

Saxophonist Benny Waters and pianist Jane Jarvis to play the Zoo Bar in Lincoln

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Benny Waters & Jane Jarvis to meet March 9 at Zoo Bar

By Tom Ineck

On March 9, the Berman Music Foundation brings to Lincoln's Zoo Bar two of the most talented jazz musicians of any age.

The fact that alto saxophonist Benny Waters is 95 years old and pianist Jane Jarvis is 81 should make no difference, although it looks good in headlines and on syndicated talk shows, where Waters has been making the rounds since his birthday Jan. 23.

No matter. When Zoo Bar patrons witness Waters and Jarvis in action, the hype will be replaced by the real thing, two musicians who have spent their lives playing jazz and seeking new musical adventures. Come to think of it, sometimes the hype is the real thing.

Waters and Jarvis will be accompanied by two of Kansas City's best rhythm players, bassist Bob Bowman and drummer Todd Strait.

In its preview of the 95th birthday bash in Waters' honor at Birdland in New York City, The New Yorker magazine wrote "Waters predates jazz itself. That this saxman can still conjure up the lusty pleasures of the swing era is a combined triumph of art and endurance."

Whether Waters predates jazz is debatable, but his 80-year career does run roughly parallel to jazz's entire recorded history.

Since returning to the United States after 40 years in Europe, Waters has been reestablishing his career. Despite total blindness, he is a featured member of the Statesmen of Jazz, a band of elders that includes Jarvis.

Jarvis, a child prodigy, was regularly playing piano on radio at the age of 11. She went on to become organ accompanist for the Milwaukee Braves, the New York Mets

and the New York Jets and produced more than 300 sessions for Muzak using top-flight studio musicians and arrangements. Since 1979, Jarvis has devoted herself entirely to jazz piano performance and education.

A few days before their Lincoln visit, Waters and Jarvis will perform a concert March 6 at Unity Temple on the Plaza in Kansas City. The day after their Zoo Bar appearance, Waters will do three master classes at the UNL, and Jarvis is scheduled to do a master class for the Lincoln Public Schools at a site to be announced.

The door will open at 6 p.m. for this special Sunday Zoo Bar event, which is also the 48th birthday party for foundation trustee Butch Berman. The performance is 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Tickets are \$10. For more information, call the Berman Music Foundation office at 476-3112.

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The Prez sez ...

Dear Readers,

Are you as excited as I am about my "really big show" 48th Birthday Party open to the public at the Zoo Bar featuring Jane Jarvis and Benny Waters? Well, you should be. I'm hoping for this to be the watershed of many annual Jazz Parties that may bloom into (sorta) the same legendary Denver soirees that Dick Gibson used to throw.

That's why I chose Benny and Jane to kick this puppy off. Jane's style, grace, and buoyancy sets off her brilliant piano work like nobody you've ever seen before...and Benny will just plain knock your socks off. Plus, what better power-packed rhythm section to handle this dynamite duo that KC's own Bob Bowman on bass, and Todd Strait on drums. They don't work for Concord's recording star, Karrin Allyson, as the pulse of her swinging band for nothing! You get the picture. This show's gonna kick butt big time. Oh, by the way...did I mention that Jane is just barely past 80, and Benny just turned 95 (and is sightless as well). Hope I can keep up with 'em.

Anyway, after this knockout month of seeing Bobby Watson in Brownville, the Verve JazzFest in KC, and our own fab show at the Lied with Christian McBride and Joe Lovano - this Zoo bash backed by the Foundation should be a genuine springboard into spring. You remember spring...birds, bees, and a lil' sunshine at last.

Next, a major thumbs up goes out to the new Lied Center director, Charles Bethea, who rang me up at home just to say howdy and thank me for our support and offer to collaborate with us to make Lincoln the jazzy kind of community I've always dreamed of. Best of luck, Charles - we're with you all the way.

I wish I could say the same for the Updowntowners, who led me to believe that my input would be included in their steering committee to help make the July Jamm a real blues and jazz festival - and not just the majority of Zoo Bar regs doing their thing in an outdoor setting. There IS room for jazz at this venue - so you can see how disappointed I was upon returning from Denver to recall my phone messages and hear they held the meeting without me and they decided to let me call Karrin Allyson to offer her a mid-afternoon spot for the paltry sum of somewhere between \$300 to \$500. A true insult for talent the likes of Karrin. I guess they figured since the Foundation brought in Allyson before I might be able to get her for that slot and price. Well, NO WAY!! I respect Karrin and what my Foundation stands for and what we are trying to achieve in the name of jazz. We were willing to donate time, energy, press, and cashola to make the July Jamm a bit jazzier, but...well...maybe next year - yeah, maybe.

I also want to say a public "thank you" to Elena and Doug Talley (of KC's The Doug Talley Quartet) for hosting a grand buffet for us when we were in town covering the Verve JazzFest. We finally got to meet face to face with the Talleys, Lee and Keith Kavanaugh (she of Diva fame, is doing an interview with me for Midwest Jazz, a publication

by Arts Midwest that cover jazz event in the Midwest, and he, a fine drummer with The Doug Talley Quartet), plus connecting in person with Doug Tatum from the Folly Theater Jazz Series. KC's got this community thing down. Doug Talley is playing with the Peru State College Jazz Band at a jazz festival at Peru State College in Peru, Nebraska on April 2. Check out our column with additional info on another jazz show not to be missed!

Gotta move 'n' groove - see ya in the sunshine. Stay tuned for my full Seattle Valentine's Day report, including cool stuff from Michele Michaels, bringing you the musical message from George Cables and Andrienne Wilson, and all the jazz news that's fit to print from the great Northwest.

Later,



Butch Berman

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Lovano and McBride show different styles

By Tom Ineck

The Feb. 8 concert by saxophonist Joe Lovano and bassist Christian McBride at the Lied Center for Performing Arts was a study in contrasting styles.

The double bill was made possible, in part, by a grant from the Berman Music Foundation.

Lovano and McBride, who have performed and recorded together frequently, led their own quartets using the same instrumentation -- tenor sax, piano, bass and drums -- but all similarities ended there. Lovano, at 44, is McBride's senior by 20 years, but the generation gap does not fully explain their different approaches.

As with all jazz musicians, their very individual sounds are largely determined by the artists who most influenced them, by their education and technical abilities and by their attitudes.

Born in Philadelphia in 1972, McBride draws inspiration from his hometown legacy of soul and from fusion jazz. His attitude is shaped by the "Godfather of Soul," James Brown. When combined with his formal jazz and classical bass training, that makes for a very eclectic mix, which was reflected in his hourlong set at the Lied.

After his colleagues played him onto the stage with the funky melody of "The Jeffersons" TV theme song, McBride quickly picked up his acoustic bass and launched into "Whirling Dervish," an uptempo tune from his second release as a leader, 1996's "Number Two Express." Everyone in the band was featured in this opening tour de force, most notably Tim Warfield wailing a Coltrane-style tenor solo and drummer Carl Allen, who exhibited the full range of percussive colors at his disposal.

From "Gettin' To It," McBride's first release, came "The Shade of the Cedar Tree," the bassist's lyrical tribute to pianist Cedar Walton. Warfield quoted from "My Blue Heaven" during his breezy solo, and McBride deftly reprised the melody and added several variations. Wayne Shorter's ballad "Miyako," written for his daughter, was the perfect showpiece for McBride's outstanding arco bass work.

For "Divergence," a romping fusion tune, McBride switched to five-string electric bass and pianist Charles Craig shifted between the grand piano and the space-age sounds of a Korg electronic keyboard. Warfield's solo started with slow, almost uncertain, lines and built the momentum to a fury.

An accomplished musician who also understands the importance of showmanship, McBride closed his set with "Gettin' To It," dedicated to funkmaster James Brown and featuring a few smooth moves from JB's bag of tricks.

By comparison, Lovano's 75-minute performance was much more cerebral. The tenor saxophonist, named Down Beat magazine's artist of the year for the last two years, dived into a hard-charging hard-bop rendition of his



Photo by Jimmy Katz

Joe Lovano, who performed Feb. 8 at the Lied Center

own "Fort Worth" that was full of forced overtones and wailing harmonics reminiscent of late-period Coltrane. A microphone attached to the bell of the horn allowed him to roam the stage while playing. Drummer Yoron Israel set up layer upon layer of driving polyrhythms.

The mid-tempo "Birds of Springtimes Gone By" featured a melodic solo by pianist Kenny Werner, whose playing always is edgy, unpredictable and intensely compelling, and the percussive -- and eccentric -- bass playing of Dennis Irwin.

From his latest release, "Celebrating Sinatra," Lovano chose the ballad "Imagination," which featured a solo intro on tenor, brilliant brush-and-cymbal work by Israel and a long tenor solo constructed of short brassy bursts alternating with long, snaking lines.

The ambitious "New York Fascination" and "Sanctuary" were drawn from a suite commissioned by the Lincoln Center and not yet recorded. The abrupt stops and starts of the opening segment seemed to mimic the big-city bustle. Werner's solo combined rolling chord clusters and single-note cascades. Concluding Lovano's set was the furious "Blackwell's Message," a tribute to the late percussionist Ed Blackwell.

The two quartets did not join in a climactic jam, as many had hoped they would, but the Lied audience of 1,000 seemed satisfied.

As usual, much of the excitement that might have been captured in a small club was lost in the cavernous, 2,200-seat Lied Center. Needless to say, it is very challenging for an acoustic jazz quartet to make itself heard there, but the hall also challenges the most capable sound engineers. Volume levels are almost always uneven, with the piano sounding muffled and the bass drums booming.

Be that as it may, the Berman Music Foundation and the Lied Center continue their commitment to bring live jazz to Lincoln.

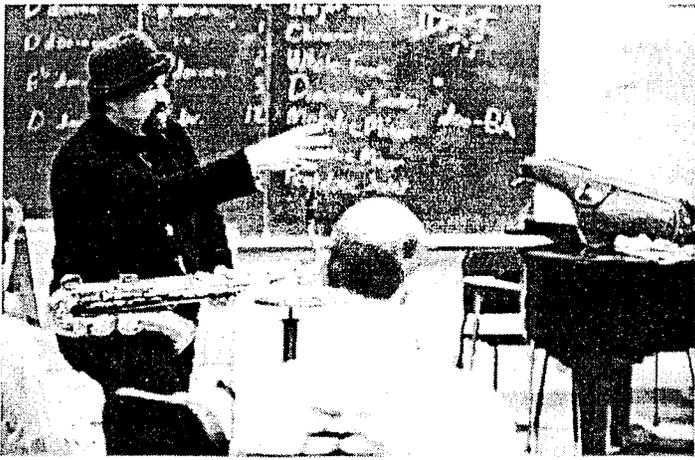


Photo by Tom Ineck

Lovano talks to students at workshop

Lovano recommends knowledge of history

By Tom Ineck

Talking to about 50 students, professional musicians and teachers during an hourlong workshop Feb. 8 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Music, saxophonist Joe Lovano urged young musicians to study the history and professional and personal background of every player they admire.

"Study the harmony as deeply as a pianist, and the rhythm as deeply as a drummer," he said. Musicians must know the methods and styles of the great players who came before them in order to understand "how to put the music together."

Jazz giants like Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Ben Webster and Thelonious Monk listened and played constantly to develop their individual sound, Lovano emphasized.

"They never saw a pattern book in their lives," he said. "You have to teach yourself how to play." And, it's not just a matter of practice, but research, he added.



Photo by Tom Ineck

Lovano demonstrates a point on the tenor sax

A strong background in formal music education and traditional song structure is important to have before venturing off into more experimental, or free, jazz territory, Lovano cautioned.

"The true test is to put together things, ideas, from the past and still play like yourself," he said. "You want to be a thinking player." That means memorizing chord progressions, blues cycles and playing in different keys, he said.

Lovano noted several times that the same notes can sound entirely different in different contexts, different keys. As a young musician growing up in Cleveland, Lovano followed his father, Tony "Big T" Lovano, to a variety of gigs. There he learned how important it is to play in different situations, different settings. His proficiency with all the saxophones, flute and clarinet helped.

"You create your own gigs," he said. "You have to be versatile."



Photo by Tom Ineck

Lovano at workshop in Westbrook Music Building

Lovano said that early in his career he learned how playing the great show tunes of Tin Pan Alley composer like Gershwin, Porter, Berlin, Rodgers and others could help teach him the full range of harmonic sequences possible on his horn.

"The material you play feeds your ideas," he said. By maintaining very high standards, a musician constantly builds on technique and professionalism throughout his career.

Every recording session and every live performance is different, so musicians must adapt quickly to the environment, Lovano said. Enthusiasm is the key, and it must begin when you are young, he said.



Photo by Michele Michaels

Christian McBride and pianist Brock Hempel at workshop

McBride says learn playing with others

By Michele Michaels

The Christian McBride workshop took place in Kimball Recital Hall at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Feb. 8. The crowd consisted mostly of high school students and a few who graduated high school an era ago. Everyone took their seats as an instructor admonished one student to cause no trouble, and shortly thereafter introduced Christian McBride.

McBride entered, paused to find his footing, as it were, and began by announcing that this clinic had no rules and no particular structure, so, "We'll have to improvise." A fitting beginning.

McBride began by playing a short composition by Oscar Pettiford and gave a quick history of his life as it relates to his interest in the bass, and jazz as his preferred mode of expression. He spoke in favor of music programs in schools, and in fact, believes that this country, and I quote, "Will go to hell in a hand basket that much faster without them." (I agree).

Although he believes very strongly in these programs, he points out that schools can't really teach you how to play jazz. He says, "They can teach you theory, harmony, etcetera, but you really learn jazz by playing with people." He then spoke of some of those he played with, Wynton Marsalis, Bobby Watson, and so many others.

This dialogue led him to describe some of his most embarrassing moments, explaining that no matter who you are, when you first start playing with accomplished professionals you will experience humiliation, and that's okay, even necessary. McBride says, "You must get out and play with everyone you can, and never become comfortable with your musicianship, there is always more to know, jazz is not an art form I believe you can ever master."

Then there were some brief pointers given regarding amplification, the pick-up versus the mike. McBride prefers no amplification, or if some is called for,

then a mike instead of a pick-up, because a pick-up only amplifies the vibrations coming off the bridge, the smallest part of the instrument, and a mike amplifies the whole of the bass.

Toward the end of the workshop, McBride had a student from the front row, Brock Hempel, join him on stage to play piano (you know this young man had to be nervous, but it didn't show, and he did a marvelous job). He then had Tom Larson, an accomplished Lincoln jazz pianist, and a drummer, JaMa Ahmose, join him for one last tune. The workshop was informative, entertaining and a great success.

Just a quick take on the performance at the Lied Center later that night -- it was magic! McBride's band was fresh, exciting, really a slice of heaven. During the workshop McBride said he was not interested in playing every chord substitution that existed, or showing the extent of his technical proficiency or intellectual understanding. What was important is that he can make you feel the song, and make you feel good.



Photo by Michele Michaels

Tom Larson, McBride and JaMa Ahmose

He succeeded in this goal. From melodies easy to hang your hat on -- to those more free expressions, you couldn't help but go to where he wanted to take you, and it felt fabulous! His James Brown dance moves at the end of the show, and his intimate rapport with his audience, made this a performance impossible to top (really hard, anyway!)



Photo by Michele Michaels

Butch Berman and McBride at reception after concert



Photo by Russ Dantzler

Benny Waters

Benny Waters at 95 is still young at heart

By Tom Ineck

Even at age 95, it seems saxophonist Benny Waters never has enough of the music that has been so much a part of his life.

As his agent, Russ Dantzler, had warned me, Waters was listening to a 24-hour jazz radio station when I called him at his home in Queens, N.Y., for an interview.

"I hear a variety of jazz from all those cats," Waters said after turning the volume down and returning to the phone. "You're always learning, you know. You never get too old to learn. Every decade or even less than that, some cat comes up with a whole lot of new stuff. It's there on the instruments."

Among the young breed of jazz reedmen, Waters points to Joshua Redman and Scott Hamilton as two of his favorites. Asked to single out an all time favorite, however, Waters names a near-contemporary, the 89-year-old Benny Carter.

Over the years, Waters has heard them all, and recorded with many of them. He began his recording career in 1927, playing saxophones and clarinet with Charlie Johnson's orchestra (alongside Benny Carter). He also performed with King Oliver and Clarence Williams and Fletcher Henderson, three titans of early jazz.

In fact, it is difficult to review Waters' musical life without noting that it runs nearly parallel with the entire history of jazz. He was there almost from its inception, and he is still here, still curious about where this music is headed. In a way, this miraculous musician is the literal embodiment of the music.

Given half a chance, Waters will run down a long list of bands he worked with.

"The best big band that I played with, when it comes down to all types of music -- jazz and blues and entertaining -- was Jimmie Lunceford's band. That band was unique. And Fletcher's was a good band, and so was Claude Hopkins. And Hot Lips Page, too."

Others are less well known.

"We had a band that was underrated. The Smalls Paradise band, Charlie Johnson's Paradise band. You don't hear it plugged much, but it was much better than people think. We had arrangements on all kinds of things. We had three arrangements on 'Rhapsody in Blue.' Three arrangements by three different arrangers. Benny Carter made one."

Trained in music theory, harmony and solfeggio at the New England Conservatory, Waters was one of the few jazz musicians of his generation who could read music with ease, making him popular with bandleaders who needed a frontline player with sightreading skills and a good singing voice.

But the real education came not from theory books, but from jobs, where Waters played traditional jazz, swing, blues, rhythm 'n' blues and more.

"I did every type of music you can think of, every type," he said. "I had a job at a Presbyterian church. I got paid for it, too. I worked there every Sunday morning. I played semi-classical solos. I worked with the circus. I worked with road shows. I worked in concert orchestras. I even worked with a free jazz group in Paris."

In 1952, Waters went to Europe with the Jimmy Archey band and stayed for 40 years, touring mainly as a soloist based in Paris.

As he grew older and his eyesight began to fail, Waters decided in 1992 to return to the United States, where he has better health insurance coverage. In doing so, he gave up an abundance of work as a celebrated jazz player throughout Europe.

Thanks to Dantzler -- an indefatigable champion of jazz's surviving elders -- and a growing audience of devotees on this side of the Atlantic, Waters is enjoying renewed popularity.

"I seem to have success here, too," he said. "Since I've been back, I've played with the Statesmen of Jazz, and I get a standing ovation nearly every night." The venerable Statesmen also include trumpeters Clark Terry and Joe Wilder, saxophonist Buddy Tate, trombonist Al Grey, fiddler Claude Williams, pianist Jane Jarvis, bassist Milt Hinton and drummer Panama Francis.

Waters celebrated his 95th birthday (Jan. 23) with performances Jan. 23-25 at the new Birdland in New York City. Enja Records was on hand to record the whole affair, with Mike LeDonne on keyboards, guitarists Howard Alden and Steve Blailock, bassist Earl May and drummer Eddie Locke.

In March, he joins Jane Jarvis for a short Midwest tour with stops in Kansas City and at Lincoln's Zoo Bar on March 9, a show sponsored by the Foundation in honor of Butch Berman's 48th birthday. On March 20 he begins a tour of Germany and northern Europe, and a month-long tour of France is likely in August.

Now totally blind, Waters still practices his horn at least an hour a day. When performing, he mixes familiar standards with original tunes he has written over the years. He limits himself to the alto horn only, but he still is singing, or, as he so modestly calls it, "hollering."

Jane Jarvis, 81, still big-league jazz player

By Tom Ineck

Pianist Jane Jarvis has been a radio accompanist, an organist for two major-league baseball teams, and a composer, recording producer and vice president for Muzak. But Jarvis, 81, is most proud of her first love, jazz piano playing.

Her 1995 release on Arbors Records is a testament to her playing ability and to the staying power of jazz veterans. An all-star session also featuring Dan Barrett on trombone, Bob Haggart on bass and Grady Tate on drums, "Jane Jarvis Jams" is a relaxed meeting of old -- and not-so-old -- friends. (The CD is reviewed in this issue.)

"We're all really good friends," Jarvis said in a phone interview from her home in Cocoa Beach, Fla. "We've all kind of grown up in jazz together, with the exception of Dan Barrett, who was the baby. I'd worked with Grady for at least 30 or 35 years in various things. We'd done a lot of recording together and a lot of concerts. We're like family friends. And the same is true of Bob Haggart. We've all gone our own way, but we get together from time to time."

So how did a young white girl growing up in Indiana become so intensely interested in what was then a predominantly African-American art form?

"I'm not sure when I heard the first jazz recording," she said. "It could have been at an uncle's home. He had a phonograph. I didn't have a phonograph when I was a child. In fact, when I was young, not every family had a radio."

"But I did, for reasons I'm not able to explain, pick up immediately on everything I heard that was jazz, and studied it without knowing I was studying it, and cataloged it in my mind without being aware that I was putting it in my musical computer. I took advantage of everything I heard, and it influenced my playing."

With the advent of the Swing Era and national radio programs featuring the best of the big bands, she became a fan of Fletcher Henderson, Earl Hines and others.

Jarvis got her first paying job as a pianist at age 11, when she became the official accompanist on a Gary, Ind., kiddie radio show. Classically trained, she already was an accomplished sightreader and keyboard transposer.

She later became the house pianist at station WJKS, and at age 13 she was accompanying such guest artists as Ethel Waters, Sophie Tucker and Paul Whiteman.

"You have to remember that when I was a youngster, there were no bars. If I had been the world's best jazz pianist, there would have been no place for a woman to play, so you welcomed any kind of a venue that you could find. Playing on a radio was the highest form of performance, at that point."

Radio also allowed Jarvis to play classical music, as well as jazz, and organ and pipe organ, as well as piano. "That made me very valuable to the radio station," she said



Jane Jarvis

of her versatility.

Later, her large repertoire and her ability to play the organ helped her land a job with the Milwaukee Braves. Whenever the Braves played a home game, Jarvis was behind the stadium organ, whipping up encouragement for the team, a role she played for 10 years.

"I played jazz," she said slyly. "I just never announced myself as a jazz musician. If I had told the baseball people that I was a jazz musician, I wouldn't have gotten the job. The word jazz was anathema to a lot of people."

At night, she played jazz piano in Milwaukee clubs with the likes of violinist Eddie South, Billy Butterfield and Maxine Sullivan. She also continued to perform regularly on station WTMJ.

Moving to New York City, Jarvis in 1964 began a 16-year job playing organ for the Mets in Shea Stadium. While in New York, she also played piano with Roy Eldridge, Lionel Hampton, Clark Terry, Milt Hinton, Zoot Sims, Helen Humes, Frank Wess, Richie Kamuca, Major Holley, Connie Kay, Joe Beck, Ruby Braff, Bill Berry and many others.

During those year as a "baseball player," Jarvis also produced more than 300 recordings for the international music broadcaster Muzak, using some of the best studio musicians and arrangers available.

In 1979, Jarvis decided to devote herself entirely to playing jazz piano, a risky proposition for anyone. "I was going to take a chance on myself. I don't know if I would have the courage to do it again."

Her courage paid off, and Jarvis has never regretted her decision. She became a sought-after college lecturer, participated in music festivals worldwide, wrote music and lyrics for theater productions and won a host of awards.

In November 1995, the Jane Jarvis Invitational jazz festival was held in Florida to raise money for a scholarship in her honor. Though a second invitational had to be scrapped for lack of funds, a \$5,000 Jarvis scholarship was awarded to a promising young Mexican pianist.



Photo by Rich Hoover
Bobby Watson at Brownville Concert Hall

Bobby Watson & Trio blow into Brownville

By Tom Ineck

BROWNVILLE -- Since Bobby Watson's latest release features an electric fusion ensemble called Urban Renewal, I arrived at the Brownville Concert Hall the evening of Jan. 31 wondering what was in store for the opening night audience.

I knew that the alto saxophonist had been dropped by Columbia Records, another victim of the label's fickle treatment of jazz artists. He had disbanded Horizon, the acoustic quintet that he co-led for more than a decade with drummer Victor Lewis. I had witnessed the explosive force of Horizon at the Kansas City Blues & Jazz Festival, at Septemberfest in Omaha and at the Lied Center for Performing Arts in Lincoln, and I mourned the passing of one of the most exciting jazz bands of the '80s and early '90s.

For his three-day visit to the historic southeast Nebraska village of just 150 people, Watson had hired a rhythm section comprised of relatively unknown Kansas City musicians. That had only increased my hopeful skepticism.

Not to worry. Watson's astonishing instrumental technique, intensity, humor and innate sense of blues and swing created an atmosphere ripe for improvisation. He managed to draw the best from his colleagues, pianist Greg Richter, bassist Matt Pitman and drummer Sam Johnson, Jr. It was the first time they had performed together, but the result was pure magic.

Watson's alto floated easily through the changes of the modern bop standard "Jeanine," bouncing lightly with his trademark melodic invention and lyricism. His original composition "Karita" began with a virtuosic solo flight blending classical counterpoint with blues riffs, then segueing into a mid-tempo Latin tune.

Richter contributed "Departing Lovers," a beautiful ballad written by the pianist's former employer of 14 years, Duke Ellington alumnus Jimmy Hamilton. Watson was unfamiliar with the tune, but like every great jazz musician

he was open to learning something new. The long, mournful lines of the melody were perfect for Watson's ballad style, squeezing notes from the horn and stretching them into intricately woven patterns.

Watson kicked off the familiar "Stompin' at the Savoy" before handing it over to bassist Pitman, who at age 19 shows a maturity far beyond his years. Watson chose his own ballad "Mirrors (We All Need)" to follow.

In fact, throughout the two-hour show, the choice of tunes remained informal and impromptu, like the best of all jazz. After suggesting one number to end the first set, Watson suddenly changed his mind, saying "I feel more like 'Cherokee.'"

It was Johnson who launched that venerable warhorse with a powerful solo using brushes. Watson took over with an incredible uptempo solo with drum punctuation. Obviously inspired, Richter dug in with a two-fisted percussive solo on the Steinway.

Bronislaw Kaper's classic ballad "Invitation" opened the second set. Deciding it was time to improvise on some blues changes, Watson announced the next tune as "The I Went to the Store and My Credit Card Didn't Work, So I Had to Go Home and Get Another One Blues." Starting slowly, he took gut-wrenching twists and turns from the bottom to the top of the alto horn. Richter again displayed his knuckle-busting technique, going uptempo with ease and assurance.



Photo by Rich Hoover
Drummer Sam Johnson, Jr.

Watson's melodic attack had hints of soul on the slow, dreamy original "Love Remains," with Johnson using mallets to great effect. The high-speed and perfectly titled "E.T.A." was a mad dash through intricate changes based on a Coltrane composition. Beginning with an alto solo showing Watson's circular breathing technique, it proceeded rapidly with a piano solo, a driving bop alto solo and a heavy-handed drum solo revealing Johnson's debt to Elvin Jones.

A standing ovation brought the quartet back for an encore, a stunning rendition of Juan Tizol's "Caravan." Alto, drums and bass hinted at the familiar exotic melody, while Richter joined with hand claps. Once the tune was fully developed, Johnson broke loose with a mallet solo, then the whole quartet returned to the melody, this time with Watson's humorous reference to the "Mission: Impossible" theme by Lalo Schifrin. Mission accomplished.

Tomfoolery

By Tom Ineck

There is something profoundly satisfying about witnessing a meeting of different generations on the common ground we know as jazz, perhaps because cooperation between the young and their elders occurs so rarely in other areas of our lives.

Big band music provides a forum like no other for such multi-generational unions. It demands teamwork, precision and discipline, yet it rewards individual accomplishment with peer respect and a chance to stand in the spotlight for a few moments.

As of Jan. 20, Lincoln area jazz musicians of all ages now have a venue where they can regularly practice that big-band work ethic. Mondays from 7:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. in the intimate, lower-level Riverside Room at the Ramada Hotel in downtown Lincoln, musicians and fans gather for a healthy blend of entertainment and education, as musicians sharpen their playing and sight-reading skills.

The Monday Night Big Band continues a Lincoln tradition that began years ago with Mother's Big Band, which was hustled from one Monday night meeting place to the next until it finally died a natural death, hastened by indifferent club owners, poor management and a confused public who never knew where the band could be found. Fans of big-band music have been mourning its demise ever since.

Run by a board of directors including saxophonist Scott Vicroy and trumpeters Bob Krueger, Brad Obbink and Dean Haist as officers, The Monday Night Big Band is a highly organized and musically consistent ensemble that shares the burden of responsibility. Vicroy, Krueger and Dave Sharp also serve as music directors, on a rotating basis that keeps the material fresh. The call list is 120 musicians strong.

I was unable to attend the opening night performance, which drew 140 people, but I did visit the Riverside Room on Jan. 27 and Feb. 3. On both nights, attendance was hampered by winter weather, but the 60 or 70 people who showed up each night were true fans ready to show their appreciation.

As a nice contrast to the more formal setting of the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra concerts upstairs in the Ramada Ballroom, the Monday night sessions were relaxed and informal, with good-natured badinage and frequent changes in the lineup as musicians came and went.

Most of the old familiar faces were there -- saxophonists Sharp, Vicroy, Ed Love, Ted Larson and Jon Hischke, trumpeters Haist, Krueger, Obbink and Brian Grasmick, trombonist Jay Pralle, pianist John Carlini and drummer Greg Ahl. But equally compelling were young players like saxophonist Jess Becker, bassist Cory Biggerstaff, guitarist James Valentine and pianist Brock Hempel.

Here's hoping that this edition of the Monday Night Big Band will be around for many Mondays to come.

Jazz on disc

by Tom Ineck

Recordings rated * to *****

BENNY WATERS QUARTET, *Swinging Again*, Jazzpoint Records. ****

A German release recorded in Ludwigsburg on April 5, 1993, "Swinging Again" captures a 91-year-old Benny Waters accompanied by an impressively sensitive and talented trio of young Germans -- pianist Thilo Wagner, bassist Jan Jankeje and drummer Gregor Beck.

Despite his advanced age, Waters still plays the alto saxophone with youthful enthusiasm, imagination and polished skill. His quavering tone harkens back to another era, but he shows little sign of faltering technique or imprecise intonation, which are almost always apparent in old players.

Waters charges through uptempo renditions of "Just One of Those Things," "Strike Up the Band," and "Undecided." He shows his blues-playing abilities on two originals, the mid-tempo "Benny's Bounced Blues" and the slow-grooving "Blue Waters," reminding the listener that Waters once played with blues legends Memphis Slim and Roy Milton.

He still hits the showy high notes dead-on, and if you have any doubts about the strength and beauty of the human voice at 91, listen to Waters sing "Them There Eyes," "Wham" and "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone."

Benny, they're going to be talking about you for many years to come, but don't leave us any time soon.

If "Swinging Again" is any indication what Waters will sound like in the company of pianist Jane Jarvis, bassist Bob Bowman and drummer Todd Strait at the Zoo Bar March 9, it will indeed be a very swinging evening.

JANE JARVIS, *Jane Jarvis Jams*, Arbors Records. ****

Like Benny Waters, pianist Jane Jarvis, 81, proves that age is no impediment to swing. For this June 1995 recording, she teamed up with old friends bassist Bob Haggart and drummer Grady Tate and the comparatively young trombonist and cornetist Dan Barrett for a sterling session of swing numbers at all tempos.

Jarvis' own catchy composition "Organizin'" is the ear-opening opener, while most of what follows is from the Great American Songbook -- "I've Got You Under My Skin," "I Get Along Without You Very Well," "That Old Feeling," "Mountain Greenery," "You Go to My Head," "The Very Thought of You" and "Lady Be Good." Also included is Jarvis' tribute to the under appreciated Swing Era pianist Jess Stacy, simply called "For Jess."

The musical rapport is palpable, with the quartet swinging as one. Tate, of course, is the master of subtle swing rhythms, and Haggart always provides a solid anchor and imaginative harmonies. Barrett's voicelike trombone adds a very personal element to the dialogue, to which Jarvis adds her artful solos with beautiful chord structures.

Verve JazzFest aptly ends in Kansas City

By Tom Ineck

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Verve JazzFest, a three-act dream festival chockful of great Verve Records artists and special guests, wound to a fitting close in Kansas City Feb. 2, four weeks and 18 cities after it opened in San Francisco.

The final stop was fitting because the headline act was the Kansas City All-Star Band, featuring many of the artists who appeared in the Robert Altman film "Kansas City," the 1996 tribute to the Pendergast era that spawned the great Kansas City swing bands.

Also fitting was the venue, the 1,300-seat Grand Pavilion in the new Station Casino, a modern-day gambling mecca that strikes one as the sanitized 1990s equivalent of the corrupt Pendergast regime of the 1930s. Be that as it may, the cause was just -- a benefit for the Kansas City Blues & Jazz Festival, which took a heavy loss one stormy weekend last summer.



Photo by Tom Ineck

Saxophonist Joe Henderson

introduction in waltz time. Watts took another romantic solo before passing it back to Broadbent for some beautifully filligreed variations on the melody.

Limited to a set of just 45 minutes, Quartet West made the most of it before leaving the stage to make way for the Joe Henderson Trio.

The 59-year-old Henderson was in a Billy Strayhorn mood, drawing most of his set list from "Lush Life," his 1992 Verve tribute to the composer. Without a piano, Henderson, bassist George Mraz and drummer Al Foster were prodded to find their own harmonic and rhythmic footholds, ranging freely across the changes.

Mraz was the harmonic key, creating beautiful and lyrical variations to Strayhorn's "Isfahan." His octave chordings on the Latin rendition of "Rain Check" led to an incredible drum solo by Foster, which then segued into Henderson's searching tenor solo and a delightful deconstruction of "Lush Life."

At first almost unidentifiable, the familiar melody was slowly exposed and expanded. Foster worked the cymbals with fervor and imagination, muffling them for effect, then moving uptempo to waltz time and finally into a funk interlude.

Henderson's approach to melody is not a conventional, linear approach, but rather an angular shaping or molding, as though he is carving sound sculptures out of thin air. Meticulously, he seeks out the soul of a tune and gives the listener a new perspective.



Photo by Tom Ineck

Pianist Alan Broadbent and saxophonist Ernie Watts

Up first was Charlie Haden and Quartet West, an aggregation that for the last decade has been creating some of the most lush, nostalgic and evocative music in jazz. The orchestrated pianistics of Alan Broadbent and the heart-rending tenor sax of Ernie Watts are superbly offset by the searching bass explorations of the leader and the subtle drumming of veteran Larance Marable.

Haden's romantic ballad "Hello My Lovely" set the "jazz noir" mood from the start. Marable's solo introduction to "Child's Play" was playful, full of march rhythms and leading smartly into a calypso beat that allowed Watts to plumb the tune's harmonic depths. The saxophonist's style is romanticism with a sharp edge, sort of a musical correlative to Humphrey Bogart's sad cynicism. Marable returned with a dexterous high-hat solo, then switched to brushes for a lesson in rhythmic subtlety.

Broadbent's "The Long Goodbye," named after the Raymond Chandler novel, continued the cinematic theme with the composer's heavily arpeggiated solo



Photo by Tom Ineck

Kansas City All-Star Band warms up JazzFest crowd

After Henderson's cerebral explorations, the bluesy informality of the Kansas City All-Star Band was the perfect antidote.

David "Fathead" Newman got things off to a rousing start with his soulful alto saxophone work on the slow blues "Froggy Bottom," followed by a wild James Carter soprano sax solo using circular breathing to heighten the suspense.

The arrangements, primarily written by saxophonist Craig Handy and trumpeter and musical director Steven Bernstein, were in the riffing blues style that first put Kansas City on the map. As in the casual club setting of the Altman film, the 13 players slouched in their seats, urging each other on or nodding and smiling with approval. It all served to help recreate the historic setting.

Don Byron, who was frequently featured, tore into a clarinet solo to drive an uptempo swinger, clearing the way for a powerful Nicholas Payton trumpet solo and an animated Mark Whitfield guitar solo.

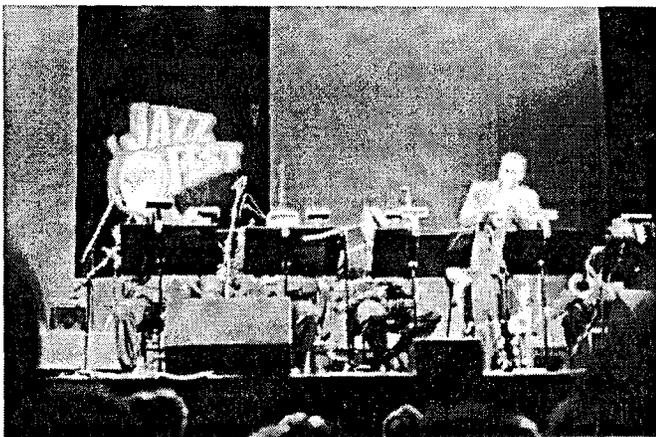


Photo by Tom Ineck
James Carter takes a solo on soprano sax

Kansas City native Kevin Mahogany joined the band for a stirring vocal rendition of "I Left My Baby," a slow blues in the Jimmy Rushing tradition. Newman took an alto solo that quoted Lennon and McCartney's "Eleanor Rigby," a humorous reference that let us know we had left the 1930s far behind. Craig Handy followed with a strong tenor sax solo, then Curtis Fowlkes displayed his triple-tonguing technique with a muted trombone solo.

Special guest Henry Butler introduced "Lafayette" with a piano solo that revealed influences ranging from stride to classical to spiritual. Payton, Bernstein and James Zollar (with a plunger mute) traded bluesy trumpet licks in a three-way cutting contest.

Coleman Hawkins' classic "Queer Notions" got an updated arrangement by Handy. Byron again was featured in a lengthy and highly energized clarinet solo, which in turn seemed to inspire great solos from Butler and bassist Brad Jones.

Mahogany returned for a mid-tempo blues that featured Jesse Davis on an alto sax solo with echoes of Charlie Parker. Mahogany then showed his incredible scat-singing skills, followed by another Byron clarinet solo, a



Photo by Tom Ineck
Guitarist Mark Whitfield plays an animated solo

plunger-muted trumpet solo by Zollar and a Whitfield guitar solo.

To bring the festival to a heated close, Carter and Handy faced off in a tenor saxophone battle, first taking individual choruses, then cutting them shorter and increasing the intensity with each four-bar break and, finally, finishing together with the whole band comping behind them.

Two saxophonists going head-to-head was a fitting close to a festival that was, if nothing else, a saxophonist's dream concert -- with Watts, Henderson and the entire all-star band's front line exhibiting world-class reed technique.



Photo by Tom Ineck
Craig Handy and James Carter face off in tenor battle

Photo album from the Feb. 2 Verve JazzFest in Kansas City

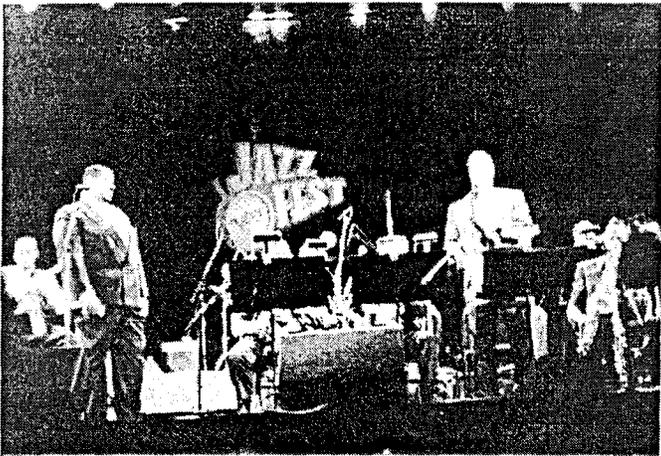


Photo by Tom Ineck
Kevin Mahogany admires Craig Handy's playing



Photo by Tom Ineck
Kevin Mahogany watches as Mark Whitfield solos



Photo by Tom Ineck
Pianist Henry Butler plays duet with Mark Whitfield

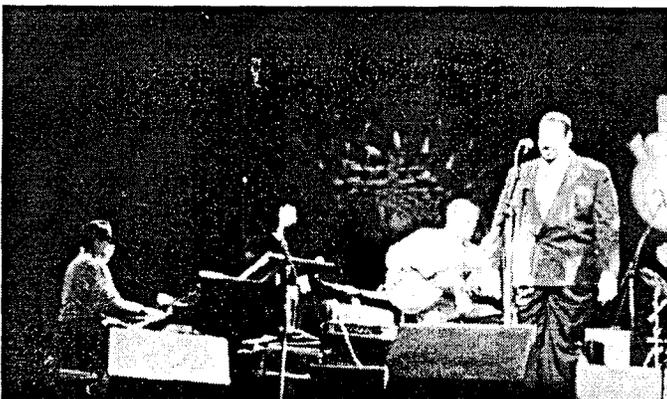


Photo by Tom Ineck
Kevin Mahogany approaches mike at Verve JazzFest

Scrapple from the Apple

By Wilma Dobie

Guest columnist Wilma Dobie is a veteran journalist known for her "Twilight Jazz" programs presented at the Overseas Press Club in the 1970s and '80s. Earl "Fatha" Hines and Maxine Sullivan served as honorary co-presidents of the informal OPS Jazz Club. Now a resident of Florida, Wilma currently does p.r. for the American Federation of Jazz Societies and the "Statesmen of Jazz" featuring internationally known musicians 65 years and older. I met Wilma via this column and learned that we share a mutual love for and dedication to jazz.

-- Russ Dantzier

After 70 Years, Sax Vets Celebrate a Reunion

It was some 70 years ago that Benny Carter and Benny Waters parted as best friends from Charlie Johnson's band. After playing shoulder to shoulder for two years during the jazz heyday of Small's Paradise in Harlem, they shared a common bond. Each achieved his first professional recognition in this band, and each made his first recording with Charlie Johnson's Paradise Ten for Victor/Emerson Records. That was in 1928.

After all these years, once again Waters and Carter share a common bond: the American Federation of Jazz Societies. Annually, the AFJS presents its coveted "Benny Carter Award" for outstanding achievement in jazz. And in 1995, the AFJS launched "Statesmen of Jazz" of

which Benny Waters is a founding member. It would seem then, that with this new bond, there was an odds-on chance of the two running into each other after all these years. They eventually did; but not just by "chance."

Russ Dantzler of Hot Jazz Management (and also an AFJS member) was on the alert for the possibility of a Waters/Carter reunion. He, Dantzler, had already heard from Waters of his sincere regard for Carter. With that bit of information stored away, Dantzler kept an eye out for Carter's next New York appearance.

As fate would have it, Carter was scheduled to appear at the swank Iridium Club the same week in October Waters was appearing at Sonny's in New York. At last, a possible reunion! It was left to Dantzler to make the call to Carter.

"I was feeling somewhat fearful about doing that," says Dantzler. "I'd never met Benny Carter and I felt it might seem a little brassy for me to call and say, 'is it OK if Benny Waters and I come by to say hello' not to mention 'Benny would love to sit in.'"

Waters didn't offer much comfort, either.

"You have to keep in mind," he said to Dantzler, "it has been a long, long time since we played together. He might not think I can still play after all these years! I wouldn't blame him if he'd back away."



Photo by Norm Harris
Benny Carter and Benny Waters

When Carter came to the phone, Dantzler had barely breathed the name "Benny Waters" when Carter said, "Benny Waters! Are you kidding? Of course he can sit in!" All arrangements and accommodations were promptly made.

It was a Sunday night to remember at the Iridium. Although the Yankees had just won the World Series for the first time in 17 years, the Waters-Carter reunion was the talk of the town. The impromptu jam, held before a spellbound audience, began with Carter graciously turning over the microphone to Waters who then addressed the crowd.

"60 or 70 years ago, when I got to sit next to this guy, he was my idol. I am proud to play with Benny Carter again after 70 years and to be able to say he is *still* my idol. Hail to the King!"

It was an exuberant performance and a moment of triumph that left the audience overwhelmed.

And, none so delightfully overwhelmed as "the king" himself.

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Considered Opinions (Recording & Performance Reviews)

By Andrew Rowan

CARMEN LUNDY, Sweet Basil, New York City.

In the mid-'80s, Carmen Lundy was the toast of New York, and rightly so. The hallmarks of her style - - prodigious technique, lilting voice, wide ranging repertoire, and sincere heartfelt lyric readings - - all evident in her recent Sweet Basil engagement

- - were there from the start. The first recording ("Good Morning, Kiss," Blackhawk Records, out of print) also foretold greater things to come. But her relocation to Los Angeles took her out of the immediate consciousness of New York fans and writers.

So in a sense, the nights at Sweet Basil were part homecoming, part discovery (for some) and rediscovery (for many others), and part revival. Working with the under appreciated pianist Onaje Allan Gumbs, bassist Kenny Davis and drummer Winston Clifford (from the UK and making his New York club debut), Lundy once again demonstrated that she has created her own sound-world, taking what suits her from the classic tradition of Holiday, Fitzgerald and Vaughn (and beyond), mixing it up with rhythm and blues, funk and post-Coltrane harmonies and rhythms. Long before the advent of the justly praised Cassandra Wilson, Lundy was searching for and deploying a synthesis of the traditional and the contemporary popular music she knows and loves.

Nowhere is her unique sound-world more profound than in her own songs. A good helping of her writing can be found on "Good Morning, Kiss" and two more recent efforts ("Moment to Moment<" Arabesque Records and "Self-Portrait," JVC Records). The brilliance of her songs comes to the fore when she stretches them out before an audience. Originals like "these Things You Are to Me" coexist beautifully with standards like "my Funny Valentine," "Star Eyes" (on which Betty Carter sat in) and Henry Mancini's bittersweet "Moment to Moment."

Hers is arguably the loveliest voice in jazz; and her concept is all her own. When she comes back to town, she shouldn't be missed.

MARLENA SHAW, Dangerous, Concord Jazz.

Marlena Shaw made a positive impression with two albums on Cadet Records ("Out of Different Bags, 1967 and "The Spice Of Life," 1969) and with a hit single ("Mercy, Mercy, Mercy"), solidifying the success she

enjoyed as featured vocalist with the Count Basie Orchestra. Subsequent recordings found Shaw mixing her soul and gospel roots with jazz, sometimes with tepid results. Her most cohesive moment on record since the Cadets was 1975's "Who Is This Bitch, Anyway?" (blue Note), given over mostly to eloquent soul expressions.

There have been other projects since, but her presence on recordings has been sporadic. A live Verve recording, as well as some duets with Joe Williams (also on Verve) and, more recently, a finely turned reading of "Rain" on the highly recommended "Benny Carter Songbook" (Musicmasters) have signaled a return to the spotlight. Now, there is "Dangerous" - - and the jazz, soul, rhythm and blues, and gospel have been well-blended. Rather than jarring the sensibilities, her funky, soul-inflected reading of Hoagy Carmichael's "The Nearness of You" becomes a turn-on. She also does a sexy slow burn on "A Beautiful Friendship." And, of course, there is the flat-out soul of "Ooo-Wee/Baby You're the One for Me," "you Make Me Feel Brand New" (where she coaxes Kevin Mahogany into really opening up his feelings) and, as usual, a signature gospel ("Keep on Trustin'"), which she sings from the piano.

The highlights, though, are the restrained, passionate readings of Mark Murphy's "Dim the Lights" and Alec Wilder and Loonis McGlohon's "Blackberry Winter." Lyricist McGlohon states that, "...we never could have dreamed it would sound as good as Marlena interprets it here."

Pianist David Hazeltine, bassist Peter Washington, and drummer Clifford Barbaro acquit themselves well - - as do several guests, including percussionists Milton Cardona, tenor saxophonist Chris Potter, organist Ed Kelly, and the aforementioned Mahogany. But the story here is Marlena Shaw.

MARY STALLINGS, Spectrum (featuring Harry "Sweets" Edison), Concord Jazz.

There are names that you see from time to time, but the records can never be found. There just seems to be no way to connect the reputation with the artist. Such was the case with San Francisco-based singer Mary Stallings. Now, in the space of a year, Concord has released two well-received recordings.

"Spectrum" finds Stallings (to these ears, at least) even more comfortable and persuasive than last year's Concord debut, "I Waited For You," where she worked with the powerhouse Gene Harris Quintet. A blues-based singer, her work lies in the classic tradition, swinging intrepidly and forcefully. Like Dinah Washington, she deploys her gospel devices sparingly.

Standards abound here, but she gives a nod to the contemporary scene with a thoughtful reading of Eric "Tears in Heaven." Her singing intertwines beautifully with a swing-inflected band that includes Gerry Wiggins (piano), Ron Eschete (guitar), Andy Simpkins (bass), Paul Humphrey (drums), and - - on some tracks - - alto and tenor saxophonist Rickey Woodard and the personification of

swing and mainstream trumpet, the inestimable Harry "Sweet" Edison. Alan Broadbent's brilliant woodwind arrangements grace two tracks.

Daringly, Stallings tackles several songs for which notable performances already exist, fearlessly staking her own claim on them. This "Black Coffee" is the best I've ever heard. For "I Just Dropped by to Say Hello" (so beautifully sung by Johnny Hartman), "Day Dream," the Ellington/Strayhorn masterpiece, and "It Had to Be You," she eloquently creates her own sound-world, using a blues-informed, relaxed delivery redolent of Washington, while never once sounding like her. Then, there are the rarely recorded gems, including Gershwin's "Things Are Looking Up" and Warren and Robin's "No Love, No Nothin'"

Mary Stallings blazes no new trails; and how dreary it would be if everyone were a trailblazer. She sings good songs with feeling. Maybe these releases will lead to a New York gig. She deserves it...and so do we.

JAMES WILLIAMS, James Williams at Maybeck, Solo Piano Recital, Vol. 42, Concord Jazz.

Coming from a community with a rich jazz tradition can be of enormous import to the developing jazz musician. James Williams has learned, not only from the universally acknowledged jazz masters, but also from those masters from home. The spirit of legendary pianist Phineas Newborn, Jr. must *still* linger in the heavy night air of Memphis, so steeped in the city's blues tradition was he. Saxophonists George Coleman and Frank Strozier, as well as the dynamic pianist Harold Mabern, Jr., were also positive musical role models.

But, role models, mentors and lessons can only go so far. With great skill and care, Williams has developed the touch, taste and improvisory spark that make him a great soloist and first-call pianist for other bandleaders in need, including Art Blakey, Woody Shaw, Milt Jackson, and Clark Terry.

The Maybeck session, though, finds him alone at the instrument for a varied and well-paced recital, starting with a long, pensive "Polka Dots and Moonbeams" that, though well played, doesn't equal the gems that follow. The program gathers momentum with "Footprints," Wayne Shorter's contemporary, lyrical blues (what a composer) and attains its first peak with Henry Mancini's "Dreamsville," a two-chorus, moody fantasia, spun out in single-note lines that well up into gossamer, rolling chords. Another ballad - - "I Fall in Love Too Easily" - - follows, extending the reflective, yet passionate, mood.

All is not reflection, however. Memphis pianist Donald Brown contributes the high voltage "New York," reminiscent of Bud Powell's "Parisian Thoroughfare," and Williams mines Joe Henderson's high-energy "inner Urge" effectively. He pulls out all the stops on Oscar Peterson's "blues Etude," tossing off blazing blues riffs.

Finally, his church roots are celebrated in the "Spiritual Medley." Plaintive reharmonizations of the hymns "Holy, Holy, Holy" and "Blessed Assurance"

surround a blues-infected "Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child." The modern gospel piece, "Why We Sing," brings the medley - - and concert - - to an emotional end.

Some pianists, when faced with a solo work, panic and reach for the well-worn book of standards, often forsaking much of their working repertoire. Although Williams' own songs are missed here, this is a varied program of unhackneyed material, well played. And, when it reaches the level of "Dreamsville," it soars.

TERI THORNTON, The Knickerbocker Bar & Restaurant, New York City.

For every freshly discovered wunderkind, there are usually several unsung veterans performing regularly without fanfare, usually sought out by intrepid critics and fans. Teri Thornton, a unique expressive singer and an accomplished pianist, has been known to the cognoscenti since the late '50s. On a recent Sunday night she commanded attention from a weekend crowd of fans and revelers at the Knickerbocker - - but not without trouble at the start.

The first set, with Thornton accompanied by pianist John Davis, was marred by badly projected, showy singing and pallid keyboard work. They simply tried too hard, pushing - - instead of relaxing - - the beat. Some good songs, including Bob Dorough's "Devil May Care" (also the title of Thornton's 1961 Riverside recording), "The Song Is You" and "My Old Flame" all suffered this fate. But, the veteran in her cam through, settling down and finishing the first set with a sleek, uptempo "I Concentrate on You," a subtle "goin' to Chicago Blues" and, best of all, "Witchcraft," where her staccato phrasing highlighted the out chorus.

Thornton performed away from the piano for most of the evening. And she displayed great technique and emotion, especially during the second set when Davis was joined by bassist Hal O'Leary and they performed: "I Get a Kick out of You," with a great scat chorus, "Ain't Nobody's Business," where the pianist rolled in a richly chorded accompaniment, and "This is All I Ask" and "We'll Be Together Again," where she took the reflective lyrics both songs offer to project soulful wisdom and experience. But the question remains, when she sings so beautifully, why change?

Providing her own backing, "Moonlight in Vermont," "Back to Detroit," and "Which Way Out?" (the last two are Thornton originals) all hit home. Those beautiful head tones, cleanly intoned, the brandy-hued edge to her voice at midrange and the sureness of her vocal improvisations are not derivative, but come from a deep, original wellspring. Thornton (and her advisors) should be wary with what works - - when it works this well.

DIANA KRALL, Oak Room, The Algonquin, New York City.

High expectations sometimes crash on the rugged rocks of reality when a celebrated young artist hits the

performance trail. In an era when the studio process can cover blemishes at will, and hype often substitutes for talent, a first encounter with a highly touted musician takes on a life of its own, with anticipation and, yes, trepidation.

Vancouver Island native Diana Krall brought guitarist Russell Malone and bassist Paul Keller with her to the Oak Room to pay homage to Nat "King" Cole. With the same instrumentation as his trend-setting '40s trio and a well-received CD ("All For You: A Dedication To The Nat King Cole Trio, Impulse) in release, the stage was set. All fears were dispelled as Krall and associates delivered again and again, delighting a packed room. In this intimate setting, abetted by Malone's attentive support and brilliantly conceived solos and Keller's finely wrought ballast, she sang *and* played with absolute ease and assurance.

On record - - both the Cole tribute and her GRP American debut, "Only Trust Your Heart," as well as one track each on the GRP Beatles tribute (a stunning, sultry "And I Love Him") and the "Benny Carter Songbook" ("Fresh Out of Love") - - the ballads and blues find her at her most expressive. At the Algonquin, however, there was nothing to choose from among the songs. Whether uptempo and jaunty, mid-tempoed and worldwide, or moody and blue, Krall exposed no seams. Her supple vocals moved freely, with phrases breaking off at unexpected junctures. "Is You Is or Is You Ain't my Baby" (a Louis Jordan staple, actually) swung deeply as Krall mixed piano quotes from "Why Don't You Do Right?" and "It Don't Mean A Thing" into a solo dressed in cleanly articulated block chords. "Peel Me a Grape," quite often over camped in other hands, struck the right balance of the sly and the wicked.

Instead of using the piano primarily as a framework for her vocals, Krall displayed great technical command, producing inventive solos that, while standing on their own merit, didn't detract from the singing. Time will tell if she can maintain her free-wheeling piano fireworks and continue to develop accompaniment, like Cole, Andy Bey, and Shirley Horn, that becomes a virtual extension of her singing.

Praise is also due to Keller and Malone. The guitarist was especially extraordinary, as he shaped his solos to catch and enhance the moods created by Krall - - spare, rueful, and singing on on "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" and wistful on "If I Had You," where guitar and voice (no piano) recalled, in their intimacy, Ella Fitzgerald and Joe Pass' beautiful partnership.

This kind of engagement does pose risks for the improvising musician. Will invention suffer when the long-term commitment mandates repeating the same program - - more or less - - from night to night for several weeks? After hearing the show, though, it was evident that they have avoided falling into predictable patternism, but rather, seemed to be using the opportunity to deepen their collective rapport, discovering new ways to keep it all fresh.

Jazz in the venues

Compiled by Dave Hughes and Nancy Marshall

The Gallery Cabaret Walk has been gradually picking up speed since its start in September. In January, the new Latin group, Braziliance, brought in such a large crowd we had to use couch cushions and equipment carts for seating. The conga line barely had room enough to weave its way around the room. It was a great party, and we learned that Lincoln has a lot of Latin music fans.

On February 7, the Ed Love Trio played to another full house. Ed did his usual fine work on sax and flute, along with the cordless rhythm section of Andy Hall on bass and Greg Ahl on drums. It was superb, very tasty jazz. The Southeast High School vocal jazz group, Ars Nova, opened the show for Ed and the guys, singing some of the tunes they will be singing at Carnegie Hall in June. They are one of only 25 college and high school groups who have been asked to participate in the North American Jazz Festival. This is quite an honor for Ars Nova and for their director, Mary Oestmann.

The show for March 7 is Luigi and Company. Luigi Waites has been a permanent fixture in the jazz scene of Nebraska for many years. He is a master percussionist and teacher who simply embodies the spirit of jazz. This will be a good concert for people of all ages to attend, because everyone who does, will be a dyed-in-the-wool jazz fan before the evening is over.

The Gallery Cabaret Walks are held the first Friday of every month at the Seventh Street Loft, 504 S. 7th St., from 8 to 11 pm. Admission is \$5 at the door with a cash bar available. It is a smoke free environment, and children are welcome.

The Nebraska Jazz Orchestra continues its 21st Anniversary Season for 1996/7 with a Tuesday, March 18 (Omaha)/Wednesday, March 19 (Lincoln) concert, "Mardi Gras is Late This Year." The NJO will include the talents of guest jazz artists Joe Genovesi on clarinet, and Mac McCune on trumpet for a night of New Orleans style jazz.

The Omaha concerts will be held at Joslyn Art Museum, 2200 Dodge St., and the Lincoln concerts will be held at the Ramada Hotel & Conference Center, 141 N. Ninth St. The concert in each city begins at 7:30 pm with priority seating for season members only from 7:00-7:15, and general admission beginning at 7:15 for tickets purchased at the door.

Season membership for admission to the five concert series was (and may be pro-rated now): \$20 for students, \$36 for senior citizens (65 & over), \$48 for adults, and \$110 for family memberships (two adults maximum). Tickets at the door for the concerts are: \$5 for students, \$9 for senior citizens, and \$12 for adults. Tickets may be purchased at the door or ordered in advance by contacting the business office at (402) 477-8222, 216 N. 11th St., Suite 302, Lincoln, NE 68508-1401.

The Monday Night Big Band continues to perform from 7:30 to 10:30 pm every Monday night in the

Riverside Room on the lower level of the Ramada Hotel, 141 N. 9th St., in downtown Lincoln (see more about this in Tom Ineck's "Tomfoolery" column). The mission of the band is "to provide a regular outlet for area musicians to read and perform challenging new and existing big band music in a musical and professional setting."

The doors open at 7 pm, and the group will play three sets a night for a cost of \$3/\$2 for students. For more information, call Joel Nielson at 477-8222 or Bob Krueger at 423-5305.

Jazz continues on Sunday nights at 6 pm at The Oven at 201 N. Eighth in Lincoln. Hear the duos of: Nancy Marshall & Steve Hanson on March 2; John Carlini & Peter Bouffard on March 9; Andy Hall & Dave Sharp on March 16; Dave Novak & Dennis Taylor on March 23; and Nancy Marshall & Steve Hanson on March 30.

The jazz continues at Kiki's Crab House at 120 Regency Parkway in Omaha on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 8:00-11:00 pm. The local performers include Jorge Nila, Tom Larson, Mason Prince, Peter Bouffard, Bill Ritchie, and Liz Westphalen.

The jazz also continues at Joslyn Art Museum, 2200 Dodge St., in Omaha on Friday, March 7, as the First Friday Jam series presents the Mason Prince Quartet. The only blues act of the year, The Heartmurmurs, played to a packed house on Feb. 7 in the museum's atrium. Sons of Brasil perform on Friday, April 4, and the Joe Cartwright Trio plays on Friday, May 2. Admission is \$5, \$3 for Joslyn members, and a cash bar and hors d'oeuvres are available.

The Fabtones Soul Spectacular II will occur on Friday and Saturday March 28 and 29 at the Zoo Bar, 136 N. 14th St. in Lincoln, both nights from 9 pm to 1 am. These shows bring back The Fabtones 10 piece show band for two big nights. For more information about The Fabtones (also known as The Fabulous Tonehuskers), The Lightnin' Bugs, or even The Toasted Ponies, call Jim Pipher at 423-2248 or 489-1517.

Finally, the new jazz/blues club in town, Ebenezer's, in Rathbone Village at 2110 Winthrop Road (approximately at 32nd & South Streets in Lincoln) seems to have found itself a house band for Friday and Saturday nights. Local act Kid Quarkstar, sometimes playing as The James Valentine Quartet or the Jess Becker Quartet, graces the stage each weekend. Also, local pianist John Carlini is playing the piano during the dinner hours of 6 to 9 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. And, the club just recently held a two day blues benefit for KZUM Community Radio on February 5 and 6. The acts scheduled to appear were Alias Jane, Radio King, C.A. Waller, Champaign Jerry & The Vegetarians, The Lost Dogs, and John Walker.

For more information about the club's shows, call Ebenezer's at 486-3331.

Jazz on the radio

By Dave Hughes

KZUM Community Radio, at 89.3 FM in Lincoln, offers a wide variety of jazz programs every weekday afternoon from 12:30 until 4 pm, except Monday when the jazz ends at 3 pm and doesn't pick up again until 8:30 pm, and Friday when the jazz only runs from 2 until 4 pm.

JAZZ writer Tom Ineck has resigned his Thursday afternoon show, "Groovin' High" because it conflicts with his new job as Development Director for KZUM. It is not known yet who or what will replace him. Congrats on the new job, Tom!

And, KZUM jazz programmer Ed Rumbaugh has added a second show to the one he is already doing on Wednesday's ("Variations on Jazz & Creative Music" from 12:30 to 2 pm), on Monday mornings from 10 am to 12 noon. It's called "Far Out Jazz & News" and features just what the title says it does.

If you would like detailed information about the jazz programs on KZUM give them a call at 474-5086. Also, to receive a free copy of their program guide "Sound Alternatives," call the same number.

Nebraska Public Radio, KUCV at 90.9 FM in Lincoln, and at other frequencies around the state (except Omaha), offers two nights of jazz each week.

On Friday nights at 11 pm you can hear National Public Radio's "Jazz Profiles," an audio biography of jazz artists. Then, Liz Chadwick presents "Bohemia After Dark," an hour of locally programmed jazz from 12 midnight until sign off at 1 am.

JAZZ PROFILES in March

- 03-07-97 The Modern Jazz Quartet: The Group
- 03-14-97 The Modern Jazz Quartet: Milt Jackson
- 03-21-97 The Modern Jazz Quartet: John Lewis
- 03-28-97 Carmen McRae

Saturday nights on Nebraska Public Radio continue with Don Gill and the sounds of the big bands on "Big Band Spotlight" at 8 pm. That's followed by two other National Public Radio programs, "Jazzset" at 9 pm, hosted by Branford Marsalis, and "Piano Jazz," hosted by Marian McPartland, at 10 pm.

JAZZSET in March

- 03-01-97 Marian McPartland and Toshiko Akiyoshi
- 03-08-97 Charlie Haden and Strings
- 03-15-97 Highlights from the Canadian Festivals (TBA)
- 03-22-97 Geri Allen, Nnenna Freelon, & the Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra
- 03-29-97 The Carnegie Hall Jazz Band

PIANO JAZZ in March

- 03-01-97 Renee Rosnes
- 03-08-97 Lyle Mays
- 03-15-97 James Moody

03-22-97 Brad Mehldau
03-29-97 Susannah McCorkle

For more information, or a free copy of NPRN's program guide "Members Only," call the studio line at 472-2200, or 1-800-290-6850.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's student station, KRNU at 90.3 in Lincoln, now has only one jazz related show. The program featuring beat poetry called "Words," hosted by Joe Krings, continues on Friday nights right from 11 pm to 1 am. For more information about this program call KRNU at 472-5768.

Rocky Mountain "almost" high

By Butch Berman

Denver, Colorado was the obvious halfway rendezvous point to bring in the new year with my Seattle lady friend, Michele. Could we find jazz there? That was the question.

The first place to look was at the stack of "The Gift of Jazz" mags from Denver that we receive at our Haymarket office. Susan Berlowitz and I, at one time, had a pretty groovy communique with Jude Hibler, whose "Jazz Link" preceded the current "Gift." Jude's friend, master guitarist Dall Bruning, as well as former Kansan, and legendary rhythm and blues axe-man Jerry Hahn, now reside there (News flash: Heard rumor Jerry moved, more info next issue). So, as I was scanning the pages of the magazines, I was hoping to see their names pop up, but they weren't there. Lincoln's jazz expert, Jim Barker, asked me to locate the likes of Ellen Rucker and/or Spike Robinson, but no avail either. Finally, I stopped at a full page ad for a club called Vartan Jazz, and billing itself as one of the United States best jazz clubs. I thought I'd better check it out.

After a truly fine dinner in the Augusta Room at the downtown Weston Hotel, we ventured out to get a cab to the club. A genuine New Year's bonus was choosing Tony Velez with his City Car Limo Service. He became our "man" in Denver the entire week, and I highly recommend him and his splendid driving services - but back to the matter at hand - Vartan's.

Our reservations were booked a month in advance - \$250 for a promised "great table," free champagne, hor d'oeuvres, and a show of varied Brazilian musicians together for a star-studded night, including an appearance by jazz vocalist Mark Murphy. Vartan Jazz, like the famed Blue Notes, do have a good roster of talent that record CDs live at the club to be sold there as well as for national distribution. A recent listen to Phil Woods live performance there verifies the club's abilities.

However, we definitely didn't get our money's worth. I remember a New York New Year's Eve at Sweet Basil's with the Nat Adderly Band that made this '97 Party pale by comparison. We, at first glance, thought the club

was OK with fair sight lines and a sound system that sounded better than the EVs on tripods looked. Our table, though close to the stage, was right under the overhanging speaker, the champagne was average, we never saw the hor d'oeuvres, and the band was only fair, with a not-so-hot female vocalist fronting a better than average cast of Brazilian talent introduced with decent credentials as they took the stage. We left at 12:30 and never saw or heard Mark Murphy. We personally hand carried promotional material to present to Vartan, and was promised information on not only the band members playing that night, but his club in general. Now, six weeks later, it appears Vartan had no intention of following through, even after half a dozen phone calls. I'd go back for a regular night or weekend, but wouldn't recommend the New Year's package.

Luckily, an unexpected Denver jazz treasure was on the agenda. Our waiter at the Augusta told us of a great, funky little Mexican restaurant within walking distance of Coors Field, that had great jazz, wonderful inexpensive cooking (a simple, small all-beef or bean menu of tacos, tostados, and burritos - but oh so good!), and never a cover for the music. So, we had Tony take us to the next night to the place called El Chapultepec.

For over 55 years, beginning with the repeal of prohibition in 1933, El Chapultepec has been at the same location on the corner of 20th and Market Streets on the northwest edge of downtown Denver. Current owner Jerry Krantz began as a bartender for the original owner, the Romero family, in 1958. Krantz started a reputation of bringing in world famous jazz performers in 1978. The club was even named Westworld's Best Jazz Club Award for six straight years starting in 1983, and was even featured on NBC's Today Show.

Referred to as "The Pec" by regulars, we caught a local group doing a grand set of bebop and standards for a crowd consisting of drunks, cowboys, and bikers. The local gang was the Tony Clacka Quartet - with Tony on flugelhorn, Ken Walker on bass, Tony Black on drums, and Jeff Cleveland on piano. As the evening progressed, a varied stream of assorted jazz lovers soon filled up the joint. The walls are lined with pictures of a virtual "Who's Who" of the past 50-plus years of jazz history, all who have appeared there - even old Blue Eyes himself - and never a cover. The jukebox plays all jazz and this place is right on the money. Don't miss The Pec.

I had planned to catch the legendary pianist Ralph Sutton, who was suppose to do a double piano concert with his sister, Barbara Sutton-Curtis, backed by former Louis Armstrong bassist Jack Lesberg and drummer Joe Ascione. The show was to be held at the Parkhill Golf Club. Upon a callback to reconfirm, I was told they were remodeling and probably wouldn't be opening in time for the show. But an article in the Denver Post foretold the worst - due to a sequence of circumstances, the club had to cancel its jazz series and the potential of no refunds to the subscribers was imminent with legal recourse iffy. The paper mentioned a similar situation regarding the Dick

Gibson jazz parties of yore that folded in the same fashion. Boy, it's tough making jazz work!

As our stay was wrapping up, we checked out one more spot that we saw an ad for, a club called the Purple Martini that had 40 varieties of martinis, local jazz, and a new trend I hate, the sale and use of cigars in clubs during dinner and the music. The Purple Martini reminded me a bit of the old Huey's Wednesday night jazz jams, as a mostly college crowd gathered to drink, smoke, and listen to the young musicians who played and appeared to allow others to sit in. I'm not a martini drinker, and even though I smoke a cigar or two every once in a while, I can't stand the extra acrid smoke to ingest. Even with this problem, I thought that the young cats played well. The only sign for the club was a business card framed and lit up in the window. Even Tony couldn't find it at first.

One club we didn't make it to called the Top Hat Tavern at 15th & Lawrence, appears to be a regular home for pianist/vocalist extraordinaire Ellen Rucker. That's the first on my list to visit next time around, or at least after The Pec.

Lastly, I want to recommend that all vinyl/LP collectors check out Wax Trax record store, three separate shops on the same block with one for used, one for cut-outs, and one for music. Known primarily for its grand rock-a-billy catalog, I found the selection of jazz to be plentiful, clean, and inexpensive. Plus, the Wednesday I was there all used items were 15% off - check it out!

During this trip we discovered Denver's effort to preserve jazz may not equal its intentions, but there is a scene, and it's worth investigating. More news on this potential hot-spot to follow in future editions.

Ten (sorta) jazzy questions

By Butch Berman

This issue, the ten questions are posed to Lincoln pianist John Carlini.

Q: Of all past recipients of this column, unfortunately, I've known you for the least amount of time. So, gimme a brief repartee of your musical origins and upbringing.

A: My earliest recollections of music come from my mom and dad who sang operatic duets together. Of course, for many years my brothers and sisters and I would try to make them stop. It sounded like yelling (nice yelling). They both have fine voices to this day, and have led choirs and have been involved with the music community of North Platte for years. My mom is also an accomplished piano player. I remember her playing Chopin's "Revolutionary Etude" and Brahms' "Rhapsody in G Minor" and thinking this music rocks. I thought Beethoven was the epitome of music (because) his music reflected so clearly the gamut of emotions that I felt myself.

My older brother Greg was a "real" hippie when I

was growing up, so I was exposed to quality rock 'n' roll, i.e., Jimi Hendrix, Beatles, and Frank Zappa, and I credit him for having such a good quality collection. He was (also) a left-handed Strat-bearing Hendrix imitator.

I didn't listen to any jazz, unless you consider Zappa or maybe Steely Dan jazz. It wasn't until I got to college that I really "heard" jazz. In fact, I only jammed a few times in high school, and it was more about how much noise we could make.

I felt I needed to express myself more after awhile. Classical music is great, but the parameters for individual expression are limited. I wanted to create music with other musicians.

I credit Tom Larson, a great local jazz pianist, for showing me the fundamental and practical skills necessary for getting started in what we call "jazz," and also Randy Snyder for opening new concepts and showing how much is possible in the world of sound. Randy is truly an amazing composer. Plus, the countless people I've known over the years that have shared something of themselves with me.

Q: I've heard you play with the old Huey's Monday night Big Band. Do you have a favorite mode of performing?

A: To me there is truly no greater high than when musicians are tuned to one another and playing together with passion and joy. It literally makes me want to sing. I think it's a difficult place to be at times because of how far we have to go to get there. But, that is the place we want to be at and once you've been there you know it. It's like riding a bike, a "celestial" bike ride.

Q: Was there a jazz record or performer you listened to as a youth that made you proclaim, "I want to play jazz piano?"

A: I'd say Bill Evans early trio work done at the Village Vanguard opened my ears to how beautiful this format was. I also thought Thelonious Monk had an incredible ear for dissonance. Plus, his sense of humor and originality mesmerized my attention. The last few years with (Keith) Jarrett has occupied a front seat in my lyrical listening. To me, he touches the soul and expresses something that only music can. Geez, I guess it's a form expressed in Romanticism, that yearning to satisfy the expression of the inexpressible. Plus, his diversity, i.e., different settings with all kinds of instruments and his courage to pursue his vision in the face of failure. Imagine going onto a stage and playing a show with no prepared material. Talk about expression, honesty, and courage.

Q: Andrew Vogt wrote an article for us about Cognac-Hennessy's jazz contest in Ft. Collins, Colorado. Was that your most memorable road trip? Or if not, what was?

A: I can't say really. I've had road trips with Holiday Inn bands that were great in their own way. I'd just like to say that Andrew Vogt is one of the best musicians I've had the honor to work with and I'm a little amazed that he didn't get



John Carlini relaxing at sunset

more support in our area. We played together in the Fungi's (FUN-guys), which I don't think a lot of "jazz" musicians ever saw. It (the band) was as if Brave Combo met Frank Zappa at an inspired Coltrane convention. Sometimes I can get pretty dark about really any sense of community that we purport to have, but I realize the venues are limited and most people consider jazz a perfume. Andrew, well what can I say about him?

Q: I've caught your video on Cablevision's Community Access channel. Can you focus to stay creatively on top when you know you're filming yourself?

A: The answer to when I'm playing my best and not beset by self consciousness is when I'm really in tune with the music and doing it the best I can. The connection is solid and there is not any separation between myself and the music. I try to transcend things such as wrong notes and playing a hot lick. It helps when the players you're with are of the same attitude. Let's face it folks, it can be a hell of a challenge, and my hat's off to people who strive to achieve this state consistently.

Q: Which has been your favorite jazz bio or book you have read and why?

A: I prefer autobiographies in the form of CDs, records, and tapes. I read the "Horn" by John Clellon Holmes which was a book "noir" and synthesis of different players such as Lester Young and Charlie Parker. Frank Zappa's autobiography was good.

Q: If you were a psychopathic maniac waiting for your turn with "Old Sparky," what would your final requested meal consist of?

A: Probably a bean burrito with hot sauce and some Tibetan bells and gongs and Catholic incense to guide my soul into the next restaurant.

Q: If stranded on a deserted island and could either take a keyboard or stereo system with unlimited LPs/CDs, etc., which would you choose, and please elaborate?

A: What kind of stereo? I would probably want a Steinway Grand for my beach parties and interpretations of the rising

moon and sentient monkeys. Hello. Can somebody reel him in? Classical record: Bach's greatest hits, (and) a Jazz record: Ouch! These questions are as if a large vise-grip were placed on my multi-dimensional cerebrum. Can this be a box set?

Okay, Keith Jarrett, but that's all the farther I can go, otherwise I'll go from album to song to note, and then of course to hell.

Q: Do you ever really feel intimidated by any of your piano heroes due to their unbelievable chops? If so, who?

A: Sure, if I'm feeling insecure or competitive, and I should also throw in courteous. Let's face it, I'm not a big monster. I really feel thankful for my experiences and for the enjoyment and beauty I've reaped from music. If I can be in tune with the sounds I'm making, all the better. When I get beyond the distractive things I find good music beautiful, exciting, and inspiring. I think most musicians would agree. This be why we musicians.

Q: Do you have any specific professional goals for yourself as you approach your 40s?

A: I would like to record more. I feel that I've had a very meandering professional career and not necessarily by design. I think I'm opening up more to the future and what it holds. Seems as if I've spent a lot of time learning how to appreciate and accept the moment.

I'm torn between moving to a metropolis and digging into what's there or moving to a remote area and becoming simpler. Well, I just want to say "thank you" to all the people, especially my family and Shari, and John Aitch, whose lives and music I've been able to share over the years.

Discorama By Butch Berman

I chose to use this space intended for Discorama to print the complete unedited version of my remembrance of the late, great Frank Rosolino that was broadcast on KZUM's Jazzmasters series that aired in January. The end product had to be edited for time, so I felt this misunderstood, but incredibly talented man, even though his mental illness led to much tragedy, deserved the full credit due him.

The Lemon Drop Kid: A Portrait of Frank Rosolino

The odyssey of trombonist/singer Frank Rosolino is a bittersweet tale of brilliance, yet madness that led to the tragic demise of one of the jazz world's most gifted artists. Fortunately, for vinyl/CD connoisseurs, his recorded legacy is fairly plentiful and simply sheer magic.

Frank was born Aug. 20, 1926, in Detroit, Mich., to an all musical family, including his parents, brother and sister who all played instruments. He started playing the guitar at 10, and moved on to trombone in the 8th grade, continuing through high school. Other local young

musicians he jammed with at that time were Elvin, Hank, and Thad Jones, Milt Jackson, and Kenny Burrell.

After a two year stint playing in Army bands he gigged with Bob Chester and Glen Gray. From 1947-48 he lived in New York and worked alongside the likes of Charlie Parker, Diz, Erroll Garner and Oscar Pettiford to name a few. While with the Gene Krupa Orchestra in 1948-49 he made a short film in which he sang "Lemon Drop," and with his natural on-screen magnetism acquired the moniker of "The Lemon Drop Kid" as a result. The early 1950s found Frank doing short runs with Tony Paster, Herbie Fields and George Auld. Only after forming his own band back in Detroit and tying for first in Down Beat's jazz poll in 1953, that he was led away to be a member of the talent packed Stan Kenton big band through 1955. Kenton even entitled one of his Capitol releases, "Kenton Presents Frank Rosolino." Influenced by the "Kenton Sound" and now living in southern California, Frank became an integral part of the "cool" West Coast style of jazz. He soon became a member at Howard Rumsey's famed Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach during the last half of the 1950s.

Besides doing TV orchestra soundtracks, such as "M-Squad," Frank worked for the Conn Instrument Company and held numerous clinics for the duration of the 60s. As the 70s approached, he toured with such diverse entertainers as Maria Muldaur and The Benny Carter Orchestra, as well as performing worldwide as a member of Supersax. Back on the TV circuit, Frank landed the featured soloist spot with the Merv Griffin Show. With Quincy Jones, he helped record several movie soundtracks, and while in Denver, you could always catch Frank playing for the infamous Dick Gibson jazz parties.

His recorded works were many, playing with all the "greats" on such labels as Capitol, Bethlehem, Mode, and my favorite soundtrack on United Artists "I Want To Live." He even recorded a jazz vocal LP on Reprise called "Turn Me Loose." One song in particular, "Don't Bug Me" was an eerie reflection of Frank's troubled mind as his bouts with depression became unbearable. Who knows how dark the road became for him the fateful night of November 26, 1978, as he took the life of his eight year old son Justin, blinded and brain damaged his other boy, seven year old Jason, and then took his own life. Their bodies were found by his fiance and friend of five years, Diane Armesto, as she returned to their Sepulveda home.

I choose to remember his sly wit as he performed on the Steve Allen Show, his sparkling interview with Oscar Brown, Jr. on the old LA Jazz Scene USA, and most of all, his fantastic bone playing on the records of so many stars, including Sinatra, Peggy Lee, Sarah Vaughn, and so many others who sessions he graced. His superb talent and incredible sense of humor often masked his pain and inner torment, but his gift of music to the world will never be forgotten and always treasured.

In March 1994, Conrad Herwig, a New York Freelance trombonist, set up the Frank Rosolino Memorial Scholarship Fund to aid and promote the education of young aspiring musicians/trombonists.

Blues Corner By Rich Hoover

Son Seals Shot

Well gosh! I was going to see Son Seals in Kansas City last Jan. 11th, but the day before my journey I was informed by Tom Ineck at a Berman Foundation meeting that Son had been shot, reportedly by his wife, Johnnie in Chicago. I got a copy of the Omaha World Herald story (I guess the Lincoln newspaper didn't find it necessary to print anything, even though an internationally famous blues bar and some blues fans exist in this town). Here are some excerpts from that Associated Press story:

"Bluesman Frank "Son" Seals is recovering from a gunshot wound to his jaw...The 54-year-old guitarist and singer was in serious condition...A hospital spokeswoman said she didn't know if the wound would affect Seals' singing ability ... Seals wife, Johnnie, shot him... Mrs. Seals, 60, was charged...with aggravated battery with a firearm... Seals... is a mainstay of the Chicago blues club scene, known for electrifying performances and muscular guitar work."

I have looked around on the "net" and have not found a thing, but some kind of info should begin to arrive through the frontline blues mags soon. Mainly, I hope he is doing well and will be able, ready, and willing to continue his life as a "bluesman."



Percy Strother

Photo by Rich Hoover

Percy Strother at the Zoo Bar

I caught a great blues show at the Zoo bar recently. Little known, at least around here, Percy Strother of Minn./St. Paul stimulated me enough to purchase his personally released/produced CD. It has 29 musicians, including Strother, recorded over a 2 1/2 year period, from '91 to mid-'93.

Percy has a compelling vocal style reminiscent of some combination of Muddy Waters and Ray Charles. He had a good backup band and seemed to be having a good time in Lincoln and at the Zoo. The CD is a great collection of tunes, with 11 of the 15 tunes credited to Strother

along with most of the other production aspects. As Steve "The White Rabbitt" Babbitt states in the liner notes, "You're a fine artist: a singer, a songwriter, an arranger, a producer, a guitarist, but first and foremost, you're a bluesman!"

If you have a chance to catch Percy Strother at any show I would recommend that you do it.

Tinsley Ellis at the Zoo Bar

I went down to the Zoo to see the "revival bluesman" Tinsley Ellis, and by golly I had some fun. Tinsley was very reminiscent of the 70s blues/rock genre, and he and his band did a fine job of it. Tinsley's show should be seen, unless you really, really dislike 60s-70s blues/rock. Tinsley has a powerful, soulful voice along with stinging, sizzling, sinuous guitar phrasings and riffs. Ellis comes through periodically, catch him when/where you can.



Tinsley Ellis

Photo by Rich Hoover

Rich's picks at the Zoo Bar

- Feb. 20 ----- New "bluesman" Kenny Neal
- Feb. 21 ----- "The Chief" Eddy Clearwater
- Feb. 22 ----- Omaha horn band, Blue House
- Feb. 26 ----- New "blueslady" Deborah Coleman
- Mar. 9 --- **Rare event!** Jane Jarvis/Benny Waters
- Mar. 10-11 ----- Jimmy Thackery and the Drivers
- Mar. 17 ----- Debbie Davies
- Mar. 21 --- Chi. blues great Willie "Big Eyes" Smith
- Mar. 22 ----- Former Teardrop John Primer
- Mar. 31 ----- Marcia Ball

I haven't gotten any info from anybody about any other blues events in the area. I would like to remind everyone that any info on events within 200 to 300 miles or so is fine for inclusion in this column as long as the public is invited. Mail, call, or e-mail the Berman Music Foundation, attn: Rich Hoover.

The more we know, the better it can be.

Blues on Disc By Rich Hoover



Photo by Robert Scheu

L.C. Robinson being "carried" by his band

L. C. "GOOD ROCKIN'" ROBINSON, Mojo in My Hand, Arhoolie.

I really enjoyed this one! Before getting this CD I had heard a few tunes by L. C. only occasionally, mainly from his "Ups and Downs" LP release on Arhoolie (1972).

In the '30s, L. C. was initially influenced and taught "bottleneck" guitar by "cousin" Blind Willie Johnson. Later on in the '30s and the '40s, L. C., a native Texan, was part of the fan following of Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys, the kings of western swing. During this period, L. C. was working on his fiddle techniques, influenced by Bob Wills, when he met and was taught Hawaiian guitar by steel guitar king Leon McAuliffe.

In 1940 L. C. moved to Oakland, Ca. where he and harmonica playing brother A. C. played the clubs on a regular basis. The pity is that during the period from 1945-1954 only ten cuts were recorded. At this time, A. C. joined the church and became a preacher, L. C. continued playing the clubs but these gigs gradually became fewer and with less remuneration. In the late '60s, he was the featured performer with one side of an album called "Oakland Blues" produced for the World Pacific Bluesmasters series. This was his first LP (now CD). Then L. C. was rediscovered by the blues revival of the 1970s and recorded for World Pacific, Bluesway, and Arhoolie. The Arhoolie LP "Ups and Downs" (now rereleased on CD) is reported to be his best recording from this period.

The "Mojo in my Hand" CD is a compilation of three recording sessions in the early-mid seventies. Session #1 has the Muddy Waters band with:

- L. C. Robinson ---- vocal,guitar, fiddle, steel guitar
- James "Pee Wee" Madison ----- guitar, vocal #6
- Sam Lawhorn ----- guitar
- Calvin Jones ----- bass
- Willie "Big Eyes" Smith -----drums
- Joe "Pinetop" Perkins ----- piano
- Charlie Musselwhite ----- harmonica
- Muddy Waters ----- supervising

Session #2 has:

- L. C. ----- vocal and instrumentation
- Dave Alexander, AKA Omar Sharriff ----- -piano
- William Hyatt ----- bass
- Teddy Winston ----- drums

And, session #3 is a live recording from KPFA radio in Berkeley :

- L. C. ----- fiddle
- A. C. Robinson ----- vocals, harmonica
- Ren Hawkins ----- piano
- Teddy Winston ----- drums

L. C.'s revival culminated in 1975 when he was invited by the Scandinavian Blues Society to perform in Sweden with Floyd Dixon and Sonny Rhodes. Although L. C. doesn't have a lot of recorded material he was influential to the Bay area blues scene and heavily influenced the music and styles of Dave Alexander, Freddie Roulette, J.J. Malone, and Sonny Rhodes.

L. C. died on Sept. 26 1976 in Berkeley Ca., but his music lives on thanks to Chris Strachwitz (producer of these sessions and founder of Arhoolie records) and the few others wise enough to record when they had the opportunity.

It's a classic keeper!

ANTHOLOGY, American Masters Vol. 1- Country Blues Classics & Vol. 2- Urban Blues Classics, Arhoolie.

These CD's are samplers for Arhoolie productions, and they have assembled some great stuff. Both CDs have 15 cuts by 15 artists from 15 previously released Arhoolie CDs.

Featured Artists and selections volume 1

- Mississippi Fred McDowell ----- Frisco Line
- Lightning Hopkins ----- Have you ever loved a woman
- John Jackson ----- Going down in Georgia on a horn
- Lil' Son Jackson ----- Cairo Blues
- Mance Lipscomb ----- 'Bout a spoonful
- Black Ace ----- Drink on little girl
- Snooks Eaglin ----- Country boy down in New Orleans
- Bukka White ----- Columbus, Mississippi Blues
- Dr. Ross ----- Shake 'em on down
- Robert Pete Williams ----- Just tippin' in
- Jesse Fuller ----- Hump in my back
- Big Joe Williams ----- Brother James
- Smoky Babe ----- I'm broke and I'm hungry
- R. L. Burnside ----- Poor black Mattie
- K. C. Douglas ----- Mercury Blues

Featured Artists and selections Volume 2

- Sonny Boy Williamson ----- Pontiac Blues
- Big Mama Thornton ----- Big mama's bumble bee

Big Joe Duskin ----- Cincinnati Stomp
 Earl Hooker ----- Anna Lee
 Charlie Musselwhite ----- Up and Down the Avenue
 John Littlejohn ----- Been around the World
 Joe Turner ----- Wine-O-Baby Boogie
 Katie Webster ----- I know that's right
 Omar Sharriff ----- The Raven
 Bee Houston ----- You think I'm your good thing
 Juke Boy Bonner ----- Going back to the country
 L. C. Robinson ----- Ups and Downs
 Piano Red ----- Atlanta Bounce
 Johnny Young ----- Wild, Wild Women
 The Charles Ford Band ----- Gibson Creek Shuffle

Lawson to teach jazz vocal camp

By Nancy Marshall

Singer Janet Lawson called recently to ask if I thought people in this area would be interested in a jazz vocal camp this summer in Indiana. I told her I would put a note in the newsletter to see if we got any response.

I have been to two camps where Janet taught and it is a marvelous experience. The word for what Janet does is empowerment. She finds the very best in each student and makes it blossom so that by the end of one short week you're able to sing better than you ever thought possible. She can inspire seasoned musicians and beginners.

If you think you are interested now, or in the future, write Janet at:

Janet Lawson
 RR 1, Box 194
 Newfoundland, PA 18445

Or, call me (Nancy Marshall) at 402-474-4080.

There is no liner info other than artist, selection, catalog numbers and query addresses for purchasing, but for listening pleasure these CDs fill the bill.

Arhoolie's American Masters Series consists of 10 volumes covering: Country Blues, Urban Blues, Cajun, Tex-Mex Conjunto, Zydeco, Mexican Regional, World Music, Piano Blues, Tex-Mex Tejano, and Country.

BENNY WATERS, From Paradise (Small's) to Shangrila, Muse.

The man is a master many times over. Born in 1902, he was 85 at the time of this recording (June '87), and by all reports is still going strong now at 95. After headlining a JVC concert last July the *New York Times* reported that Waters is "simply a powerhouse." Also last spring after his performance at the New Orleans Jazz Festival the *Times-Picayune* proclaimed his style as "hard-swinging, melodically inventive, technically proficient... and exudes great joy as he plays".

Waters started in a family with musical presence, primarily an older brother Clarence. Waters taught himself organ licks at age five, which led to formal lessons and by age seven he was giving recitals. Later his brother introduced him to reed instruments starting him on the clarinet. After his mother's death (Benny was eight), he moved to outside of Philadelphia to his Aunt and Uncle's. By the time Benny was in high school he was working with Charlie Miller's band as a professional. At 18 Benny was fortunate to attend the Boston Conservatory of Music where he studied piano and theory and privately taught clarinet. Soon he began his long-lasting career as a full-time professional musician, working with and around all the greats over the next 70+ years. Time seems to have only enhanced his desire to create, learn, and teach.

This CD release is Excellent. A pure pleasure to sit back and let Benny, Don Coates-piano, Earl May-bass, and Ronnie Cole-drums, slide, hop, jump, and groove around each other. Top-notch musicians-production-material.

It's a keeper!

(This CD was recorded in '87 and released in '89. Tom Ineck has a review of Water's latest release earlier in this issue.)

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