon of the strings and has made KC his home for years. He dropped by over the holidays and presented me with his newest CD, entitled "The Hatchlings," a blues trio featuring leader, singer and drummer Jaisson Taylor, Billy on all guitars, and Len Bacoski on the Fender bass.

They are all former bandmates of the late, great Provine "Little" Hatch, who passed away in 2003. If you're a blues fan and/or Bill Dye fan, get their CD on the Web at www.thehatchlingsband.com. Do it and dig it.

Yours in touch,

Butch Berman



Gary Sivils (left) on muted trumpet with Gerald Spaits and Ray DeMarchi.

Russ Long continued from page 1

Jardine's is a long-standing KC jazz venue that always imparts an intimate, festive atmosphere to visitors. Musicians like it for its cozy acoustics, even when audience banter becomes obtrusive.

On this particular occasion, apparent joy was mixed with regrets that Russ Long could not share in the glory of the event. "Time to Go" is a recording of which Long can be very proud and his musical associates recreated it with technical expertise and emotional commitment. If there is any justice, it will be a commercial success from coast to coast. There is no doubt it will impress the critics.

The septet captured the blues feel of many Long tunes, but also brought sophistication to the original tunes, arranged in a collaborative effort by Spaits and Long for the larger ensemble. Long, Spaits and DeMarchi played for more than 20 years as a trio, but seldom have Long's wonderful compositions been heard with this degree of instrumental enhancement—from the bluesy "E-Train" to the Miles Davis tribute "s'Miles" to the uptempo swinger "Can City" (Long's comical contraction of Kansas City) to the extraordinary brass voicing of "Parallel."

Gary Sivils, an old friend and bandmate of Long's, sat in on flugelhorn for "Save That Time," a lovely ballad of Long's that is most familiar for vocal renditions by Karrin



On horns are (from left) Charles Perkins, Stan Kessler, David Chael and Paul McKee.



Gerald Spaits (left) plays bass as Paul Smith commandeers piano.



Stan Kessler on flugelhorn.

Allyson, Joe Williams and Kevin Mahogany. Even without the lyrics, Sivils brought a very personal perspective to the music.

Among others who came out to Jardine's on this frigid night to pay their respects to the genius of Russ Long were KC singers Angela Hagenbach, Julie Turner and David Basse.

At the risk of sounding maudlin or corny, trumpeter Stan Kessler late in the evening paused to put into words



Gerald Spaits bears down on bass.

just how special the occasion was for the musicians who so respect Long. Describing the stage as a "sacred space" and a kind of "church," he summed up the event's emotional wallop, which the audience could not fail to feel.

"Time to Go: The Music of Russ Long" is available in Kansas City at Streetside Records, Borders and the Kansas City Store and on the Web at <http://cdbaby.com/cd/russlong> and <http://passitproductions.com/>.

Photos by Tom Ineck

Photo Gallery

Musicians pay respect to Russ Long's music



The front line (from left) is Charles Perkins, Stan Kessler, David Chael and Paul McKee.



Trumpeter Gary Sivils and bassist Gerald Spaits share a laugh.



Paul Smith sits in for ailing Russ Long.



Perkins is equally talented on flute.



Paul Smith with Perkins on clarinet.

**Photos by
Tom Ineck**



Gerald Spaits solos as Perkins and Kessler listen.



Perkins, Kessler and Chael blow.

*Artist Interview**KC legend reflects on his long musical career**By Tom Ineck*

Outside of his hometown of Kansas City, recognition for Russ Long's musical contributions and artistry has been a long time coming. Thanks to a recent recording project funded by the **Berman Music Foundation** and guided by KC bassist and BMF consultant Gerald Spaits, the ailing piano player, singer and composer, now in his late 60s, is finally getting the respect he deserves.

Spaits began by transcribing many of Long's compositions, some of which had not been documented. He and Long then arranged a selection of tunes that would be recorded by a seven-piece ensemble in two studio sessions. Spaits wrote the charts, hired the musicians and shepherded the entire process to fruition. The result is "Time to Go: The Music of Russ Long." The CD is reviewed elsewhere in this issue of the BMF newsletter.

Diabetes and multiple heart surgeries have slowed down Long in recent years, but on Oct. 5 we chatted by phone about his music and where it came from. What was it like growing up in Kansas City? How long did it take to decide that music was a lifelong calling?

"It took no time for me to make it a career," Long replied without hesitation. "I was precocious from the standpoint that I could play piano well enough to start working in a night club when I was still 17. That does not necessarily translate to anything spectacular, but I knew from that time on that I was going to be a musician. I don't know what happened. I just always wanted to play music."

Trumpeter Gary Sivils, and old friend and frequent bandmate, got Long



File Photo

Russ Long plays the Berman Music Foundation piano during a visit in 2001.

his first gig.

"When I met Gary, I still had a year to go in high school. I met him during the summer, and as a result I played a few jobs with him around town." An opening in a band landed him a regular piano job on New Year's Day 1957.

Living in Kansas City in the 1940s and 1950s, Long was inevitably drawn to the blues, and his music is rife with the nuances of the blues.

"It seems like the blues is everywhere," he said. "But, it was never my intention to be a blues singer. It was just part of my repertoire, doin' some of those good ole blues songs." In 1960, Long immersed himself in the blues as a member of Claude "Fiddler" Williams' Kansas City-based band, featuring the great alto saxophonist and blues singer Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson.

"That was quite an experience," Long recalled. "He (Vinson) was just an incredible performer. That was at

the Fandango Club on 26th and Troost. For me, it was just a brand-new world, getting to play with a band like that." The combo also included Rusty Tucker on trumpet and Wild Bill Jones on drums. During that time, Williams eschewed his famed fiddle to play a double-necked guitar-bass. Unfortunately, the band never recorded.

"I just can't say enough about Eddie Vinson," Long continued. "He was a wonderful player and a wonderful singer. He was so much more than a blues singer, and yet he had made his money being a blues singer with a big band." After a stint with the Cootie Williams Orchestra, Vinson led his own big band and had a string of r&b vocal hits, including his signature "Kidney Stew Blues." In the early 1950s, a young John Coltrane was a member of Vinson's band.

KC legend continued on page 8

KC legend continued from page 7

In tribute to his mentor, Long later adopted “Kidney Stew” for his own repertoire, singing the tune with his trademark relaxed, bluesy approach. Asked where he acquired his regional drawl, he laughs.

“I don’t know. For me, it’s just trying to do justice to the songs. Sometimes it came out that way. You can’t force something like that.”

Long journeyed elsewhere for a time, but always returned to his hometown. Throughout the 1970s, for example, he held down a regular gig fronting the house trio at a night club in Lake Geneva, Wis. It was there that he wrote his most famous composition, the touching ballad “Save That Time.” In rapid succession, three prominent jazz singers recorded the song—Karrin Allyson in 1992 (on her debut recording “I Didn’t Know About You”), Joe Williams in 1993 and Kevin Mahogany in 1994. Chicago-based singer Judy Roberts recorded an early version in 1981, and in 1995 it was recorded as an instrumental by bassist Charles Fambrough.

When asked about the genesis of “Save That Time,” Long answered with typical modesty.

“It was just one of those things. I just threw it off. I was playing at the Playboy Club in Lake Geneva. This would have been ’79 or ’80, a year or two before I came back (to Kansas City). I was foolin’ around while we were up on the stage one night. I had a little private moment there and kind of put the song together. I didn’t think about it a whole lot, and I didn’t write lyrics to it. It was a week later that I decided to write some lyrics to it. The first time we performed the song with lyrics, Joe Williams was in the audience. He liked it. He said, ‘Give me a copy of that.’ He took it back home and had his arranger make an arrangement for him.”

A few months later, Williams was



File Photo

Butch Berman hands a check to Russ Long in support of Long’s recording of a few years ago entitled “Never Let Me Go.” Also shown are Gerald Spaits and Ray DeMarchi, long time members of the Russ Long Trio.

in Chicago and asked Long to join him. Appropriately, the singer unveiled “Save That Time” with the composer accompanying him at the piano.

“It was quite a kick,” Long recalled. “He used the song for awhile as his evening closer. He hadn’t recorded it yet. After a period of time, I got a check from the Library of Congress. They had recorded his show, so he was on record at the Library of Congress, and to make it official they had to pay everybody.”

Long returned to Kansas City and formed the Russ Long Trio with Spaits and drummer Ray DeMarchi in 1982. This very compatible relationship lasted more than 20 years, until the trio’s final performance Nov. 11, 2004, as part of the Berman Jazz Series in Topeka.

In referring to the recent recording project and the many instrumental compositions that had never been documented until now, Long displayed a mix of humility and his trademark sense of humor. Had he kept any of these tunes in his repertoire in recent years?

“Not in any real sense,” he said. “They’re all jazz tunes, and nobody wants to hear jazz. There’s no girls up there.”

Indeed, both Long’s compositions and unique performance style were poorly documented until recently. His Lake Geneva trio recorded, but it’s a product he dismisses for its poor sound quality. “Never Let Me Go,” a CD re-

leased a few years ago with the financial support of the Berman Music Foundation, captures his trio sound and has a nice version of “Save That Time,” but is slight on his other compositions. That’s why “Time to Go: The Music of Russ Long” is so long overdue.

“The tunes on that album are actually pretty old,” he said. “They were written as jazz tunes, to be played with a jazz group. That was the thrill for me. It was the first time I heard my tunes performed pretty much the way they were supposed to be.”

“Meatloaf” is a tune that Long wrote in 1959, while “Woodland Park” and “Shoemaker” are circa 1963. In other words, many of these compositions have been languishing for more than 40 years without the ensemble treatment that the composer first envisioned. Aside from “Save That Time,” the only Long composition with lyrics that was included in the long list is “Out There,” a 1969 product that did not make the cut for the final recording.

Regarding the recording and two recent Long tributes at the popular Kansas City night spot Jardine’s—in August and in December—the composer again reveals his modesty and his respect for others.

“I was really flabbergasted,” he said about the first Jardine’s tribute. “It’s especially hard for me to do very much these days, and Gerald has just jumped in the breach and saved my life. He was the only one who could have done it.”

Editor’s Note: *As we approached deadline for this issue, we learned of the death of Russ Long on Dec. 31. He will be greatly missed by many, though his music will live on in the form of his recordings, especially the new release “Time To Go: The Music of Russ Long,” and “Never Let Me Go.” The Berman Music Foundation extends its sympathy to the family, friends and many fans of Russ Long.*

Concert Review

Karrin Allyson and NJO perform for 1,000 fans

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—Singer Karrin Allyson has made a lot of friends and fans in Lincoln over the years. More than 1,000 of them turned out Oct. 27 at the Lied Center for Performing Arts to hear her perform with the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra.

With her own rhythm section and a wide-ranging repertoire that included a handful of tunes from her latest release, Allyson was the consummate professional. Dressed in a slinky, satiny gold outfit, she connected with the audience and demonstrated her considerable talents as song stylist, pianist, lyricist and stage performer.

She started her set with a lovely waltz version of “Hello, Young Lovers,” accentuated by a scat-singing interlude trading licks with guitarist Rod Fleeman. An upbeat take on “Them There Eyes” featured a fleet Fleeman solo and trades between Ed Love on tenor sax and Dave Sharp on alto. Both tunes were arranged for big band by longtime Allyson friend and collaborator Laura Caviani, a noted pianist from the Twin



File Photo

Nebraska Jazz Orchestra

Cities. Duke Jordan’s “Jordu,” with lyrics by Allyson under the new title “Life is a Groove,” was arranged by Sharp.

Some of the best performances of the evening were showcased in a quartet setting with Allyson at the piano accompanied only by guitarist Fleeman, bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Todd Strait, who became fast friends and colleagues during Allyson’s long residence in Kansas City. A perfect example of their compatibility was “Footprints,” the Wayne Shorter tune and title track of Allyson’s 10th and latest recording on Concord. With new lyrics by Chris Caswell, it is a wistful, moody song, made even more profound by a lovely

Spaits bass solo.

The bluesy “Turnaround,” a showcase for Fleeman and Strait, was followed by a French samba that exhibited Allyson’s fine sense of rhythm, pronunciation and faultless intonation. The big band returned for Jobim’s “Double Rainbow,” sung in perfect Portuguese. “Hum Drum Blues” ended the first half of the show with a swinging fervor emphasized by Bob Krueger on a plunger-muted solo.

The Frank Loesser ballad “Say It (Over and Over Again)” segued neatly into an uptempo Latin rendition of “All or Nothing at All,” in an arrangement by West Coast pianist Bill Cunliffe. Two Nat Adderley tunes from “Footprints” followed—the boppish “Teaneck” and the mid-tempo swinger “Never Say Yes,” both with lyrics by Caswell.

Allyson displayed her gift for singing with total conviction during the quartet performances of Oscar Brown Jr.’s “As Long as You’re Livin’” and the lush Jim Webb ballad “The Moon is a Harsh Mistress.”

The Nebraska Jazz Orchestra was most effective in its ensemble work, while its soloists seldom rose above the mediocre. Part of the blame can be attributed to the 2,200-seat Lied auditorium, which remains an acoustically challenging venue, often creating a sound reproduction that seems muddy and undermiked.

Editor’s Note: Karrin Allyson’s Grammy® nominated “Footprints” CD was the No. 2 most-played jazz album in 2006, with 6,286 spins, according to Jazz Week.com. That’s an average of more than one spin every hour, 24/7, since its release last April.

A Jazz Quiz by Jean Reldy

Duke Ellington featured colors in many of his recordings. Let’s see how many you can find here. Each hyphen will represent a letter.

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| A) “---- and --- Fantasy” | G) “----- Panorama” |
| B) “-----” (a shade of blue) | H) “----- Cress” |
| C) “---- Feeling” | I) “----- Shake” |
| D) “Mood -----” | J) “Blue ----” |
| E) “-----, ----- and -----” | K) “--- Shoes” |
| F) “----- Haze” | L) “----- Gazelle” |

Answers: A) Black, Tan; B) Azure; C) Blue; D) Indigo; E) Black, Brown, Beige; F) Magenta; G) Sepia; H) Golden; I) Chocolate; J) Rose; K) Red; L) Purple

Friends of BMF

Master string repairman begins new venture

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—After 30 years working for Dietze Music House in Lincoln, Bob Popek decided it was time to venture out on his own. The master repairman of stringed instruments recently opened CGS Music, a combined retail and repair operation at 1244 High St.

The CGS doors officially opened in September. The business space is split nearly even, with half devoted to retail display and half devoted to repair, a clear indication of Popek's desire to maintain a balance.

"From day one I decided that this was going to be repair and restoration oriented," he said, waving a hand toward the work area. Popek's own work bench is positioned under a window to allow for full natural light. "People can come into the showroom and see that I'm repairing, not just waiting for the next sale."

When he left Dietze, he risked losing customers, but his fears were unfounded. One of his oldest customers is Butch Berman, founder of the **Berman Music Foundation**, whose guitars Popek has worked on for many years. Berman and many others have remained loyal to Popek since his move.

"I had a fear when I first came here," Popek admitted. "You can't expect anything. You can hope. But as far as my big accounts that I worked with, including those that I thought I might lose because I didn't have a road route to go get stuff, it looks to me like 100 percent participation."

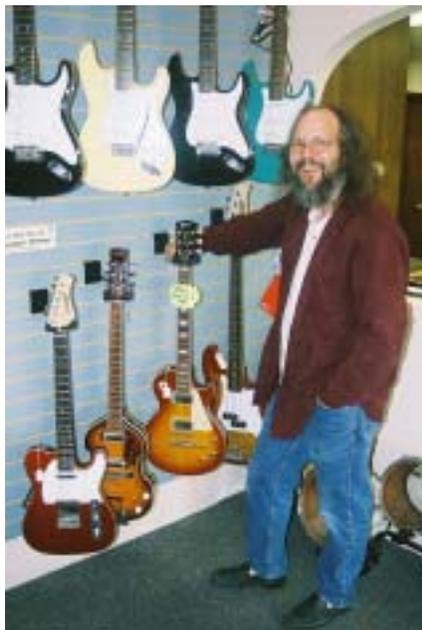
One of the most difficult decisions in starting his own business was leaving his friends at Dietze, especially owner Doug Fenton.

"We did work very well together," Popek said of Fenton. "To leave was



Photos by Tom Ineck

Bob Popek works on a guitar at his workbench, with ample natural light.



Popek's retail showroom includes a selection of assorted electric guitars.

very tough. We're still very close. Since I've been here, the store has sent a lot of work to me. I've seen it several times a week and sometimes daily, that I was referred to by the store." Popek returns the favor by referring horn work



Roy Schmidt restores a player piano.

to other repairmen in town.

"I was with that company for 30 years, and I was extremely loyal in that it was very important to me that I did not seek distributors. I didn't talk to any reps. I didn't sign any papers for anything. I didn't sign a lease until after I gave notice and my last day. So, it was kind of a gamble, on my part. It would have been unfair for me to work for another store and be doing things behind their back. Because of that, it created more risk."

Popek also is working closely with Harris Music Studio, situated adjacent to CGS. It provides a variety of music lessons, making it perfectly compatible



CGS Music also offers unique instruments like this antique organ.



Vicki Harris of Harris Music Studio teaches group lessons in this keyboard lab.



Popek with his daughter, Jillian.

with Popek's business. Vicki Harris serves everyone from pre-school to the elderly with instruction on keyboards, strings, percussion and other instruments. She even has contracted with a drama teacher to teach rudimentary acting techniques.

"We're trying to provide for the whole spectrum," Popek said. "It's not just me here getting something fixed or selling them something. It's to continue to service them. Both of us separately had that in mind, but what we learned was that the weaknesses that I had were her strengths and it was the exact same in the other direction."

He said he is up to the challenge of operating a private business in a "box-store world." His long experience in local stringed-instrument repair work is a benefit. Most of his stock is new, though through his many contacts he also has acquired instruments for sale

on a consignment basis, including a classic Chickering square grand piano and an antique organ. Several pianos came from Jim Gourley when he decided to close his O Street store after many years, but limited display space does not allow for dozens of new pianos, so Popek picks and chooses from the best.

"I have total control of what I can buy," he noted. "One of the things I started with here is the violins and violas because Vicki is so heavy over there teaching with them. I'm doing things that other stores can't do. I can buy the instruments somewhat in pieces, new, so that I can have control of the outcome of the instrument," rather than submitting to a manufacturer's original specifications. I can custom-make them to suit my needs, and to assure that the criteria of playability are there."

CGS is essentially a one-man operation. Restoration of player pianos is the specialty of Roy Schmidt, who has been working on a freelance basis with Popek for several years. Popek's daughter, Jillian, does the bookkeeping.

"There will be a time when I'll be getting employees, but right now I like to do the hands-on as much as I possibly can," he said. His low volume and specialized work gives Popek a competitive edge over the larger chains, especially those who have no local connections.

"If you become too large, then a volume sale is your key. I'll never have

300 guitars in here like other stores do. I have to be more careful when I pick guitars out. It has to be something that I feel really good about and want to show to other people. After that, I don't have to be concerned with looking at 25 guitars of a model that didn't sell as expected, and having to discount them."

Popek knows the value of the technical skills and knowledge he acquired over three decades at Dietze.

"What I'm doing requires a lot of knowledge in a lot of areas. A straight repair man would have difficulty with the retailing." On the other hand, Popek doesn't have to turn to someone else to make repairs. By removing the "middle man," he has the best of both worlds.

The name for the business is open to interpretation—and to Popek's sense of humor. While it could stand for Custom Guitar Shop, but that would have been too limited in scope. It also could refer to www.cgsmusic.net, a website that Popek established several years ago to sell classical guitar sheet music, or to Creating Great Sounds or to CowGirls in the Sand, a reference to the song by one of Popek's favorite rock artists, Neil Young.

Despite all the obstacles of operating a small business, Popek says he has a long-term commitment to CGS. "This is where my real knowledge is, and my excitement."

Call CGS Music at 328-0677 or stop by the showroom at 1244 High St.

Tomfoolery

Austin yields another memorable night

By Tom Ineck

AUSTIN, Texas—When in search of live music in New York City, Kansas City, New Orleans, San Francisco or Seattle, it's the jazz clubs I'm most interested in, but Austin, Texas, has established a national reputation as the home of roots rock, Americana, and country music with an attitude, so that's what draws my attention. Of course, it's also a great place for barbecue, platter-sized chicken fried steaks, authentic Mexican cuisine and beer brews of every stripe.

While taking brief winter holidays to that marvelous city in recent years, we have enjoyed the sounds of singer Toni Price, former Merle Haggard guitarist Redd Volkaert, legendary singer-songwriter Billy Joe Shaver (cheered on by his old buddy Kinky Friedman), folksinger-songwriter Eliza Gilkyson, and former Faces keyboardist Ian McLagan, with guitarist "Scrappy" Jud Newcomb.

In August 2003, we enjoyed a feast from Austin's musical menu at the three-day Austin City Limits Festival, which that year featured Steve Earle, Lucinda Williams, Shawn Colvin, Kings of Leon, Steve Winwood, Robert Randolph, Jay Farrar, The Mavericks, Tift Merritt, Caitlin Cary, The Gourds, Yo La Tengo and many more.

On our latest sojourn to Austin, a Dec. 28 performance by Alejandro Escovedo and his band at Antone's was our destination. Another local legend, Escovedo has made Austin his home for

more than 25 years, after forming a pioneering cowpunk band called Rank and File. With his brother, Javier, he formed The True Believers, which frequently opened for Los Lobos in the 1980s. His own CDs began to arrive in the early 1990s, and he has nine recordings to his credit since 1992.

Escovedo made a comeback in recent months after suffering a bout of Hepatitis C that had put him out of commission since 2003. "The Boxing Mirror," his first CD in four years, was released in 2006 with production by John Cale of the Velvet Underground. He has formed a killer band, featuring guitarist David Pulkingham, ex-Spirit bassist Mark Andes, cellist Brian Standefer and drummer Hector Munoz. He occasionally features additional strings and keyboards, as well.

The night we saw him at Antone's, Escovedo was accompanied by the quartet only, but what a quartet. Pulkingham is a prodigiously talented guitarist, equally adept on electric and acoustic instruments, in styles ranging from rock to blues to classical. Standefer, of course, also dabbles in the classical genre, but he is capable of going head-to-head with Pulkingham or Escovedo (or both!) in rock-style guitar-cello trades. With Pulkingham on lead, Escovedo concentrated on the rhythm role, occasionally bursting forth with slashing lead runs. Munoz kept everything tightly under control with his polyrhythmic barrage.

I've purposefully saved the best for last. Bassist Mark Andes, the eldest member of the band at 58, seemed as much a spiritual participant as a musical one. He entered the club carrying his bass and accompanied by a striking young blonde who could have just walked out of a late '60s head shop. As they passed by, he turned to us, smiled and said hello. I was taken back some 36 years, to the only time I saw Spirit in concert, a December 1970 appearance in a Riverside, Calif., high school gymnasium.

The first thing Andes did on taking the stage was give Escovedo a loving hug. He plugged in and they went to work.

From Escovedo's new release came "Arizona," "Break This Time," "Dear Head on the Wall," "Take Your Place" and the title track. But the band also played selections from his earlier releases. Totally unexpected was a raucous version of Iggy Pop's "I Want to Be Your Dog," purportedly the product of a liaison between Mr. Pop and Bela Bartok.

Throughout the performance there was an urgency that perhaps comes with the recognition of mortality. Besides Escovedo's own brush with death, Andes' longtime Spirit bandmate and friend, keyboardist John Locke, died last August. Whatever inspired it, it made for another memorable night in Austin.

Jazz on Disc

Final Russ Long recording is a collaborative gem

By Tom Ineck



RUSS LONG
Time to Go: The Music of Russ Long
 Russ Long Records

The rare talent and wry comic genius of Kansas City pianist and vocalist Russ Long are legendary among his many friends, fans and musical cohorts. But until recently much of his extensive songbook has been undocumented and virtually unknown to the public.

“Time to Go: The Music of Russ Long” corrects that omission in style, with 14 Long compositions performed anew by an ensemble consisting of stellar KC musicians. The **Berman Music Foundation** helped make this project possible with financial support, at the urging of longtime Long friend, bassist and BMF consultant Gerald Spaits.

In the true spirit of collaboration, Long and Spaits chose the tunes that would be included. Spaits transcribed much of the music and the two co-wrote the arrangements. Spaits then hired the musicians that could best interpret the charts and wrote out their parts. The result is a stunning recording of original music, lovingly rendered by a septet of compatible craftsmen. At the core is the threesome of Long, Spaits and drummer Ray DeMarchi, who have performed as a trio for more

than 20 years and who were featured several years ago on the BMF-produced CD “Never Let Me Go.”

But what makes this session so memorable is the expansive sound of the larger ensemble, with saxophonists Charles Perkins and David Chael, trumpeter Stan Kessler and trombonist Paul McKee. The brass voicing is warm and embracing, giving the sound an intimate feel that enhances the personal nature of this tribute. Needless to say, the ensemble’s performance is flawless and the overall sound is pristine.

In his modest manner, Long downplays his ability at the keyboard in a brief introductory statement, saying that it wasn’t until the 1980s he knew he was a piano player. Judging by the wealth of original compositions here, he was developing as a distinctive tunesmith long before that.

“Woodland Park” is a snappy little opener that has the brass moving in close formation, with urgent emphasis by Kessler on trumpet. Perkins opens “Serenade” with a lovely bass clarinet statement, giving the tune an appropriately lazy, relaxed quality. McKee expands on that mood before handing it off to Spaits. Long proves his keyboard mastery with typically subtle contributions.

The title track returns to an easy-swinging medium tempo, while “Meatloaf” picks up the pace with a bluesy gusto and solos by McKee, Chael and Kessler, who trades fiery fours with DeMarchi. Dark, minor chords introduce “E-Train” in bluesy brass harmony before opening into a more conventional blues pattern, perfectly expressed in solos by Perkins, McKee, Chael and Long.

In an obvious tip of the hat to Miles

Davis, “s’Miles” is a hard-charging bop tune with excellent solo takes by Perkins on flute, Kessler, Chael and McKee. “Etude” is a moody classically influenced piece pairing piano and trombone. “Shoemaker” and “Can City” are both swinging uptempo tunes, which may cause some confusion for the listener. The titles were inadvertently transposed on the CD.

“Spider” has a loping, aptly spider-like movement with an interesting, descending chord progression. Another bluesy mid-tempo offering is “I Don’t Care Who,” with Chael, McKee and Perkins and Spaits delivering relaxed but forceful solos and Long comping with casual aplomb. Perhaps the most profoundly moving piece is also the most simple, a two-minute brass chorale called “Parallel,” with horns stating the chord progression in harmony and the rhythm section comping gently.

But what is a Russ Long recording without his unmistakable voice? As an apt closer, he treats us to a brief rendition of Cole Porter classic “You’d Be So Nice to Come Home To.”

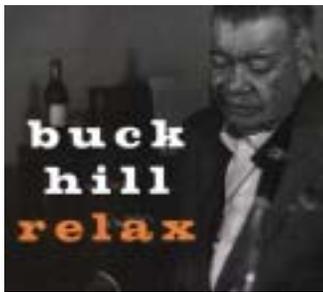
The wild card here is guitarist Pat Metheny’s solo acoustic rendition of Long’s gorgeous ballad “Never Was Love,” a longtime favorite of Metheny’s that he recorded without a chart—by memory. Metheny also contributed liner notes praising Long for his lasting influence more than 30 years ago, when the guitarist—still a teen—played in Long’s organ combo. “One of the highlights of my life as a musician,” Metheny writes, “has been the chance to play with one of Kansas City’s greatest musicians ever—Russ Long.”

Spaits reports that the ensemble

Jazz on Disc continued on page 14

Jazz on Disc continued from page 13

recordings for “Time to Go” were completed in just two sessions, with most tunes captured in the first take. Long’s tasteful choice of comping chords throughout the session is a testament to his bandleader’s unerring ear, much like that other KC legend, Count Basie. Unusual in today’s world of extended jams—that too often go nowhere—six of the 15 tunes clock in at under four minutes, all well-polished and shimmering gems.



BUCK HILL
Relax
Severn Records

As he approaches 80, Roger “Buck” Hill could be forgiven for slowing the pace a bit. But no, the Washington, D.C.-based tenor saxophonist insists on swinging with gusto on his latest effort. A blue-collar worker who kept a day job as mail carrier throughout most of his jazz career, Hill still knows the value of good, hard work.

“Relax” gets its title from the second track, a suitably relaxed mid-tempo swinger. For Hill, however, the blues are never far away. The blues feel is enhanced by John Ozment on Hammond organ, guitarist Paul Pieper and drummer Jerry Jones, creating the classic soul jazz setting for Hill’s muscular tenor.

The burner “RH Blues” opens the CD with a charging reminder of Hill’s roots. “Little Bossa” gets everyone involved, beginning with Ozment, then Hill and finally Pieper, while the bossa beat keeps Jones on his toes.

Miles Davis is well represented here, with three of his tunes programmed consecutively: the exotic excursion “Flamenco Sketches,” the bluesy “Prancing” and the boppish “Milestones.”

Hill also shows his ability to emote on the ballad standard “Old Folks.” His intonation and breath control, where age in horn players usually starts to show, remains strong even in the upper ranges. The Hill original “Sad Ones” closes the recording on a wistful note.

Ozment, Pieper and Jones admirably back Hill’s brawny tenor blasts and add their own touches to an all-around satisfying listen. As he ably ranges the Hammond keyboards and bass foot pedals, Ozment is especially effective in helping to establish the easy swinging groove that dominates the session.

That Hill himself wrote half the tunes is a testament to his involvement in this project, his first recording as a leader in almost 15 years. A welcome return to the spotlight, indeed!



ROGER KELLAWAY
Heroes
IPO Recordings

Pianist Roger Kellaway, explaining the magic of Oscar Peterson’s early drummerless trios, describes it as “the will to swing.” Likewise, Kellaway’s latest release on IPO Recordings, with guitarist Bruce Forman and bassist Dan Lutz, expresses that same will to swing—a propulsive, often breathtaking, always rhythmically charged performance that leaves the listener thor-

oughly satisfied—and astounded.

The threesome is a cohesive team, clinging to the challenging tempos with faultless technique and devil-take-the-hindmost bravado. The collective interplay often is extended—three of the 10 tracks are over eight minutes—and the mood is alternately breezy and intense. It seems Kellaway, Forman and Lutz may be capable of anything, from the blues swagger of “Killer Joe” to the driving “Cotton Tail” to the relaxed “I Was Doing All Right” to the sublime “Nuages.”

In terms of repertoire, there are few surprises here and only one original tune. Most of the tunes are taken from Peterson’s 1950s recordings. It is the camaraderie and prodigious playing of Kellaway and his fellow-travelers that elevate this set far above the ordinary. “Night Train,” for example, captures all the bluesy bluster of the Jimmy Forrest classic, but offsets the bombast with lyrical stride piano passages that cleverly avoid cliché. After Kellaway’s stately solo introduction, Forman picks up the mood with dazzling guitar runs as Lutz keeps a steady walking bass line before taking a brilliant solo of his own. Finally, the trio blazes a three-way trail to the finish line with call-and-answer precision.

Kellaway’s aptly titled “I’m Smiling Again” is a brief, but joyful romp with Lutz taking the lead melody line in a lyrical style reminiscent of Ray Brown. Forman keeps the rhythm chugging along as Kellaway adds deft flourishes. In reharmonizing “Midnight Sun,” the trio has created a new interpretation, with cascading chords and a wistful Latin tinge. For less emotionally charged material, Kellaway and company turn to “Moten Swing” and the furiously paced and fearlessly executed “52nd Street Theme.”

After an unusually long pause between tracks, the trio returns with its grand finale, Oscar Peterson’s gospel-tinged paean “Hymn to Freedom.” Kellaway begins with mournful, blues-

drenched chords and leaping arpeggios, building slowly as Forman and Lutz enter more than half-way through the eight-minute piece. They drop out again, as Kellaway takes it home with an exquisite piano coda.

It simply doesn't get any better than this.



SONNY ROLLINS
Sonny, Please
Doxy Records

At 75, Sonny Rollins entered a new phase in his amazing six-decade career in the forefront of modern, post-bop jazz. He inaugurated his own Doxy label, and its first release is a humdinger.

"Sonny, Please," named for a term of endearment used frequently by his late wife, Lucille, is simultaneously a reaffirmation of his staying power and a confident step forward. To sustain his comfort level, Rollins has gathered around him a well-established group of compatible musicians—nephew Clifton Anderson on trombone, Bobby Broom on guitar, longtime comrade Bob Cranshaw on bass, Steve Jordan on drums and Kimati Dinizulu on percussion. Rollins penned four of the seven tunes in this hour-long set.

The lead-off title track is a brash, bold venture that perfectly illustrates the brawny Rollins sound, still as robust as ever. Noel Coward's rarely heard "Someday I'll Find You" proves a lyrical vehicle for Rollins' waltz-time proclivities, with especially tasteful contributions by Broom and Cranshaw.

"Nishi" swings with blues power as Rollins digs deep into his bag of sly

references, Jordan delivers a crackling drum solo, and Anderson follows with a muted statement. Rollins faithfully renders the melody to "Stairway to the Stars" before deconstructing it in typical fashion. "Remembering Tommy" is a gently swinging tribute to the late pianist and frequent Rollins collaborator Tommy Flanagan.

Rollins returns to the dance floor in waltz time with Drigo's tender "Serenade (Love Serenade)." In stretching it to more than eight minutes, Rollins creates a panoply of variations on the theme. With the closer, "Park Palace Parade," he again dabbles in one of his favorite rhythmic genres, the calypso sounds of Trinidad.

"Sonny, Please" has been justly nominated for a Grammy Award in the category of best jazz instrumental album. If anyone deserves continued success and critical accolades, it is Sonny Rollins.



EDDIE DANIELS
Mean What You Say
IPO Recordings

Eddie Daniels, like another inveterate swinger, Ken Peplowski, is equally adept on the tenor saxophone and the clarinet. On 2005's "Mean What You Say," Daniels showcases both instruments in a solid repertoire, largely consisting of standards, and accompanied by a trio of giants—pianist Hank Jones, bassist Richard Davis and drummer Kenny Washington.

Daniels displays his straight-ahead tenor chops on the opening title track by the pianist's late brother, Thad.

Switching to clarinet, he leaps and frolics through "It Had to Be You," gently essays Billy Strayhorn's "Passion Flower" and throws sparks on the frantic "Nagasaki," as Jones strides with aplomb and Washington expertly keeps the hectic pace with brushes.

It's back to the tenor sax for an absolutely beautiful version of the popular ballad "My One and Only Love." Daniels is all over the horn, exhibiting his trademark burnished tone and deft fingering. Jones, age 87 at the time of this recording, contributes a subtly spectacular solo with consummate good taste.

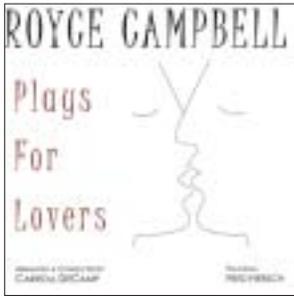
Daniels and Jones co-penned the three-minute gem, "Why You..." a clever and joyful romp for clarinet and piano duo. The easy swinging, lyrical Ellington tune "Azure," is the perfect vehicle for clarinet, with the trio gracefully laying back. Clarinet is again the lead instrument on a mid-tempo version of Ray Noble's "The Touch of Your Lips," decorated by Jones' stately keyboard contributions.

The tempo swings mightily on "You and the Night and the Music," another showcase for Daniels' tenor excursions and Jones' stylish pianistics, with precision, stop-time trades with Washington. The clarinet leaps back in for "I'm Getting Sentimental over You" and Charlie Parker's rumba-tinged tune "My Little Suede Shoes." Acting as the closing bookend on the recording, Daniels' brawny tenor returns one more time for an uptempo take on "How Deep is the Ocean," with another brilliant solo by Jones.

While billed as The Eddie Daniels Quartet, the ensemble is immensely influenced by the presence of the masterful Mr. Jones, a significant contribution that Daniels acknowledges throughout. Despite more than 20 years difference in their ages, they prove a musically compatible team in a memorably executed session.

Jazz on Disc continued on page 16

Discorama continued from page 21



**ROYCE CAMPBELL
Plays For Lovers
Moon Cycle Records**

A prolific, but underappreciated, mainstream jazz guitarist, Royce Campbell has released some 15 recordings of his own since his debut in 1990, most of them on small labels, including five on his own Moon Cycle Records.

Originally released in 1999 under the title “Waltz for Debby” on the Japanese King Records label, “Plays for Lovers” is exactly the lush, romantic outing you would expect from its title. In addition to well-regarded romanticist Fred Hersch at the piano, the session boasts the great bassist Lynn Seaton, drummer Mark Wolfey and a classical ensemble of strings, brass and woodwinds that enhances the mood without intruding on the superb craftsmanship of the players.

The repertoire contains many of the usual suspects for a collection of romantic melodies—the gentle bossa nova “Est-tate,” the evergreen “Body and Soul,” Bill Evans classic “Waltz for Debby,” Johnny Mandel’s “A Time for Love,” Cole Porter’s “I Concentrate on You,” the well-worn standard “But Beautiful,” and the Gordon Jenkins ballad “This Is All I Ask,” famously covered by Tony Bennett, Nat Cole, Perry Como, and Frank Sinatra.

Tempo vary slightly from ballads to mid-tempo swingers, but always guided by Campbell’s light touch on the fretboard. “I Concentrate on You,” for example, swings for over nine minutes, while affording Campbell, Hersch and Seaton plenty of room to express themselves in

solos and in trades with Wolfey. Most of the nine tracks average five minutes each.

Campbell’s own compositions, “Sounds of Love” and “I Feel like We Have Met Before,” are ideally suited for the occasion. A gorgeous violin solo by Cathy Morris introduces the latter, segueing into a Hersch statement before the pianist turns it over to Campbell for a full statement of the theme, with Morris returning for a tender summation.

The yearning “This Is All I Ask” is a delightful showcase for Campbell’s melodic talents and lyrical phrasing, guaranteed to make two lovers of friends. In fact, “Royce Campbell Plays for Lovers” is the perfect soundtrack for a cold winter’s night in front of the fire with someone near and dear.



**MINGUS BIG BAND
Live in Tokyo
Sue Mingus Music/Sunnyside**

Formed 15 years ago to pay tribute to the music of the late, great composer, bass player and bandleader Charles Mingus, the Mingus Big Band continues to honor its namesake with a tough, aggressive and bluesy sound on “Live in Tokyo.” Recorded on New Year’s Eve 2005 at the Blue Note, it is the eighth release since the band’s recording debut in 1993 and the first on the Sue Mingus Music label, under the auspices of the composer’s widow.

Herein, the 14-piece ensemble reels off eight tunes by the master, including the hard-charging opener “Wham Bam,” a 50s vintage piece arranged by baritone saxophonist Ronnie Cuber. “Opus Four,” from the early ‘70s, is a typically complex

Mingus chart, with stop-time shifts segueing into solo statements by trombonist Frank Lacy, trumpeter Eddie Henderson and pianist Dave Kikoski. Again delving into the 1950s Mingus songbook, the band presents Steve Slagle’s arrangement of the ballad “Celia” as a vehicle for alto saxophonist Craig Handy.

Cuber also contributed the arrangement for “Bird Calls,” which Mingus wrote in the 1950s as a bop tribute to Charlie “Bird” Parker. Beginning with band members vocally and instrumentally mimicking the tweets and squawks of tropical birds, it kicks into high gear with successive sax solos by Cuber, Seamus Blake on tenor, Handy on alto and Abraham Burton on alto. They trade in furious rotation, raising the ante with every round. Kikoski eventually dives into the fray for a stunning piano solo.

“Meditations” is a 10-minute tour de force of constantly shifting tempos and time signatures that perfectly exhibits the ensemble’s precision and dedication with beautiful and haunting brass voicing. It is fitting that the soulful “Prayer for Passive Resistance,” composed by Mingus in the ‘60s, was the last piece of music arranged by longtime band member and tenor saxophonist John Stubblefield, who died in July 2005. Wayne Escoffery masterfully takes the helm at tenor in Stubblefield’s absence.

Despite the implications of its gloomy title, “Free Cell Block F” is an upbeat tune featuring a sprightly flute solo by Handy and equally expressive statements by trombonists Conrad Herwig and Lacy and baritone saxophonist Cuber. Finally, Lacy takes the pulpit as preacher on the hell-raising “Ecclusiastics,” setting the stage for tenor sax workouts by Escoffery and Blake.

Drummer Johnathan Blake drives the entire proceedings with forceful precision. It is comforting for Mingus fans to know that more than 27 years after the composer’s death in 1979 his music continues to inspire faithfully fiery interpretations such as those captured by the superb musicians on “Live in Tokyo.” Long live Mingus!

Discorama

Like an onion, Vogt release reveals many layers

By Butch Berman



ANDREW VOGT
Action Plan
 Drew's Blues Records

I've known Andrew Vogt for more than a decade, and even in his early 20s he gave the appearance of an "action man." Laid back, but hyped; a little drifty, but extremely focused; sensitive, yet intense. You knew he was headed somewhere, hence a plan.

He left Nebraska, woodshedded on the cruise ships, overcame a health setback, moved to Colorado, gigged a lot, recorded with the likes of Jason Hollar, and now—finally—put out a record under his own moniker. "Action Plan," indeed.

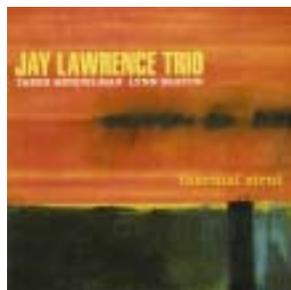
It's a nifty little CD packed with a bunch of great tunes penned by Andrew and played to perfection. It took me to the zone upon first listening, and, like an onion, it reveals all sorts of cool shit within the grooves upon repeated listening. I seem to like it more each time, and I dug it a whole bunch from the first sit-down.

Oh yeah...Andrew plays sax, all of 'em, and a mean clarinet as well. This cat blows with a sound, clarity and delivery of a much older, more seasoned player. We both share a love for the late, great Art Pepper, and his spirit shines through his astounding reed work. The cleverly titled "Art Peppershaker" showcases his fondness for Art, yet his

style is all Andrew Vogt.

Andrew's backed by a fine group of presumably Colorado pros featuring the tasteful touch of Mark Sloniker on the piano. Eric Applegate holds down the bass work tightly, along with drummer Mark Raynes, who combine to be a most able rhythm section. Rich Chiaraluce handles the other sax chair along with Kevin Whalen on trumpet, creating a superb frontline with Vogt. The double-clarinet performance by Andrew and Rick on "Fry Tin" is terrific. Andrew's solo experience on the piano/sax duo "Never No Not Far" was stirring and simply lovely, as was Sloniker's fluid accompaniment.

"Action Plan" was recorded at Notable Fine Audio in Denver by Colin Bricker, who created a most decent environment, capturing a wonderful, true jazz sound by all involved. Jeff Blume's neat photo work and layout make "Action Plan" a must-have for 2007. Plan to take immediate action and go out and get it. Where? Go to www.drewsblues.com for all the info and...all that jazz.



JAY LAWRENCE TRIO
Thermal Strut
 OA2 Records

I get tons of recordings for review, and probably would not have

gotten to this fine product if I hadn't noticed two names that rang loud bells. I first encountered the master bassist Lynn Seaton while attending a Jamie Aebersold jazz clinic near Chicago several years ago. He's an outgoing guy with a heart as big as his body, plus an immense talent to boot. His supple playing has astounded me ever since.

I heard and met pianist Tamir Hendelman with the Jeff Hamilton Trio when I was working the now-defunct Topeka Jazz Festival in Kansas and admired his chops greatly. The drummer and leader of this group and session is Jay Lawrence. I had not been graced by his presence, nor heard his resounding, percussive style before. When you put these three cats together, look out. "Thermal Strut" is as incendiary as its title.

All the up-tempo tunes sizzle. Nobody can out do Cozy Cole on "Topsy," but these top-notch players take it to another place that still captures the original magic of the "cozy" one. I was most blown away by their fab arrangement of The Beatles' "You Can't Do That" that almost romps and stomps itself off the CD player. It swings THAT hard!

No clunkers anywhere on this disc, as this album's track list reads like a great night out on the town to hear really good jazz. A lovely take on Jimmy Rowles' "Peacocks" ends this excursion on a sweet note, and nobody does Slam Stewart like Lynn Seaton, which kicks off this splendid piece of work on the opening title track. Yup..."Thermal Strut." It'll get you hot, and make you want to dance. Indeed.

*Concert Review***Norman Hedman & Tropique get rave review in NYC***By Harry Maisonette*

The following is a review of the Oct. 6 performance of Norman Hedman & Tropique at the American Museum of Natural History. The band, which has a longtime association with the **Berman Music Foundation**, appeared as part of the museum's "Starry Nights" series. This review is reprinted by permission of Jazz Improv, which publishes *Jazz Improv Magazine* (a quarterly of 250-300 pages with a companion CD in each issue), which NPR's Curious Listener's Guide to Jazz described as "hands down the best," and *Jazz Improv's New York Jazz Guide*, New York's largest circulation jazz monthly, available at 250 locations and as a downloadable PDF from www.jazzimprov.com. To subscribe to *Jazz Improv Magazine* or *Jazz Improv's New York Jazz Guide* call 1-888-472-0670 or write Jazz Improv, P.O. Box 26770, Elkins Park, PA 19027.

Walking in the brisk fall New York air and entering "Starry Nights" at the Natural History Museum, all the stars were aligned in the Norman Hedman universe. The Rose Center Conservatory, cavernous in scope, seemed to transport one back to the Palladium or the St. George, where Latin and Latin jazz music first held court. The stars of this universe were Tito Puente, Eddie Palmieri, Ray Barretto and Joe Cuba to name but a few. As soon as you walked into this huge ballroom, you could feel the pulsing of the bass and the pounding ring of the percussion.

Ah, I was home again courtesy of Norman Hedman and Tropique. And they were taking flight on a tune called "Flight of the Spirit," a piece in 6/8 reminiscent of the Tito/Mongo/Bob groove. It proved to be a perfect vehicle for this setting. Smooth, flowing, clean and tight, the transformation was complete. I was in Latin jazz and Latin soul heaven. The band's funky solos showed off this won-

derful unit's cohesiveness and polish, signaling what was yet to come.

Hedman is a renaissance man if ever there was one; musician, composer, producer, and scholar; a hands-on player who makes his own percussion instruments. With a polished attitude yet humble demeanor, Hedman allows you readily into his universe and says, "Welcome and enjoy the ride."

The next selection up was "Rundadar Dance," written by vibraphonist Alexei Tsiganov. The percussion at first traded licks with pianist Misha Tsiganov, the other half of this brother team, and urged the band along. As they broke into a funky mambo jazz, flutist Craig Rivers took a tasty solo, followed by Alexei on vibes showcasing his tune. This is a cat that definitely has his clave together. A Latin-piano vamp followed, introducing us to Hedman on congas. His riffs, slaps and rolls grooved in the pocket and made for a smoking tune. "Walk in the Moonlight," a piece written by Hedman in a bolero jazz groove with flute and sax blowing the harmonious rhythm, took the tempo down. A segue into a slow guaracha and back to bolero provided ample space for the vibes and piano to lay down flowing textured solos, meeting again for the melody to cap off this relaxing and beautiful arrangement.

Hedman and the members of Tropique set the pace perfectly, constantly mindful of their audience while moving from one chart to the other. In return, an eclectic crowd of all ages and backgrounds applauded in all the right places. On "Cutting Loose," bassist Ron Monroe and Hedman on congas laid down funky rhythms before the rest of the group joined in to create a mélange of Latin soul, jazz, and Caribbean funk highlighting the piano and vibes. This, I

learned later, is what separates and defines Norman Hedman's Tropique—his ability and willingness to incorporate different rhythms, genres and cultures into his music.

The last selection of the evening was the self-titled "Hed-Theme," inspired by Hedman's travels, observations and daily rituals of living. The chart began with shades of the "I Love Lucy" theme, something Hedman remembers as one of his first personal experiences that has remained with him. The band heated up on this one as Norman laid down that Latin tumbao, followed by Willie Martinez—one of the hottest drummers on the scene today—on timbales. This led into a ripping piano solo by Misha Tsiganov that flowed like a rumba, transitioning into a fiery sax solo courtesy of Roger Byam while Monroe laid down the foundation and kept it going. As for the percussion, Martinez led the way. Demonstrating his funkiness and dexterity on timbales, rolls, flams, rimshots, and various combinations thereof erupted out of the drums, all placed perfectly on the 2-3 clave. The band was bounding along to a heavy descarga finish. As Hedman's turn came to put his tag on the chart, he exemplified a command of the rumba with a round of slaps and beats before riffing in a cohesive and exhilarating flurry reminiscent of his early mentor, Mongo Santamaria. The mark of a true drummer, Hedman made the drum talk in his own unique musical language.

Norman Hedman & Tropique are a unit whose time has come. His ability to fuse different genres—Latin, r&b, Latin soul—makes for an exciting yet unique style. If you run across this exciting group, don't pass it up. Stay and enjoy the ride; you won't regret it.

Letters to the Editor

Friends and musicians offer salutations

Reader loved Russ Long tribute

Dear Butch,

I just now saw, read, loved your commentary covering the Russ Long tribute. On behalf of all who have yet to read it (as well as those who have and have already expressed their gratitude) thank you for the kind... generous... glowing review. It really was a very special event. I'm glad we got to at least say hello to each other and momentarily press flesh... lots of flesh was pressed that night! Hope to see you again soon.

Carol Comer
Kansas City, Mo.

Editor: You can read the Russ Long tribute in the September newsletter.

Museum tour gets warm thanks

Dear Butch,

I can't thank you enough for the delightful time I shared with you, as you showed Roy (Nifoussi) and I your marvelous music foundation collection. The wine was great, the coffee most excellent and the conversation spectacular. It was a perfect way for me to wind down from a long, hard day in court, sharing our passion for music.

Your home is a sanctuary for all that is wonderful about music and helping to maintain its essential qualities for generations to come.

We must keep in touch.

Warm regards,

Dan Beckwith

Jim Monroe fan takes exception

The slam on Jim Monroe in your newsletter was in VERY bad taste. Kick the dead guy... Shame on you for publishing this!

Patti Wilkinson
Wife of saxophonist Todd Wilkinson
Topeka, Kan.

Editor: The piece (which appears in the September newsletter) to which you refer is clearly identified as commentary. While critical of Monroe's authoritarian style, it also praises him for his dedication to live jazz as music director of the Topeka Jazz Festival for seven years.

Praise for BMF website

Butch,

I like your site. Looks like you've spent countless hours on it.

Jim Vanderslice

Demuth story and BMF earn thanks and high praise

Dear Sir,

First of all, let me thank you for having published the wonderful article by my good friend Dan Demuth. I was most touched by its content and was very honored to be featured in your very good review.

I have known Dan and his lovely wife, Patti, for some years as they both lived next to my daughter in Colorado Springs. He has a tremendous record collection (some 10,000) and also a great library. During one of my visits, I found some 100 copies of The New Republic review which I eagerly consulted for writing many articles about the political scene of the '30s.

For many years, as mentioned in the article, I have been writing about jazz in various reviews in French, English and Spanish. I also write some quizzes for these publications and attached you will find one of them you may want to submit to your numerous readers.

With Dan's permission, I had a local newspaper, The Cheyenne Edition, recopy and publish the original article with a minor change, as it was Duke Ellington and not Louis Armstrong who recorded "Jubilee Stomp" and "Take it Easy."

I really enjoyed your jazz review and its presentation, text, and colors are above par, so keep up the good work

Wishing you and yours the very best, I want to say:

"Un Joyeux Noel Et Une Bonne Annee..."

Swingcerely yours,

Jean Reldy
Colorado Springs, Colo.

Editor: Read the Dan Demuth profile on Jean Reldy in the September newsletter. Mr. Reldy's jazz quiz is on page 9.



To order a Russ Long CD, send a check for \$18 to Gerald Spaitz, 4 East 57th Terrace, Kansas City, Mo., 64113.



Non Profit Org.
 U.S. Postage
PAID
 Permit No. 1359
 Lincoln, NE

Butch Berman Charitable Music Foundation

719 P St. Studio G
Lincoln, NE 68508

Return Service Requested

Claude gives Regina a fiddle lesson



Photo by Russ Dantzler

Virtuoso violinists Claude Williams and Regina Carter first met many years ago at Russ Dantzler's 4th floor walkup a block south of Birdland in New York City. The late "Fiddler" Williams, who died in 2004 at age 96, assumed the role of mentor to the young violinist, who has since achieved much success in the jazz world.

How can you help the foundation?

The Berman Music Foundation is a non-profit, tax exempt, 501(c)(3) private foundation, and your tax deductible donation is needed to help offset the costs of this newsletter and its programs.

\$ 10 \$ 25 \$ 50
 \$100 \$250 Other

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____
 Fax _____
 E-mail _____

**Make check payable to Berman Music Foundation at:
 Berman Music Foundation
 719 P St., Studio G
 Lincoln, NE 68508**

Thanks for supporting jazz!