



File Photo

Eldar Djangirov at play

Eldar Djangirov returns for Jazz in June concert

By Tom Ineck

Eldar Djangirov has been a familiar name and a familiar sound here at the **Berman Music Foundation** since the BMF covered the inaugural Topeka Jazz Festival back in 1998, when an 11-year-old Djangirov performed to an audience awestruck by this combination of prodigious talent and tender age.

Since then, we have watched him grow into a young man and an even more amazing pianist, performing and recording his own compositions and continuing to exhibit a technique and a confidence well beyond his years. Although he and his family moved from the Kansas City, Mo., area to San Diego, Calif., a year ago, he still is a featured artist at the annual Topeka fest. He also has developed a devoted following here in Lincoln, where he has appeared with his trio at Jazz in June and as featured soloist with the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra. He last performed here in January 2003 with the NJO.

He returns to the Capital City for a June 1 concert in the Jazz in June series at the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery Sculpture Garden. Though

still just 17 years old and a junior in high school, he travels extensively when he is able. After a series of phone-mail exchanges, I tracked him down in Washington, D.C., area, where he was rehearsing for a performance with high school and college students as part of Billy Taylor "Jazz and the New Generation" program. From there he was headed to three performances at the Gilmore Piano Festival in Michigan.

When he takes the stage in Lincoln, he will be accompanied by bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Tommy Ruskin, a slight variation on the trio that for so long featured Todd Strait on drums, both in concert and on Djangirov's recordings—2001's "Eldar" and 2003's "Handprints."

Almost a year since that last recording, Djangirov said he continues to add to his repertoire. The Jazz in June set list likely will include two new originals, "Point of View" and "Raindrops." Jazz standards we can expect to hear include "Body and Soul," "Maiden Voyage," "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Caravan."

Eldar Djangirov cont. on page 3

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*Prez Sez***Age 55 and still swinging full speed ahead***By Butch Berman*

Dear Jazz lovers everywhere,

Hey dere...thanks for clicking in. Lots and lots of news this issue, so get ready. Had a great 55th birthday BMF bash and grand conclave. Wade Wright from Jack's Record Cellar in San Francisco flew in, as well as New York percussionist and recording artist Norman Hedman. The Demuths from Colorado, and Steve Irwin and Jo Boehr from Kansas City couldn't make it, but Gerald and Leslie Spaits, my bass playing KC consultant and his wife, drove up from Missouri. Add my darling wife Grace, **Jazz** newsletter editor Tom Ineck, photographer Rich Hoover, legal representative Tony Rager and secretary Kay Davis from Cline Williams law firm and newcomers to the mix, Mark and Melissa Epp, and you've got yourself a party. Loyal, trusted and dear friends, all of them.

We had a swell luncheon meeting at the Green Gateau discussing all of our stuff. The Epps were there as my renewed friendship with Mark has turned into two couples who enjoy each other's company and stimulate each other very creatively. Mark and I were in rival bands during the mid- to late '60s. The Modds and Music certainly had their moments. Now Mark and Melissa are running an operation called Here We Go Kids (HWGK Productions) which puts out informative musical illustrated books and tapes for education. They are now embarking on "Sticks n' Stones," a movie they created with a screenplay by Joseph Kwong, about coming of age in Nebraska during the



Photo by Rich Hoover

Wade Wright, Leslie Spaits, Tom Ineck, Kay Davis, Tony Rager, Norman Hedman and Gerald Spaits (back row), Butch and Grace Sankey Berman, Melissa and Mark Epp (front row) at Butch's birthday luncheon.

'50s. We hope to collaborate on helping to put together the soundtrack, utilizing some of the rare 45s in my collection from that era. The one and only Herbie Hancock will be handling the major musical production, so this could be a gas. We'll keep you posted as more details become finalized.

Later that evening we were joined by my other girl Friday (besides Grace and Kay) Ruthann Nahorny and a slew of about 50-plus other old cronies from my cherished past. We wined and dined at the ever-so-cool Marz Bar in downtown Lincoln. Had a ball and that ain't all...but now, back to the news at hand.

Got to hang out a little with my new musician buddies, pianist Roger Wilder from KC and the ever-so-saxy Rob Scheps from Portland, Ore., who were in Lincoln gigging with the Boulevard Big Band from KC at Kimball Recital Hall on our

University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus. (Check out my related review in this issue.)

After many productive meetings with this year's Jazz in June committee, led to perfection by Doug Campbell, the lineup for 2004 should be another blockbuster. We kick off the proceedings with the BMF-sponsored return of Russian-born piano phenom Eldar Djangirov on June 1. We also helped procure the incredible singing talents of New Yorker Kendra Shank and her band for June 8. Next are East Coast trumpeter Ingrid Jensen and her group performing June 15. Chicagoan acoustic bluegrass/jazz guitarist John Carlini and his combo, featuring a returnee from last year, mandolinist Don Stiernberg, appear June 22, and Lincoln's own swinging big band the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra (NJO) round out another

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Eldar Djangirov cont. from page 1

"I've been learning more tunes, making more music, trying to make progress," he said. "Handprints," he said, is a collection of some of his favorite tunes by his favorite musicians, many of them pianists. The 11 tracks feature compositions by Thelonious Monk, Herbie Hancock, Billy Taylor, Bill Evans and Chick Corea. ("Handprints" is reviewed elsewhere in this newsletter.)

"We just tried to have fun and create music," Djangirov said of that



File Photo

Eldar Djangirov with the NJO in January 2003

recording. "It's a reflection of many things. It's a reflection of piano players that I like, and the way I was playing at that point in time, what I was listening to and working on."

Djangirov doesn't worry much about the conventional wisdom that says a soloist who achieves fame too early in life may fail to develop a sound of his own, instead merely mimicking the sound of others.

"When players or musicians get together, you never find two musicians that sound alike," he said. "It's kind of like saying, 'Have you ever met two people that are exactly alike?' I don't think that's possible. There might be similar players. There are definitely players in music that are influenced, but the personalities are different, and the personality comes along from the very beginning. It's just trying to find

that trait and getting it to grow."

As far as having developed a "voice" that is unmistakably his, Djangirov is more philosophical.

"It's always for the people to decide whether they hear the voice and the musical statement that one is trying to make," he said. He acknowledges that Oscar Peterson remains his favorite pianist, but "whomever I'm listening to, whether it's Chick Corea, Brad Mehldau, Benny Green, Herbie Hancock, McCoy Tyner, Art Tatum, Oscar Peterson, Fats Waller, Bill Charlap, Joey Calderazzo, I'm

finding something that really appeals about all of them. They're all just amazing in what they do, and I admire what they do. I try to be influenced, in a good way, by all of those."

Many of these jazz luminaries—including Billy Taylor, Marian McPartland, Dave Brubeck, Benny Carter and Benny Green—have heaped praise upon the young Djangirov, recognition by his peers that he considers very flattering. But he doesn't let it go to his head. Rather, he said, he seeks their advice.

The best news for Djangirov fans is that he already has recorded a third CD, to be released as early as August. He was reluctant to discuss details of the as-yet-untitled release, other than the fact that it will be on the Sony label and will feature bassist John Patitucci and drummer Todd Strait. I promised not to reveal the name of a very special guest saxophonist (but his initials are MB). Sorry, Eldar, I couldn't resist.



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

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fine season June 29. (Check out Tom Ineck's coverage on Lincoln's best annual festival.)

Eldar, backed by Tommy Ruskin and Gerald Spaits will play Jazz in June right after their performances at the Topeka Jazz Festival. (See Tom's report on this great venue.)

I mention this because it leads into the most important news I have to offer you this time around. To preface a bit, I think I met Jim Monroe when he spoke at the Mid-America Jazz Conference in KC around 1998. That same year, the BMF started sponsoring the Topeka Jazz Festival, held yearly on Memorial Day weekend and now starting with a kick-off Friday evening picnic after a day of master classes for the kids. Later, we helped to fund a Jazz Mentor program. Jim has been the artistic director since the start.

To my surprise and pleasure, I received a letter from Rob Seitz, the executive director and Mark Radzieski, the assistant director of the Topeka Performing Arts Center (TPAC) inquiring if I would like to take over for Jim, who was retiring, and head the TJF for the next four or five years, starting with 2005. After ironing out all the legal stuff, I gladly accepted and proceeded to book the festival, to be announced at the close of this year's event. (Ya gotta be there in



Butch at birthday bash

Photo by Rich Hoover

Topeka to find out first).

I was also asked to book a five performance jazz series to be held on Sunday evenings the months of September, October, November, February and March. This kinda work is a labor of love for me...and I was further thrilled when TPAC offer to name it the Berman Jazz Series. Wow! Dig the ad for these upcoming concerts in this issue...and be there. It's like goin' to KC without all the traffic for only 2¾ hours of driving with a nice hotel right across the street from the beautiful TPAC building.

More on all of this in our upcoming newsletters and on our website, as I don't want to steal any thunder from this year's fine show. (You'll enjoy Tom's preview and review of this year's haps in this and following issues of Jazz.)

We also want to thank Jim Monroe for all of his grand efforts over the years and wish him the best of luck in whatever he pursues in the future. It's a genuine honor to be able to perpetuate this great legacy for our grand, national treasure, jazz, which Jim brought to fruition over the course of seven years. There'll be some changes made, but the tradition of the "jazz party" will live on in Topeka at this wonderful festival.

While I'm thanking people, I must mention my gratitude to the Cline-Williams computer whiz Matt Campbell, who's been giving me

weekly lessons on my Dell, which make this job a lot more fun.

Speaking of fun...what a great night to be hearing my old friend, the Brazilian be-bop trumpet master Claudio Roditi struttin' his magical sounds and vibes all over the Cornhusker Hotel ballroom March 16, sittin' in as special guest with the NJO. (Bill Wimmer wrote a nice piece on it in this issue.) Claudio looked and sounded wonderful. He also charmed the audience with some lovely singing, which I'd never heard before. You'll be hearing and seeing more of him in the near future, I promise you.

Elsewhere in this issue you can read my travelogue of Grace and my super fab trip to NYC the first of April. I'm flying again and hope to visit San Francisco in September after catching Prince's supposed last concert tour in KC on May 4 just prior to the Topeka Jazz Festival and Jazz in June. Good times ahead. We here at the BMF wish you all a very safe, healthy, happy and, of course...jazzy summer.

P.S. Just a thought here... I got turned onto a new personal doctor, Kevin Coughlin, who's hip, listens and looks towards alternative routes, as opposed to overprescribing, that I'm very impressed with. If you're competing with the Bebopman regarding age, and haven't had a decent checkup in a while, check Kevin out and tell him you-know-who sent ya. He's at Heart & Health Solutions at www.kjcemd.com.

With grace in mind,

Butch Beerman



Butch and Claudio Roditi

Photo by Rich Hoover

Concert Preview

2004 Jazz in June offers five Tuesday concerts

By Tom Ineck

The popular Jazz in June concert series in the Sculpture Garden of the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery in downtown Lincoln returns with five Tuesday evening performances. The free concerts begin at 7 p.m. and generally last until 9 p.m.

As noted in the accompanying story, young pianist **Eldar Djangirov** returns to the Jazz in June stage June 1, fronting a trio that also features bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Tommy Ruskin.

Originally from Kyrgyzstan in the former Soviet Union, Djangirov was discovered by New York jazz enthusiast Charles McWhorter, who brought him to the United States to attend summer camp at the prestigious Interlochen Center for the Arts in Michigan. He later moved to Kansas City, Mo., and then to his current home in San Diego.

Singer **Kendra Shank** is joined June 8 by a top-flight rhythm section including pianist Frank Kimbrough, bassist Dean Johnson and drummer Tony Moreno. Shank's crystal-pure tone, powerful musicianship and elastic phrasing have won her rave critical notices and fans worldwide.

Born in California to a playwright father and actress mother, she began as her music career a folk and pop singer-guitarist in Seattle. Her jazz recording debut was in 1994 with "Afterglow," which was followed by "Wish" in 1998 and "Reflections" in 2000.

Bluegrass and jazz acoustic guitarist **John Carlini** performs June 15 with a band that includes jazz mandolinist Don Stiernberg, who played to an enthusiastic crowd at last year's Jazz in June. Carlini



Photo by Butch Berman

The Jazz in June committee is Doug Campbell, Katherine Starace, Rob Simon, Tom Range, Sean Morrison, Orville Jones, Rachel Principato, Jessica Kennedy, Marcia Laging-Cummings, Lori Seibel, Linda Crump (back row), Ted Eschliman, Alexia Morrison, Rand Wiiese (front row). Member Butch Berman took the photo.

graduated from the Berklee College of Music, composed and orchestrated music for the 1978 film "King of the Gypsies," and appeared onscreen performing with jazz violinist Stephane Grappelli.

He became a member of the David Grisman Quintet and has recorded with Grisman, guitarist Tony Rice and the Nashville Mandolin Ensemble. The John Carlini Quartet, with Stiernberg, bassist Brian Glassman and drummer Steve Holloway, issued its debut album, "The Game's Afoot!" in 2003.

Trumpeter **Ingrid Jensen** brings her band, Project O, to Lincoln June 22. Selected by Down Beat magazine as one of the 25 most important improvising musicians of the future and rated in the top three in a number of their critics' polls for talent deserving wider recognition, Jensen attended the

Berklee College of Music.

She has an impressive discography, including three CDs of her own on the Enja label and recordings with Big Band leader Maria Schneider, saxophonist Virginia Mayhew, vocalists Chris Connor and Roseanna Vitro, and the all-female band Diva. Her current band features Hammond B-3 organist Gary Versace.

The **Nebraska Jazz Orchestra** rounds out the five-date season June 29 with a concert certain to include a variety of traditional big band compositions by such jazz masters as Duke Ellington and Count Basie, as well as more modern additions to the jazz repertoire.

The NJO has performed for its many local fans since its formation in 1975 and has seven recordings.

Concert Preview

BMF returns to Topeka Jazz Festival

By Tom Ineck

After a one-year hiatus from covering the Topeka Jazz Festival, the Berman Music Foundation returns with high expectations for the 7th annual Memorial Day weekend event, May 29-31, with a special outdoor concert kicking off the festivities from 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. May 28.

Singer Karrin Allyson, a beloved TJF regular for many years, returns this year to headline the free Friday evening "yard party." Before she takes the stage for the 7:30 p.m. finale, however, some of the other TJF favorites will mix it up.

Singers Lee Gibson and Giacomo Gates will lead the bill, accompanied by pianist Shelly Berg, bassist Jay Leonhart and drummer Joe Ascione. The trio of pianist Bill Mays, bassist Jennifer Leitham and drummer Jackie Williams follows, and a sextet featuring reed master Ken Peplowski, trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, guitarist Rod Fleeman, Berg, Leonhart, and Ascione precedes Allyson.

We anticipate hearing some new tunes in the extensive Allyson repertoire. Her upcoming Concord release is called "Wild for You" and features tunes first recorded by Joni Mitchell, Melissa Manchester, Carly Simon, Bonnie Raitt, Carole King, Roberta Flack, James Taylor, Elton John and Cat Stevens.

A trio of piano trios headlines this year's festival proper, which runs from 10:45 a.m. Saturday to 7 p.m. Monday in the beautiful art deco-style Georgia Neese Gray Performance Hall. Pianist Paul Smith fronts a band with bassist Jim DeJulio and drummer Todd Strait, while bassist Jennifer Leitham is the leader of a trio also



Guitarist Rod Fleeman, bassist Bob Bowman and drummer Tommy Ruskin at the 2002 Topeka Jazz Festival.

consisting of pianist Shelly Berg and drummer Joe Ascione. The 17-year-old piano whiz Eldar Djangirov will be accompanied by bassist Gerald Spaits, with either Todd Strait or Tommy Ruskin filling the percussion chair.

The 2004 festival again features a number of tried-and-true favorites, but one can't complain about the caliber of such instrumentalists as trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, tenor saxophonist and clarinetist Ken Peplowski, trumpeter Warren Vache, multi-reed player Gary Foster, pianists Bill Mays, Shelly Berg, Tom Ranier and Eldar Djangirov, bassists John Clayton, Jennifer Leitham and Jay Leonhart, and drummers Joe LaBarbera, Joe Ascione and Jackie Williams.

New to this frequent festivalgoer are saxophonist Brent Jensen, trombonist John Allred, pianist Jon Mayer, bassist Jim DeJulio and singers Giacomo Gates and Lee Gibson, but we're looking forward to making their acquaintance.

Of course, Kansas City's finest will also be in good supply, including guitarist Rod Fleeman, pianists Joe Cartwright, Paul Smith, bassists Bob

Bowman and Gerald Spaits and drummers Todd Strait and Tommy Ruskin.

Once again TJF Artistic Director Jim Monroe booked all the artists and scheduled all the elaborately "choreographed" sets, with three or four sets in each of the four sessions on Saturday and Sunday and three sessions on Monday. Musicians rotate on and off the stage throughout the day, playing in formats ranging from solo piano to sextet (including a set with six basses!) and all-too-often confined to familiar Swing Era melodies. It is a complicated schematic that makes the Topeka festival unique, though its rigidity occasionally stifles creativity.

It remains to be seen just how the Topeka Jazz Festival, its music and its aging audiences will evolve after this year's festival, Monroe's last hurrah as artistic director.

In 2005, Butch Berman takes the reins and refashions the festival in his image, tapping his considerable intuition and the long list of jazz artists with whom he has worked since forming the Berman Music Foundation in 1995. (*For Butch's perspective, see his Prez Sez column in this issue of Jazz.*)

Ticket information for the 2004 Topeka Jazz Festival

Admission for a single set is \$25, while a reserved-seat pass for all three days (11 sets) is \$225. Single-set tickets are available through Ticketmaster, but three-day passes and VIP festival packages are available only through the Topeka Performing Arts Center at (785) 234-ARTS.

Concert Preview

Berman Jazz Series begins in September in Topeka

By Tom Ineck

The first Berman Jazz Series will include five concert beginning in September and continuing until next March at the Topeka Performing Arts Center in Topeka, Kan. The premiere series is primarily a showcase for prominent Kansas City-based musicians.

The Dan Thomas Quintet kicks off the series with a Sept. 12 performance. The group's extensive repertoire consists of tunes from the early swing era to bebop and beyond. Thomas' new CD is "City Scope." A performer and educator, Dan hails from Canada, and has been in the United States for nearly a decade. He was a regular on the West Coast jazz scene. Thomas currently is professor of jazz studies in the music department at the University of Missouri—Kansas City.

The Doug Talley Quartet performs Oct. 10. Talley is a familiar face throughout the Midwest as a jazz performer and educator. Formed in 1995, the Doug Talley Quartet has performed throughout the region, including Oklahoma City, Okla.; Dallas, Texas;

Elkhart, Ind.; Lincoln, Neb.; and, of course, the band's home base, Kansas City, Mo. The rest of the band consists of pianist Wayne Hawkins, bassist Tim Brewer and drummer Keith Kavanaugh. The Doug Talley Quartet has three CDs, "Town Topic," "Night and Day" and the latest release, "Kansas City Suite."

The Russ Long Trio is scheduled for Nov. 14. Pianist Russ Long is a favorite in the Kansas City area, performing for many years in the city's jazz venues. His recording "Never Let Me Go" was released in late 2001. Also featured in the Russ Long Trio are bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Ray DeMarchi.

Luqman Hamza and Lucky Wesley will appear Feb. 13, 2005. Pianist-singer Luqman Hamza is a much-loved presence in Kansas City. Recent recordings include "With This Voice" and "When a Smile Overtakes a Frown." Bassist and singer Lucky Wesley also has been well-known to KC jazz fans for many years.

George Cables will perform a solo piano concert March 13, 2005. Equally skilled as a leader, a sideman or in solo performance, Cables helped to define modern mainstream jazz piano of the 1980s and '90s. He gained recognition during his stints with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, Sonny Rollins, Joe Henderson and Freddie Hubbard. He was with Dexter Gordon during the tenor's successful return to the United States in the late 1970s, and became known as Art Pepper's favorite pianist. With more than 20 recordings as a leader, Cables most recent releases are 2002's "Shared Secrets" and 2003's "Looking for the Light."

Tickets for the entire series are \$75 through June 30. To order by phone, call (785) 234-ARTS. To order by fax, dial (785) 234-2307. To order by mail, write Topeka Performing Arts Center, 214 SE Eighth Ave., Topeka, KS 66606. *For fax or mail orders, use the order form on the next page.*

Memorial

KC area composer-arranger Frank Mantooth dies

Frank Mantooth, 56, a composer, pianist, arranger and 11-time Grammy Award nominee, died Jan. 30 at his home in Garden City, Kan. He reportedly died of natural causes.

Mantooth was born April 11, 1947, in Tulsa, Okla. By age 14, he was playing in public. In 1969 he earned a bachelor's degree in music from North Texas State University and contributed arrangements as a member of the Air Force Academy Falconaires from 1969 to 1973. He received a piano degree in Vienna, Austria, in 1977.

He was commissioned to write music for Doc Severinsen, The Kansas City Symphony and the Madison Symphony Orchestra. He taught at several universities, high schools and summer jazz camps. He published five volumes of "The Best Chord Changes for the World's Greatest Standards" for the Hal Leonard Corp., in addition to more than 165 works for combo and jazz ensembles since 1978.

He was included in the 2001 edition of Grove's Dictionary of Jazz. As a leader, he made five albums that

yielded 11 Grammy nominations.

Singer Marilyn Maye was working with him on his last project, a combination of female vocalists and instrumental music he was arranging before his death.

Vocalist Kevin Mahogany and bassist Bob Bowman were among the last of Mantooth's friends to perform with him Jan. 17 in Great Bend. Both also had performed with him in Garden City in recent years.

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Concert Review

Trumpeter Claudio Roditi plays with fireworks

By Bill Wimmer

The Nebraska Jazz Orchestra presented Brazilian trumpeter Claudio Roditi March 16 at the Cornhusker Hotel.

Having arrived fashionably late, I missed most of the first song, which I was assured later was not one of the highlights of the evening. Now warmed up, the band played an arrangement of Ellington's "Prelude to a Kiss." The opening ballad section featured trumpet in the melody, before switching to a waltz, with Bob Krueger taking a turn on flugelhorn and Tom Hartig taking a quick one on alto.

Guest artist Roditi was brought out to play "Samba de Orfeu," featuring Claudio with NJO Music Director Ed Love. The trumpeter began his solo jaunt by immediately belting out beautiful melodies with that fat, rich tone, and Dave Sharp followed with a nice statement on soprano. Percussionist Joey Gulizia, who shined all night long through the



Claudio Roditi

ensemble, dueled and propelled Roditi to close out the tune.

The NJO really sounded good, but they were really hurt sonically by poor balance of the instruments. The bass, while very solid and sounding great, was just too loud all night long. Predictably, whenever one rhythm section member is so loud it interferes with the balance

and blending of other instruments. Although the piano, the usual victim of any soundman, was really undermiked, what really suffered was Peter Bouffard's guitar, which could have helped provide more intensity and authenticity to the sambas and bossa novas featured all night long. The band played "A Felicidade" next, a beautiful Jobim line with a chart penned by Dave Sharp. Things went well, but during the solos, the band began to drag a little. Sensing this, Roditi picked up a shaker and helped Gulizia and drummer Greg Ahl get the band back into the groove. A big band dragging on a samba can get old really quick. Sharp kept the best of this tune until the end, with his scoring and harmonies surprising and well crafted.

Next up was "Groovin' High," the Dizzy Gillespie take on "Whispering." Sharp on alto and Roditi were featured, with Roditi soulful and hitting all the right notes. Dave and Claudio then traded four-bar phrases that were woven nicely into the arrangement.

Another Dizzy tune, a medium bossa named "Tanga," featured Ed Love with Roditi. Claudio is so tasteful and warm. He is capable of great fireworks, but seemingly incapable of overplaying or exploiting them. This one also gave Joey Gulizia and Greg Ahl to demonstrate how much heat they can generate as they were given a workout at the end of the song.

On a Don Menza arrangement of a plagiarized Miles Davis blues



Claudio Roditi (left) is joined by drummer Greg Ahl, bassist Andy Hall and saxophonist Ed Love.

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called “Gravy,” Scott Vicroy was given a rare chance to solo on bari sax, and he made the most of it. Bassist Andy Hall followed, pulling out all the stops-and all the double stops in his fine exploration of this blues. Peter Bouffard’s chart on “Danny Boy” started as a ballad, with Sharp taking the lead on soprano. Nice solos by Sharp, who played well all night in solo spots, Peter on guitar and a nice sax soli section were also highlighted on this one.

Roditi returned for a nice working of “Secret Love,” with a catchy opening vamp. Roditi played a beautiful solo, followed by Bouffard, who really was hard to hear in the mix. Claudio finished a nice out section with another tasty cadenza. On “Desifinado,” another Bouffard arrangement, Roditi took the mike and sang the melody, his enthusiasm and authenticity more than making up for any shortcomings on intonation.

After writing that exact line during the song, imagine my delight at Claudio’s assertion immediately following the applause at the end of the song: “My God, even when someone sings out of tune in Portuguese it sounds good.” Honesty is so refreshing.

Before the closer, “A Night in Tunisia,” Roditi paid a nice compliment to the NJO, noting the kindness, respect and professionalism that he and his wife, who books him, experienced dealing with the band. “Tunisia” was led off by Bob Krueger on trumpet, followed by Scott Vicroy’s great tone and booting lines on bari. This guy’s too good a soloist to be buried in the section all night long! Roditi finished up the solos as only he could, with a cadenza leading to the big send-off.

The band did an encore im-



Photo by Rich Hoover

Trumpeter Bob Krueger (left) with trumpeter Claudio Roditi

promptu “Bag’s Groove,” with Claudio coaxing some of the more reticent (I didn’t say timid) members up to the mike to solo.

This was a great show that probably deserved a larger crowd. Roditi is a really fine musician and a beautiful man, who seems to exude the same warmth off stage as when he plays. It is also a tribute to the NJO and the Berman Music Foundation for bringing a guy like Claudio Roditi to Lincoln.



Photo by Rich Hoover

Doug Campbell and Butch Berman chat during intermission.



Photo by Rich Hoover

Seated at the BMF table are (from left) Ruthann Nahorny, Kathryn Sinclair, Monica Schwarz, Grace and Butch Berman, Kay Davis and Mary Jo Hall.

Concert Review

Newport Jazz Festival celebrates its 50th year

By Tom Ineck

TOPEKA, Kan.—Impresario George Wein's 1954 Newport Jazz Festival was the first all-jazz festival ever presented. Its inaugural performances featured Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie, Billie Holiday, Errol Garner and Gerry Mulligan.

Since then, headlining artists have included Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Miles Davis, Nina Simone, Charles Mingus, Frank Sinatra, Mahalia Jackson, Dave Brubeck, Herbie Hancock, Diana Krall, Cassandra Wilson, Pat Metheny and Roy Hargrove. Known since 1984 as the JVC Jazz Festival Newport, R.I., the event still is regarded by many as the most important event of the jazz year.

When you can't go to the Newport Jazz Festival in Rhode Island, it's nice to know that some of its best players may come to a venue near you—especially during the festival's 50th anniversary year.

Such was the case Feb. 27 in Topeka, Kan., where seven of today's mightiest jazz players met to celebrate the landmark occasion with a 2½-hour concert at the Topeka Performing Arts Center. Headlining the group was legendary saxophonist James Moody, but his compatriots were also among the jazz elite—saxophonist James Carter, trumpeter Randy Brecker, guitarist Howard Alden, pianist Cedar Walton, bassist Peter Washington and drummer Lewis Nash.

Musicians entered and exited the spotlight as the size of the ensemble shifted to feature certain players and exploit the array of talents, personalities and group dynamics.

All seven appeared on stage as the concert began with a fast-paced

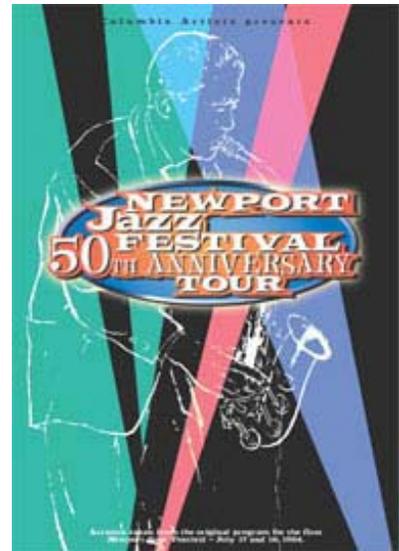
Cedar Walton tune, assuring that everyone was warmed up, players and audience alike. Walton then fronted a piano trio in a gorgeous rendition of "Over the Rainbow," cleverly interpolating "When You Wish upon a Star."

Carter and Alden made it a quintet, with Carter on baritone sax muscling his way through "Moten Swing" as a tribute to the classic Kansas City jazz tradition represented by the tune's composer, bandleader Bennie Moten. Trumpeter Brecker took the spotlight on Benny Golson's "Stablemates," while Walton, Washington and Nash bonded in rhythmic synchronicity.

Moody finally appeared for his first feature, a duo version of "Body and Soul," coupling the 78-year-old veteran's tenor sax with Washington's impeccable bass lines. Accompanied only by bass and drums, guitarist Alden attacked Barney Kessel's "64 Bars on Wilshire" with a furious drive, never dropping a note. The whole band returned for the obligatory "C Jam Blues," featuring Moody and Carter taking idiosyncratic tenor solos and trading fours.

Dizzy Gillespie's "Groovin' High," a warhorse for the classic bebop quintet, was a perfect vehicle for Moody, Brecker, Walton, Washington and Nash. The drummer was especially noteworthy for his virtuosic—but tasteful—playing throughout the evening. Again the stage was turned over to a Walton-led trio, this time for his up-tempo composition "Midnight Waltz."

Duke Ellington's songbook yielded a pair of winners. Carter, on soprano sax, and Alden first took a turn on the maestro's "Don't You Know I Care?" The whole band wailed on Juan Tizol's "Caravan," but



it was Nash who truly excelled on the tune's familiar, exotic rhythms.

In mutual admiration, the featured players frequently called for applause for their bandmates. Moody was especially generous with praise for Nash, telling the audience that the drummer's skill was largely due to his vegetarianism.

Something would have been missing if Moody had not vocalized, and he met our expectations with a typically outrageous rendition of "Moody's Mood for Love," complete with a "rap" finale.

Walton's memorable composition "Firm Roots" served as the concert closer for the full ensemble, allowing everyone a final statement but featuring Moody on tenor and Carter on baritone. Called back for an encore, they sent us home with Gillespie's "Birk's Works."

About 500 people attended the concert in the 2,500-seat Georgia Neese Gray Performance hall, which has earned many fans over the last seven years as the comfortable venue of the annual Topeka Jazz Festival.

Concert Review

KC's Boulevard Big Band makes big noise

By Butch Berman

I, as you know, dig jazz a bunch. For no specific reason, I've always been a small-group aficionado—especially trios, quartets and quintets. Straight ahead and bebop have always been my specialties. I've never heavily gravitated towards the big band, although I've been fortunate enough to have caught the Mingus Band at Fez in New York City, as well as sponsoring them at the Lied Center for Performing Arts in Lincoln and catching the now non-existent Toshiko Akiyoshi-Lew Tabackin Big Band at New York's famed (new) Birdland. I've always admired the great arrangements and bombastic sound but still preferred the intimacy of smaller combos.

However, I was in for a rare treat as Kansas City's famed Boulevard Big Band (BBB) played a March concert at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Kimball Hall to celebrate the Nebraska State Band Masters 2004 convention.

On the chilly night the hall was



Roger Wilder (left) and Rob Scheps were in Lincoln for the Boulevard Big Band concert.

crammed with children of all ages, most from Lincoln and Omaha. These kids must have really dug the music as they were quiet, polite and very attentive.

This year the BBB, led by trum-

peter Mike McGraw, had a very special guest—and a very new, but dear, friend of mine. Sax-o-wizard Rod Scheps of Portland, Ore., as usual, really tore up the joint with his masterful chops and showmanship. He even wowed the throng just using his mouthpiece for soloing, and his superlative reading skills were most evident.

The band had a unique and varied repertoire utilizing such astute arrangers as the recently departed Frank Mantooth and current jazz stalwarts saxophonist Rick Margitza and trombonist John Fedchock, to name a few. They even tackled Monk's lovely "Ruby My Dear" and ended the evening with a rave up rendition of the Flintstones theme.

There were many top players in the band, with such standouts as pianist Roger Wilder, trombonist Steve Decker and the amazing Paul McKee. Jay Solenberger and Al Pearson are KC trumpet aces that go back a ways—especially Al, who played in the old Pendergast era of cats. I also enjoyed guitarist Rod Whitsitt, who has George Shearing history, and drummer Tom Morgan.

If you are a Topeka Jazz Festival attendee, you should know that I've invited Paul McKee, Roger Wilder and Rob Scheps to do their thing at the 2005 happening, of which I am proud to say I am artistic director.

The BBB have a few CDs out, and I highly recommend them. Check out the KC local section of my fave Missouri record store—The Music Exchange, near Westport. These guys obviously impressed some young ears that night in Lincoln and enlightened a few old ones like myself.

Memorial

Guitarist Barney Kessel dead at age 80

Barney Kessel, a high-profile jazz guitarist who performed with Billie Holiday, Charlie Parker, Art Tatum and other jazz greats, died of brain cancer May 6. He was 80.

Kessel's early style was heavily influenced by the electric guitarist Charlie Christian, but he branched out in his early 20s, working with the big bands of Artie Shaw, Charlie Barnet and Benny Goodman.

In the 1950s, Kessel developed a reputation as a studio musician,

writing and directing music for movies and backing performers from the Beach Boys to Fred Astaire.

He formed the group Great Guitars in 1972 with Herb Ellis and Charlie Byrd.

Kessel served as a Music Ambassador during the Carter administration, becoming only the third person to be named to that office, after Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie.

His performing career ended with a stroke in 1992.

Performance Review

Oscar Micheaux film gets live accompaniment

By Tom Ineck

Oscar Micheaux is widely recognized as a pioneer film-maker and author, despite the fact that he was a black man working in a white-dominated entertainment medium in its infancy.

Beginning his career in 1918 on a financial shoestring, Micheaux managed to produce some 40 films, including 25 silent movies and 15 "talkies," making him the only black film-maker to make the transition to sound. Living in South Dakota, he worked throughout the Plains states in the early decades of the 20th century and continued to make films until the late 1940s.

Emphasizing racism's injury to the community and to the society at large, Micheaux's films also illustrate the power of black pride, personal dignity and independence to free blacks from the yoke of racism. Like Malcolm X, he also preached against



Pearl Bowser

the hazards of underclass black urban life.

The new Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center in Lincoln, under the direction of longtime Lincoln art film impresario Danny Lee Ladely, recently gave Micheaux the respect he deserves, screening the 1925 mas-

Photo by Rich Hoover

terpiece "Body and Soul," starring Paul Robeson, the 1920 film "Within Our Gates," and the award-winning documentary on Micheaux and race movies called "Midnight Ramble."

The films were presented with introductory comments by Pearl Bowser, a renowned scholar of Micheaux studies, and Thulani Davis, scholar and writer of works for the theater, journalism, fiction and poetry.

For the Feb. 6 special screening of the silent film "Within Our Gates," Ladely arranged for Kansas City jazz pianist Luqman Hamza to provide a live, improvised "soundtrack," much as local musicians did in the movie houses of the silent era. Hamza's keyboard contribution was invaluable, adding dramatic impact to an already dramatic story line.

In "Within Our Gates," Evelyn Preer, the first black film star, plays Sylvia Landry, the illegitimate daughter of a white plantation owner in Mississippi. Following the tragic death of her adopted parents at the hands of a lynch mob, Sylvia devotes her life to the education and uplift of her centerpiece for Micheaux's controversial drama on race in America.

Hamza tastefully accompanied the film on the Ross theater piano, weaving well-known melodies throughout the narrative and flawlessly segueing from one scene to the next. Among the tunes he used to illustrate the story line were "Taking a Chance on Love," Gershwin's "Summertime," "Blues in the Night," the Depression-era "Pennies From Heaven," Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood," Billie Holiday's "God Bless the Child," and Gershwin's classic "I Got Rhythm."



Luqman Hamza of Kansas City stands next to the Ross Theater piano.

Photo by Rich Hoover

Travel Story

Recent NYC trip was a non-stop jazzathon

By Butch Berman

NEW YORK CITY—I hadn't visited America's greatest city, New York City of course, since I took my BMF gang eastward to catch Norman Hedman and Tropique's CD release party at the famed Blue Note for "Taken by Surprise" and to help me celebrate my 50th birthday.

I was using Amtrak in those days, never flying. Then after 9-11 I wondered if my neurotic self would ever see NYC again. Well, thanks to the ever-so-healing attributes from my loving and supportive wife, Grace, I made it.

We flew to Chicago for our honeymoon last year, so this was my second flight in about eight or nine years. No sweat! I've made a complete 360 and now truly love flying and sorta traveling. Grace getting me to try to dig the process more, and complain less, sure has helped. Once I get to my destination (and especially NYC) I seem to transform into a true native and run non-stop like a madman trying to take in everything we can until we have to return home. Usually for about a week or so, I ruminate on how we should move and live there until "most" of the realities set in. Lincoln's a great place to live, NYC is a great place to visit, but maybe...

Even getting to Eppley Airfield in Omaha for our non-stop to Newark/NYC was a gas. I had read about a new van shuttle called Omalink that provides rides to and from Lincoln to Omaha from different convenient pick-up and drop-off locations. My photographer Rich Hoover used them and loved their



Butch and Norman Hedman in NYC

service, so I thought, why not? Larger cities utilize these, so it's neat we now do. Owned and operated by Chris Stokes and Shawn Mrsny, and with Bruce Baker handling dispatch, they make a good team. Our driver, Ed Shaw, was a sheer delight. Fun, polite and helpful, as well as a decent driver, made for a very pleasant trip. Ed, a barbershop singer on the side, even sang a duet with me on "You Are My Sunshine," as Grace just shook

her head in disbelief. What a great start for our excursion, huh? Oh yeah, don't wanna forget, call 'em at (402) 475-LINK (5465) and leave the driving to them.

Norman graciously picked us up at the Newark airport. I'll never book a flight to a major metropolis on a Friday night at rush hour again, if I can help it. Minor oversight, I guess, but I felt sorry for Norman. This is the kinda stuff that probably keeps me rooted in the Midwest for most of my life. Anyway, I've always dug the mid-town or "Hell's Kitchen" neighborhood as my turf when in town. That way you can just catch the airport shuttle bus outta NJ into Port Authority, NYC, and be less than half a mile walk or cab ride to the hotel I usually frequent, called the Belvedere on 48th Street between 8th and 9th avenues. From there you're within a half-



Grace Sankey Berman and Russ Dantzler in NYC

Photo by Grace Berman

Photo by Butch Berman

hour walk from just about anything you might want to do in Manhattan in all directions.

As far as the Belvedere goes, it's a pretty comfortable, European-style older hotel that was once a residency apartment, with an interesting history I'm sure. Bring your smudgestick unless you encourage earth-bound spirits as roommates in the "Big Apple." The biggest drawback is the super-slow, tiny elevators that are always too full for you to get on within its 20-some floors. Clean rooms with all you'd need while in NY, very pleasant staff and a great concierge. Right across from the Musicians Union, it's a PERFECT location place to stay for a fair price. I'd probably avoid their "cafe" which is really an overpriced buffet with many other better choices within minutes. The old Metro on 48th Street and 8th Avenue, which had better bagels and onion to boot, is now the Pigalle, and still worth starting your morning coffee with.

This was Grace's first trip to NYC, so we couldn't have been in better hands to help show her the ropes than Norman and my old friend from Lincoln, now a New Yorker all the way, Russ Dantzer, who still operates his Hot Jazz Management but on a more limited basis. We all had our first 9th Avenue late dinner at the Westside Cottage Two to plot out our short trip's activities. FYI, food is great and not terribly overpriced everywhere in the city but 9th Avenue from 36th Street to 57th Street is a famed notorious "Restaurant Row" that has an annual "Food Fair."

Russ suggested a boat trip for us the next morning, so Grace could get a better picture of how the island is laid out. Unfortunately, we had unseasonably cold, Nebraska-like weather with the temperature hovering around 30 degrees, rain,



Photo by Grace Sankey Berman

Butch plays Norman Hedman's piano.

gale-like winds and snow threatening. Luckily, as Nebraskans we handled the cold OK and brought appropriate duds, but shelved the boat for an Uptown Bus Tour. Again because of the rotten climate, we had to sit inside the bus instead of the top deck...and couldn't see much. The fumes were getting to me too, but the tour guide was very informative. His major prob was he was dyslexic so whenever he said to check something out on the right, we all had to laugh, and look left. After the tour, Grace and I found a lovely joint called the Brazil Grille on about 46th Street and 8th Avenue, and had maybe our favorite meal of the week.

For our first jazz experience, we met up again with Russ and another dear friend of his and mine, Ms. Mikala Freitas. A sweet and talented singer-dancer who also does excellent massage work. Sadly, she had just lost her beau to the horrible war in Iraq, and was feeling very blue. These blues were soon to be chased away for at least as long as the marvelous performance that awaited us.

Subscribing to the ever-so-snappy guide to NY/NJ jazz haps, Hot House magazine arrived the day before we left. I even got to meet their VP/General Manager Gwen Calvier-Dittmann at Zuni the following Monday. Anyway, Hot House had this full-page ad for a show at Jazz at Lincoln Center called "Brazilian Nights" – Toots Thielemans and Friends, friends consisting of Kenny Werner, Oscar Castro-Neves and Airtio.

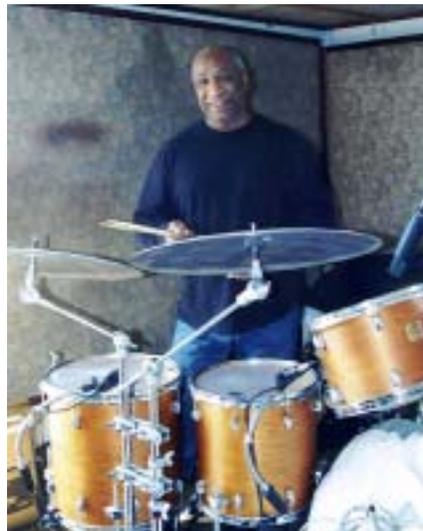
Ohmygawd! I've loved the gorgeous harmonica of Mr. Thielemans since I first learned his famed standard, "Bluesette" as a piano recital piece as a youngster. Later discovering his early guitar work as Jean Thielemans with George Shearing's first recorded groups. A lovely sage-like gentleman with be-bop chops, and a golden tone to die for...he surpassed my expectations, regardless of his 80-plus years of existence. Werner, a piano genius and inspirational author, has worked and recorded with Toots a lot the past few years. His brilliant playing on the piano, augmented by an additional

keyboard to simulate strings, etc., shaded and laid down a backdrop to accompany Mr. T. to a T. One of the first to ever record Bossa Nova music is Castro-Neves, whose guitar and vocal stylings were simply magical as the one and only drummer/percussionist Airtó lived up to all his proceeded legionary status.

They hushed the packed Alice Tully Hall, doing two sets that could have gone on all night. Pure perfection. We left sated...dazed in a Brazilian haze to end our night with desert and wine at the quaint and busy Café Luxenberg.

The law firm, Cline Williams has taken care of my family for years. Since the beginnings of my foundation, they have been there for me 24/7 taking care of me, Grace, our families and homes and of course the Berman Music Foundation. Not only are they a great law firm, but best of friends as well. I can't say enuff good stuff bout Dan Stogsdill, Tony and Tammy Rager, Kay Davis, Kristy Rohr and Matt Campbell.

For my birthday this year, knowing of our destination, they wanted to get us tickets for any Broadway play of our choice. After a couple of snafus, we settled on a matinee at the Vivian Beaumont Theater, also at the Lincoln Center, featuring Broadway, cabaret and opera star and diva Barbara Cook. She put on basically a one-woman show backed only by her long time pianist/arranger Wally Harper and bassist Richard Sarpola. Her tribute to most of the fabulous Broadway songwriters through her personal stories, and songs was one of the best musical experiences I've ever attended. I got to meet and hear her years ago and never forgot her most lovely voice. Truly one of the world's finest. Now in her mid-70, at least, she still looked as beautiful and classy as ever...and



Horacee Arnold

her voice maybe never better. A glorious trip taken through memory lane.

Another one of the main reasons I chose this time to visit NY was to see my dear friend, jazz pianist Jane Jarvis, and introduce her to Grace. The BMF had brought Jane to Lincoln a number of times, and our friendship just seemed to grow in leaps and bounds. Now approaching 90 and becoming a bit frail, but still elegant, I just couldn't

hang in the city and not spend time with this fantastic lady.

Grace and I walked from the Cook concert to the Eastside with flowers and a deli lunch to dine with Jane. She and her apartment looked radiant, as we were greeted warmly. We shared stories, a few laughs and had a ball ending our stay with Jane and me taking turns playing the piano for each other. Her keyboard work still excels and entertains most admirably. I will always love her and be her fan. Hope she makes it to a 100 and then some. Thank you, Jane, for a sweet afternoon.

Sunday must have been a diva day. Hearing Barbara Cook, then Jane, and by evening we were gearing up to catch dinner and a set by jazz vocalist Carmen Lundy.

While visiting my old pal Fred Cohen at his magnificent Jazz Record Center (see related story on page —), I mentioned that I couldn't make up my mind to see the Memphis sax master George Coleman at Smoke (formally Augie's) or Carmen at the new Eastside club



Eastside Sound engineer Lou Holtzman sets the levels for a recording session as Norman Hedman watches.

Photo by Butch Berman

Photo by Butch Berman

Le Jazz Au Bar, Fred raved so regarding Ms. Lundy and how infrequent and outta sight her performances were, we decided to check her out. She may have been the main event, musically, of our whole weekend.

Joined again by Russ, the room was grand, yet intimate. Great sound and sightlines, cheerful waitress and delicious cuisine made this another night to remember. Carmen and her band, led by her brother and bassist Curtis, were about as good as it gets. Pouring her heart and soul into every song, she had the rapt attention of everyone in the room as she stayed in the zone from start to finish. Deserved standing ovations followed suit. I'm now in search of every recorded album and CD she's ever put out. Better call Fred.

Our last day in New York was reserved mostly to hang with Norman. He and I had a ball messing with his recording equipment and touring the amazing artist's complex he's lived in for many years. Got to hang with his upstairs neighbor, drummer, writer and painter extraordinaire Horace Arnold. He

was on Norman Hedman's first album, "Flight of the Spirit," as well as being the original drummer in Chick Corea's Return to Forever. His longtime friend, drummer Max Roach, helped to bring Arnold to New York from Kentucky to play behind Miriam Makeba at the start of his career. He played some of his new-recorded works for us, and we talked of him and Norman playing together for me in Topeka or at an upcoming Jazz in June sometime soon down the line. A very cool and brilliant chap, that Mr. Arnold is.

Norman then gave Grace a walking tour, as well as her first subway ride through the lower Eastside, Little Italy and Chinatown, stopping to eat at my fave Jewish Deli, Katz's Delicatessen and then to visit my ole buddy Lou Holtzman.

Lou, in my opinion probably the best recording engineer in the biz, had recently relocated his Eastside Sound. We dropped by to say howdy and catch a session that he was wrapping up. Lo and behold, the adorable young woman who was making her first record, Ms. Teraesa Vinson, really knocked me out, so much so that we plan to use

some of our grant money to help her get her first CD out and tour some. She was that good, as was her band. Consisting of Dion Parson on drums; saxophonist Ron Blake; Carlton Holmes on keyboards, bassist Nicki Parrott and Tom Dempsey on guitar, the band just smoked. We wish her the utmost success with her promising career.

We wrapped up our non-stop jazzathon meeting Russ for dinner at Zuni and catching a great band that plays there every Monday night for no cover. The Joe Cohn-Harry Allen Quartet is one of the best groups I've heard in years. Guitarist Joe Cohn is saxophonist Al Cohn's son and today's answer to Barney Kessel. Saxophonist Harry Allen is probably best known for his many recordings with singer-guitarist John Pizzarelli. The quartet also consists of Joel Forbes on bass and Chuck Riggs on drums. Russ sent me their new release for Xmas, "The Harry Allen Quartet," and it totally cooks. Check him out at www.harryallenjazz.com for more on this young tenor master. We had to leave before Frank Wess joined them to jam to take the "A Train" to Harlem, as it was getting late and we were flying home the next morning.

We couldn't have ended our trip in a better place than Lucy's Lounge to get blown away by the big Harlem Renaissance Orchestra doing a huge chunk of Basie and Ellington arrangements while Lucy's patrons danced the night away doing the Lindy Hop as if they were still back at the Savoy during the 30's. What a night, what a trip, what a TREMENDOUS city New York City is. It felt all right getting back to Lincoln...but I can't wait to return to that wondrous island...Manhattan.



Photo by Butch Berman

Carlton Holmes, Teraesa Vinson, Dion Parson, Vicki Parrott, Tom Dempsey and Ron Blake take a break from recording at Eastside Sound in NYC.

*Friends of Jazz***Jazz Record Center is a collector's paradise**By *Butch Berman*

NEW YORK CITY—I have been a rabid vinyl junkie since childhood. Working with Charlie Burton during the '70s and soaking up some of his musical knowledge helped me turn up a notch my hunger to get out there and hunt. The thrills, excitement and competitive nature of this vast hobby enabled me to acquire a wonderful assortment of 45s, LPs, now CDs, videos, now DVDs and a whole shitload of musical memorabilia. I've had to move a couple of times to make room for my fabled possessions, and since I started the Berman Music Foundation I have legally made my house a museum/shrine for it all.

My main desire now is just to be able to live long enough to hear, view and/or read all the stuff that I've compiled—over 30,000 pieces of music in the past 45-plus years, or as I call it, “truly owning” each item to where I've absorbed it and etched its very details into my nearly overstuffed memory bank.

One time before I met Charlie I had sold my collection to David Hibler, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln English professor. I had assisted him in his class on the history of rock 'n' roll. After Charlie Burton and Rock Therapy got popular, Dave must have sensed the importance of my involvement with music and just gave them all back to me, with a few rarities of his own thrown in for good measure. That's another story unto itself, and I've never stopped searching since that time.

Of course, my adventure has spanned record shops, Goodwill stores and garage sales from coast to coast. Outside of my longtime personal involvement with my good



Photo by Grace Sankey Berman

Freh Cohen and Butch at the Jazz Record Center in New York City

friend Wade Wright, who owns and operates San Francisco's oldest record store, Jack's Record Cellar, my all-time favorite haunt is Fred Cohen's Legendary Jazz Record Center at 236 West 26th St. Room 804 in New York City.

I can't even remember who turned me on to this incredible spot to feed my hunger neatly tucked away on the 8th floor of this near-Chelsea establishment. You have to be buzzed in the building through an intercom, then take the elevator up to a safe, clean, roomy space crammed to the hilt with the best variety of jazz music

in one place that I've ever shopped in.

The genius behind this almost-perfect environment to pursue sounds falls on the astute shoulders of Mr. Fred Cohen. His impeccable taste and dignity towards this national treasure called jazz is not to be equaled. You will never hear anything on his fine sound system that doesn't catch your ear and remind you why you love this magical music so much. Fred's warm persona shines through as he fields your inquiries with his brilliant awareness of the massive inventory, with no pressure to buy anything.

Originally from Boston, Fred, now in his late 50s, started this business on April 1, 1983. He has only employed six assistants during his tenure and tells me he still keeps in touch with five of them. Now that's a good boss. Most of his clientele comes from word-of-mouth. Most of the records come to him—people move, get married, pass away, etc., and often need to part with collections that have been

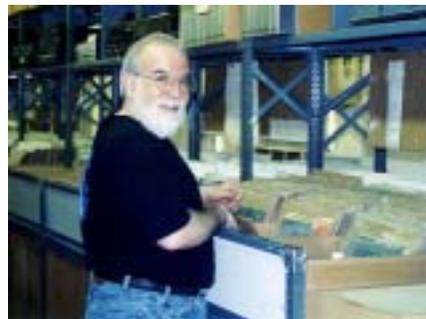


Photo by Grace Sankey Berman

Butch in paradise

stored in attics, basements and garages of people's homes. Fred says a large portion of his inventory comes from Ohio, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and of course, New York City and its boroughs.

The condition of these discs is pristine as any I've ever encountered. Prices can be steep at times, but the rarities of his finds are worth every penny to us fellow collectors, and I consider his pricing fair. I've never hassled him about discounts, but he is keenly aware of who you are and

what you purchased and often ships without charging postage. You can shop via his website at www.jazzrecordcenter.com

If you want to look at everything in his stock, including a great library of books and videos, you may need a second day to stop back. There is that much there—all killer, no filler. IALWAYS find something. This time, it was a Vi Redd LP I have been after for years, as well as Terry Gibbs doing jazz versions of Jewish music.

You get the scoop here—if you

are a true collector and are in New York City (or online), make the Jazz Record Center your one-stop shopping. You won't be sorry and, like me, will return for more time and time again. Thank you, Fred, for your kindness, patience and perseverance. I know you might want to retire someday—and I hope your only son digs the sounds, too, so your fabulous Jazz Record Center will never have to shut its doors. Call Fred at (212) 675-4480 and tell him the Bebopman sent you. I know you will thank me for this.

I Said, She Said

Two views on the etiquette of jazz listening

By Butch and Grace Sankey Berman

I SAID

I'm a gabber, always on the phone and probably not the world's best listener within a group, a touch of bipolarism and ADD added to the mix can't help either, but, listening to music. Well, now, that's an entirely different story.

I must have been born to be a record/CD collector and/or music critic. I feel I have the ability to hear every instrument, each layer of sound, space within space—you get the picture—Mr. Total Absorption here.

Natch, my near-anal fixation with hearing/listening to music, mainly jazz, has always been a sore spot for me. Being a professional musician for over 40 years, I've competed with audiences for my time and space on stage a lot. Sometimes, I think, what the heck! On my worst nights, people tell me I sound great and on my rare but occasionally totally in-the-zone performances I've been dumbfounded as everyone appears to be sitting on their hands, but dat's show biz I guess.

Anyway, I've always admired artists, Karrin Allyson comes to mind, who don't take any crap off their occasionally rude patrons and, as Barney Fife would have said, "Nip it in the bud!" and get back to the main event—music! Whether a gig or concert, the artist at his or her performances should be respected and revered like you'd reserve for professors in their classrooms.

I knew I was on the mark when some of New York's best true jazz rooms posted signs to remind folks to refrain from talking in order to truly appreciate what's being presented. I will forever stand on this premise, but my wife, Grace, who by no means is rowdy or disrespectful to any of the acts that she takes in with me. She still has another take on this subject and feels I take this matter too seriously.

Read on and you can be the judge. We would appreciate your e-mail responses and opinions on this matter.

SHE SAID

As a jazz fan I am concerned with the declining popularity of this great art form. I have a lot of respect for all the great talent out there and their ability to entertain and transport an audience to magical places with their music. It is a shame that most of these artists don't enjoy the degree of success that they should have.

However, some jazz shows can run the risk of being too stuffy and stiff, possibly alienating an audience that might otherwise be interested. Maybe they think there is a need to educate fans about the music and demand absolute attention. As much as I enjoy the music, I don't go to shows to be tutored. That should be saved for the classroom. When the music is good and the artist is engaging, my attention is absolute.

When artists put more energy into playing great music, the audience will be entertained and you won't have to compete with noise or demand attention, your work will do that for you. The only reason the average fan goes to a show is for the entertainment value.

*Music News***Educator Bobby Watson gets recognition***By Tom Ineck*

As both a top-of-the-bill alto saxophonist and a first-rate educator, Bobby Watson is in demand, and his labors in both fields of jazz are paying off with some highly deserved recognition.

Watson, 50, has been an endowed professor and director of jazz studies at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music since 2000. In early April he took his UMKC jazz ensemble all the way to top honors at the North Texas Jazz Festival in Addison, Texas.

For more on his recent achievements and current activities, I caught up with Watson by phone while he spent a few days in Pittsburgh, Pa., where he was performing at the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild in a program called "Jazz Across the Americas." The band for that gig included trumpeter Nicholas Payton, trombonist Jay Ashby, bassist Marion Hayden-Banfield (of Straight Ahead fame) and drummer Roger Humphries.

Watson related with pride his students' first-place showing at the Texas jazz fest.

"There were 10 bands from across the country, from Hawaii and Oklahoma and out East, 10 bands that were invited to the festival," he noted. "It's a non-competitive festival, but they did say that they were going to pick one band out of the 10 to perform that evening and open the concert for John Pizzarelli. And that band would receive an award named after Dr. Gene Hall."

As a graduate student at what was then known as North Texas State Teachers College, Hall wrote the thesis, "The Development of a Curriculum for the Teaching of Dance Music at the College Level," which was the model for the first jazz degree offered

at North Texas State, a dance band major in 1947. The program attracted national attention and enrollment soared. Hall remained head of the lab band program until 1959, and then taught at Michigan State University, College of the Desert in Palm Desert, Calif., and Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas, where he was music department chair from 1967 to 1983. He died in 1993.

Watson took 21 UMKC students to the festival, ranging in age from 19 to 28, including two pianists, two drummers, a percussionist and a guitarist. They performed Bob Brookmeyer's composition "Hello and Goodbye," and a tune called "Mi Nina," by Marlon Simon, a percussionist and brother of longtime Watson keyboardist Edward Simon. One of Watson's students, Pablo San Hueza of Chile, played the bata drums native to his homeland on the second piece.

The band also played a Bob Brookmeyer arrangement of the Hoagy Carmichael classic "Skylark," featuring Rick Rieger on alto sax, and finished with Watson's own "Wheel Within a Wheel."

"We try to swing," Watson said. "I try to make it sound like a jazz band. Our rhythm section swings. I try to make sure they're comping and playing the right stuff."

Five UMKC soloists also won recognition in Texas. Two years ago, Watson also led his band to the highest rating during a similar event at the University of Notre Dame two years ago. His ability to play examples of jazz concepts on his horn is a great benefit in the classroom, he said.

"I use my performing in my teaching, because it's so good to be able to

demonstrate to students what you're talking about. The horn is a great equalizer. They see me do it and they know they need to do that. It cuts out a lot of conversation."

His standing as an endowed professor also allows him to maintain his national and international presence as a performer in his own right. When he's on the road, trombonist Paul McKee directs the UMKC band.

"I have a lot of one-on-one students, so I give them extra work," Watson said. "Most of my students have enough stuff for a couple of years," he said, laughing, "So if they miss a week, it's OK. We make it up when I go back."

When the school year is over at the end of April, Watson heads to Alaska for a week of "Jazz in America" programs in public schools, courtesy of the Thelonious Monk Institute. In mid-May he heads to Europe for a tour with the 29th Street Saxophone Quartet, a group with which Watson has been associated for more than 20 years.

Another of Watson's long-standing ensembles, Horizon, also will regroup for a series of concerts this summer. The quintet, which was one of the most exciting and talented jazz combos to emerge in the early 1990s, also consists of trumpeter Terrell Stafford, pianist Ed Simon, bassist Essiet Essiet and drummer Victor Lewis. Watson's personal favorite, the group recently recorded "Horizon Reassembled," a CD on Palmetto Records that is scheduled for release in June.

Midwesterners can look forward to the 2005 Topeka Jazz Festival for an entire Memorial Day weekend of performances by Horizon.

Tomfoolery**Neon Violin Quartet expands to a five-piece band**

By Tom Ineck

Fiddling phenomenon Dave Fowler's latest musical venture is a winner. He's assembled a Lincoln-based group of talented and like-minded musicians who want nothing more than to spread the swinging, acoustic gospel of "gypsy jazz" legends Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli.

With typical, wide-grinning enthusiasm, Fowler first told me of his plan to form a band patterned after Reinhardt and Grappelli's historic Quintet of the Hot Club of France back in early March. He had recently returned from a gypsy jazz festival in Europe and was anxious to carry on the tradition here in America's heartland.

It was fortunate for Fowler that other Lincoln musicians, with the high-level of technical ability needed to perform this music, also were looking for an opportunity to play. Young classically trained violinist Sam Packard had the urge to play a jazzier style, so Fowler took him under his wing. Rhythm guitarist Mike Herres, like Fowler a veteran of local bluegrass bands, wanted a new musical challenge. Bassist Dave Boye, perhaps best known for his long-time association with Lincoln rocker Charlie Burton and also with the band Shithook, signed on to play the upright bass.

Although Fowler's group is called The Neon Violin Quartet, it also has expanded to include the guitar work of Lincolnites Tom Martin and, most recently, a young flash named Greg Gunter. Months ago, Gunter placed an ad in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's newspaper *The Daily Nebraskan*, looking for fellow gypsy jazz fanatics.

If the Neon Violin Quartet's April 18 performance at The Mill coffee-



Photo by Tom Ineck

The Neon Violin Quintet is (from left) guitarist Greg Gunter, violinist David Fowler, guitarist Mike Herres, violinist Sam Packard and bassist Dave Boye.

house in downtown Lincoln is any indication, the group may soon have to change its name to accommodate Gunter's auspicious arrival. The five-piece ensemble convincingly locked into the gypsy jazz groove and swung with energy and conviction, despite the fact that the chord changes and solo transitions still need a little work. For a new effort just getting off the ground, these guys played with fire and a rare camaraderie.

Most of the tunes were familiar, including "These Foolish Things," Gershwin's "Lady Be Good" and Ellington's "It Don't Mean a Thing (If it Ain't Got That Swing)," but they also included the Reinhardt originals "Nuages," "Minor Swing," and "Djangology." The fiddles of Fowler and Packard are beautifully matched, often harmonizing on unison passages. The guitar rhythms were suitably "chunky" and the solos were spirited, especially Gunter's extraordinary slurring runs and fleet octaves that seemed to channel

Reinhardt's idiosyncratic style.

The swinging "Limehouse Blues" was one of the evening's highlights, a tune that never fails to excite when played with appropriate gusto. Likewise, "Sweet Georgia Brown" yielded superb solos by Fowler and Gunter and a series of traded statements between Fowler and Packard. The ballad "Coquette" received a lovely reading with unison fiddles and a luscious guitar solo.

Packard also proved a competent vocalist with spirited renditions of "All of Me" and "Honeysuckle Rose."

The Mill is a perfect venue for a small acoustic swing combo like The Neon Violin Quartet (plus one). Its low ceiling and cozy wood-paneled interior lend just the right blend of ambient sound to the mix, making amplified instruments and microphones unnecessary and making the audience of 40 or so people feel as though they are lounging in someone's living room.

Giacomo Gates sings the “Five Spot Blues”

By Giacomo Gates

Singer Giacomo Gates submitted this story to the Berman Music Foundation.

On Sunday afternoon Feb. 8, I did a performance at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, where I am part of the private lesson faculty. The gig was held at Russell House, a beautiful old mansion, converted to performance spaces and philosophy department offices. There was standing room only, with people overflowing into the next room and sitting on the staircase. The rhythm section was made up of Tony Lombardozi, guitar; Jeff Fuller, bass; and Jesse Hameen, drums.

Halfway through the set, a bearded man in the back of the room raised his hand and said, “Five Spot Blues!” It’s a Thelonious Monk composition, with my lyrics to Monk’s melody and Charlie Rouse’s solo... a historical lyric. It’s the opening tune on my first album, “Blues Skies.” I tell a short story about the club to set up the tune, and we do the request.

About 12 years earlier, when I had begun to write the lyrics, I had met Stuart Troup, a jazz critic and writer. I asked him if he had any information on the Five Spot, as I had done some library research, but was looking for something more personal. He suggested I call Charles Turyn, who used to be a waiter at the Five Spot.

Charles Turyn was open and willing to share some great stories. He spoke very well of the two brothers that owned the Five Spot, Joey and Iggy Termini. Sometimes, there weren’t enough chairs in the club, although Turyn remembers a slow night, the brothers paying the band, then borrowing money from the waiters to get cab fare home... and, of course, paying them back... real people, golden cats... little tables big enough for four drinks and an ashtray...

Monk keeping the club alive, and the club keeping Monk alive... along with stories of players and people who frequented the club.

Turyn is a book of jazz history himself, working at the Five Spot in 1957-58 and again in 1960 and ’61. Later, he was a bartender at the Tine Palace and, lastly, the head bartender at the very famous and now unfortunately defunct Bradley’s, from 1980 to ’86. He knew all the cats, and he plays tenor sax and piano, as well. Charles told me so many stories; I told him he should write a book. We have become good friends.

“Johnny Griffin and John Coltrane, David Amram, Cecil Taylor blew there, too.

Let me hip you, it was a time of innovation, there was a sextet with Phil Woods,

Charlie Mingus played his goods, and Sphere, no square.

Everyone raved, Five Cooper Square! Everyone played there, Art Farmer, Lou Donaldson and even Lester...

Joey and Iggy Termini, they really loved the music, they even helped Monk get his cabaret card back for him, yeah.”

— from “Five Spot Blues”

One summer night in 1990, I go to Condon’s on East 17th Street to listen to the great Lou Donaldson. He is very gracious and asks me to sit in with him. I call a blues in B flat and sing my new lyrics to Monk’s “Five Spot Blues,” partially to try ‘em out, but mostly because Lou is one of the cats mentioned in the lyric, and I wanted him to hear it.

So, I finish the tune, and sit down at one of the tables. A man wearing a black, flat-rimmed hat comes over to me and asks me where I got those lyrics. I respond, “I wrote them.” He says, “My daddy wrote that tune, my name

is T.S. Monk. Would you like to sit at my table for a minute?” Just a few weeks before, I had sent my lyrics to the Thelonious Monk Institute and now, by chance, I’m sitting with his son, T.S. To cut to the coda, Thelonious Music and T.S. Monk gives me permission to record my lyrics to Monk’s “Five Spot Blues.” I call it “Five Cooper Square,” the address of the club. It gets released on the DMP label in 1995, the CD titled “Blue Skies.”

Return to Russell House, Wesleyan... a very good gig, the rhythm section sounds great, really happenin’... and exuberant crowd, and I feel good. After the performance is over, the bearded cat approaches me holding a black T-shirt. Printed on the front are white piano keys, with the words “Five Spot” over the top, and the address Five Cooper Square, NYC. I look at him, he says to me, “This shirt is from the Five Spot, and I’d like you to meet my father, Iggy Termini.”

Needless to say, I am gassed! We have a short conversation, while I am pumping Mr. Termini’s hand. I’m knocked out to meet him, knocked out that he’s hip to my lyrics that pay tribute to his club, the music, the era, and to him and his brother, Joe, who passed away a few years ago... and, of course, to Thelonious Monk and Charlie Rouse.

His son, who I am too wiggled to even think to ask his first name, says to me, “When I heard your lyrics to this tune a few years ago, it made me cry.” I thank them both profusely, for coming, and a bit choked up myself, take my treasured T-shirt home.

“Goin’ to a night club, got to be the right club, good folks and swingin’ music...”

Everyone’ll be there, baby, don’t you be square, we’re goin’ to the Five Spot...

Baby, can you make the scene?”

*Memorial***Claude “Fiddler” Williams was my kind of guy***By Butch Berman*

If there is life after death (which I hope and believe there is to be) I want to come back as either one of my beloved pets...or the recently departed Claude “Fiddler” Williams, who died peacefully yesterday in his “playground” of Kansas City, Mo., at the ripe old age of 96.

What a life this cat had. He was born in Oklahoma on Feb. 22, 1908, and played guitar during the late 1920s with Andy Kirk and the Twelve Clouds of Joy and, before Freddie Green came along, with Count Basie’s Band. Claude would later hear Joe Venuti play his violin and in a short time mastered his jazzy, swinging fiddle style.

Claude would then travel the globe, recording and playing with virtually everyone that ever was from Art Tatum to Ms Kendra Shank for the next 70-plus years.

I used to catch him at the old Nebraska Legionnaire Club in my early twenties jammin’ with other vets like Jay McShann, and later sittin’ in playing the blues at Lincoln’s own Zoo Bar.

When visiting his manager at the time, my old pal Russ Dantzer of Hot Jazz Management in New York, we helped Claude celebrate his eighty-seventh Birthday at the now defunct Downstairs at the Metropolis. Backed by such jazz luminaries as bassist Earl May, Junior Mance on piano and Tootsie Bean on the drums it was like a revelation for me. Mostly used to hearing Claude being supported by local Nebraska musicians...it was a rare treat hearing him truly swing out giggin’ with some of the East coast “heavies.”

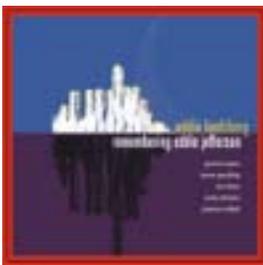
It was that gig that inspired me to bring that same band to the Zoo so folks could REALLY hear Claude at his best. We got the late Jaki Byard and Jimmy Knepper from the original Mingus gang, Earl on bass, the vastly underrated drummer Jackie Williams and new-comer at the time, vocalist Kendra Shank to knock people’s socks off for an entire weekend. This show helped pave the way for many more great BMF shows to follow for

nearly the next decade plus covering their debut Statesmen of Jazz concert at the Sacramento, Calif., Jazz Festival around 1997 or so.

Claude’s life got a bit bumpy the last 10 years or so. But go figure...if you’ve lived that long with good health and fortune, you’re bound to get kicked in the butt a little by the laws of averages. A fall here, a car accident there and his lovely wife, Blanche, dealing with her own health recovery issues all came to Claude in his later years.

Still here’s a guy who always put too much sugar in his coffee, drank, smoked and gambled a bit, never worked out a lick, and lived nearly a century doing what he loved the most. Hell, this guy is my hero, playing, teaching and living the life of a true “Jazz Cat.” He had such strong genes he never even had a wrinkle on his handsome face.

Yeah, I’d love to come back as Claude Williams. God bless the “Fiddler.”

*Discorama***Landsberg and Gates pay tribute to Mr. J***By Butch Berman*

EDDIE LANDSBERG
Remembering Eddie Jefferson
Berghen Records

There is an interesting story surrounding my first encounter with the

amazing man and jazz singer named Giacomo Gates that I want to share with all of you before I continue my original plan to review this wonderful new CD on the Swedish label, Berghen entitled “Remembering Eddie Jefferson.”

I’m embarking on a new position with the Topeka Jazz Festival as the new artistic director, beginning with me booking the entire 2005 season by this year’s Memorial Day annual event. In search of a male vocalist, I asked my friend, BMF consultant and KC bass player Gerald Spaits who he would recommend. He immediately named

Giacomo, and said he wowed them at last year’s festival, which I didn’t attend. I call and introduced myself to Mr. Gates and told him of my interest in his appearance in 2005. We had a little discussion over dough and, because I hadn’t heard of him and wanted my first year with the TJF’s budget to go smoothly, I declined his offer until I could check him out.

Well, let me tell ya, after getting on his website and just hearing barely one minute of his sound bytes, I was

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hooked. This cat's a monster. I rung him back up, gave him the money he needed, and ensured he'd also handle the festival's workshop for young people in the vocal division.

Since then, after many entertaining phone calls and e-mails, Giacomo and I have become new pals of sorts, and I can't wait to meet him and hear his incredible talent in person. (FYI, you can catch him at this year's Topeka Jazz Festival, as well as the next.)

There you go, jazz fans. Another serendipitous tale of the ever-so-small jazz world we live in. Now on to this CD you must add to your collection as soon as you finish reading this review.

Giacomo's promo arrived with this newest jewel, "Remembering Eddie Jefferson," neatly intact.

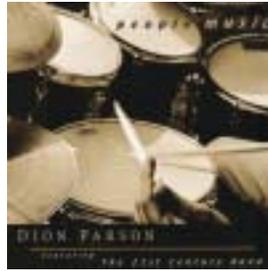
My first experience listening to vocalese (vocally improvising jazz solos) was Lambert, Hendricks and Ross, and then King Pleasure. Eddie Jefferson pioneered this hip, swinging technique in the early 1940s. He also penned James Moody's famed variation on "I'm in the Mood for Love."

Eddie Landsberg's tribute to Mr. J. is a powerhouse from start to finish. I'm on my third spin, and I hardly ever have the time or usually the desire to keep something on my player for this long. It's just that good.

Gates' own "Mr. Jefferson" kicks off the CD in grand style. Some outta sight B-3 organ grooves by Landsberg grab your attention from the get-go. The whole band swings like hell with one of my faves, James Spaulding blowing his ass off on alto, and Ben Dixon driving the group HARD on drums. Still, it's Giacomo who takes you to the races tune after tune simply blowing your mind throughout. Not a clunker on board, with Mary Lou Williams' "The Land of Ooh Blah Dee" and "I Just Got Back In Town," with Moody's solo over "I Cover The Waterfront" and lyrics by Jefferson, as my standouts.

Gates' timing, phrasing and gorgeous timbre shine track after track. He even lets the band blow their brains out on two separate instrumentals. Truly a great, great endeavor.

Mr. Giacomo Gates...you have arrived, man...BIG TIME! I just envy the kids you get to teach back in Connecticut, who get to dig your hipster persona daily.



**DION PARSON featuring
the 21st CENTURY BAND
People Music
Tahmun Records**

While in New York City last month, my wife Grace, Norman Hedman and I decided to drop in on our old friend recording wizard Lou Holtzman and check out his "digs" at his newly relocated Eastside Sounds in Manhattan's Lower East side.

Lou was conducting a recording session for a new, and very talented young lady named Teraesa Vinson, who by coincidence had three members of drummer Dion Parson's 21st Century Band as her back-up ensemble.

We were greeted warmly by all, and Dion made sure I had his new released CD, "People Music" on Tahmun Records, safely tucked away within my belongings for future perusal.

Well, it's "People Music" all right and totally top-flight jazz. You could almost call it "world music," as it combines sights, sounds, swirls, textures and deep grooves from around the globe, coast to coast with a touch of a New Orleans shuffle thrown into this mighty mix. Truly one of the most diverse efforts drawn towards any music I've

heard for awhile that appears to work well on all genres displayed. I was eagerly looking forward to hearing this fine CD a third time since my return home.

Even though I've not caught Parson "live" yet, you can tell by his command of the proceedings and sheer power and energy set forth on this CD that he's a virtual drum machine. Hard-driving, intense, yet subtle when called for with the ability to soothe the listener as on his lovely creation "Lullaby For Belle," one of the warmest and heartfelt instrumentals I've heard captured on disc in ages.

Saxophonist Ron Blake, who's been deservedly making his way up the ladder as of late, just melts you with his lush, languid tone.

I dug the whole CD, and their rendition of one of my fave Monty Alexander compositions "The River Rolls On" in its own way nearly equals the perfection of the original as the magical beauty of it all takes you out. Percussionist Robert Thomas Jr. leaves his indelible mark on this track among others as the whole band cooks behind Parson's leadership.

Keyboardist Carlton Holmes weaves a soulful web of enchantment throughout including some funky down-home organ playing. Reuben Rogers skillfully shifts between acoustic and electric bass like a champ—tight, punchy with a great fat sound. Ron Jackson on guitar has an unexplainably different approach to his axe work. It cleverly draws your attention towards the fluid chops he displays from cut to cut without ever overplaying.

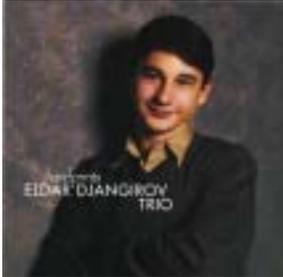
Special guests Jeremy Pelt on trumpet and Denise Jannah on voice and additional percussion round out this solid deal dealt by Mr. P. Kudos to Michael Carvin for his deft production work on this Tahmun Records release of merit.

If this review helps Dion Parson's "People Music" get into more people's homes and more deejays' playlists, I've done my thing right.

Jazz on Disc

Djangirov second CD confirms great talent

By Tom Ineck



ELDAR DJANGIROV TRIO
Handprints
 D&D Music

For those of us fortunate enough to have witnessed keyboard whiz Eldar Djangirov perform live more than half a dozen times over the years, his recordings only confirm what we already know.

The nice thing about recorded documents is that we can listen to them again and again, each time discovering something we missed the first time around. While that is true of many jazz artists, Djangirov's blazing single-note runs, inventive phrasing and endless ideas never fail to surprise and reward the patient, repeat listener.

"Handprints" is a case in point. Djangirov's second trio CD begins with a careening solo piano intro to Juan Tizol's "Caravan" that nearly jumps the track before the rhythm section consisting of bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Todd Strait reins it in with a funky contrapuntal anchor. Like Oscar Peterson or Art Tatum, the 16-year-old Djangirov dazzles, leaving us breathless and wondering, "How does he do that?"

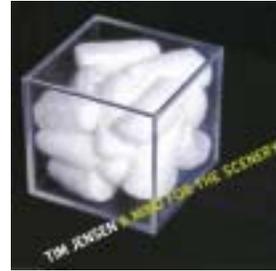
In effect, "Handprints" is a tribute recording to some of the young disciple's favorite jazz com-

posers and players, especially the genre's keyboard giants. Thelonious Monk's "Bemsha Swing" gets an imaginative, virtuosic reading. Djangirov flashes the funk factor on Herbie Hancock's "Cantaloupe Island" before settling down to a more conventional ballad rendition of "Body and Soul."

Benny Carter's "When the Lights Are Low" gets a loving and witty treatment, and Billy Taylor's "Capricious" is a joyful, but highly disciplined romp. The bluesy "Freddie Freeloader" is a nod to composer Miles Davis, while Chick Corea's "Matrix" pays homage to that pianist's complexity and genius. Djangirov's own "Perplexity" is a surging, stately tango-like dance, expressing a range of emotions.

Djangirov's astounding keyboard technique is given free rein on the CD's two solo piano performances. The title track, Djangirov's "Handprints," is clearly inspired by Wayne Shorter's classic modal workout "Footprints." The lyricism of Bill Evans is evoked on Evans' sad and achingly beautiful composition "We Will Meet Again." The two pieces serve as bookends for Djangirov's immense stylistic range.

Djangirov, who recently moved from the Kansas City area to San Diego, Calif., will appear in Lincoln with his trio (Spaits and drummer Tommy Ruskin) for a performance June 1 at the Jazz in June concert series in the sculpture garden at the Sheldon Art Gallery on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln downtown campus. *(Read the interview I did with Eldar in this issue of Jazz.)*



TIM JENSEN
A Mind for the Scenery
 Origin Records

Like much of the bountiful fruit harvested at Origin Records in Portland, Ore., Tim Jensen's "A Mind for the Scenery" challenges the listener from the get-go.

Jensen is a composer and reed player of eclectic tastes, versatility, technique and audacious creativity. He also is an arranger and a bandleader who knows how to surround himself with like-minded musicians capable of equal audacity. Take for example the opener, "Sausage," a squiggly tune pushed through all sorts of musical permutations by Jensen on tenor, Rob Scheps on soprano sax, Paul Mazzio on flugelhorn and Jeff Uusitalo on trombone.

The band is enlarged to nine horns for "Rusty Rayburn and Piggy Lee," a nightmarish parody of the worst of Big Band excess. The only jazz standard here, "Green Dolphin Street," gets a very percussive treatment with Jensen soloing on piccolo.

Bob Dylan's "My Back Pages," on the other hand, begins with a lush, but dissonant brass chorale and leads into a gorgeous statement of the melody by pianist Randy Porter.

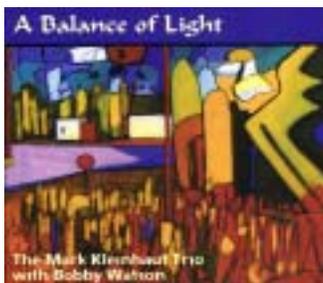
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Scheps follows with a soaring tenor sax solo. The brass section also opens “Lament for Larry,” which is notable for its eerie, mock-operatic vocalizing by Brenda Baker. Horns are front and center again for the ballad “Felpham’s Vale,” where tenor, alto and soprano saxes combine with flugelhorn and trombone.

Jensen’s versatility is most evident on “Mambrino Flats,” a slow Latin tune that features the leader on both soprano sax and bass clarinet. He also is a capable player on flute and on alto and baritone saxes, as well as tenor sax and piccolo.

Horns dominate most of the arrangements, which is not to say that pianist Porter, bassists Phil Baker and Dave Captein, drummer Gary Hobbs and percussionist Reinhardt Melz are buried in the mix. On the contrary, the rhythm section is essential to this exciting, propulsive music. They are especially prominent—and effective—on the loping “Carson City” and the up-tempo bopper “Fiasco.”

It is no surprise to find Scheps in this company. As we heard when he brought his adventurous young band to Lincoln a few months ago, he is always pushing the envelope of group improvisation, just as Jensen does here.



**THE MARK KLEINHAUT TRIO
with BOBBY WATSON
A Balance of Light
Invisible Music**

Mark Kleinhaut is a composer and guitarist deserving of more recognition. With “A Balance of Light,”

ingeniously integrating the virtuosic alto saxophone of Bobby Watson, he should begin to achieve some belated acclaim.

A native New Yorker, Kleinhaut resides in New England, where he is adjunct faculty member at the University of Southern Maine. This is his fourth CD on Invisible Music since 1999. Along with Watson as special guest, his trio is rounded out by bassist Jim Lyden and drummer Les Harris Jr.

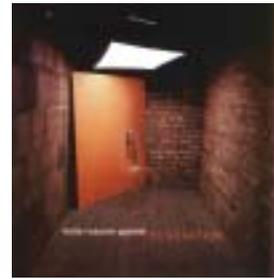
Kleinhaut says he wrote much of the music herein with Watson in mind, obviously aware of the saxophonist’s melodic sensibility and technical facility. “Ferdinand and Isabelle” leaps from the grooves, with Watson spinning his trademark nimble-fingered lines. “Long Look Back,” on the other hand, is a wistful ballad that draws soulful performances from Watson and Kleinhaut.

Watson and Kleinhaut lock lead lines in effortless unison on “Four Lane Clover,” which has a cleverly shifting structure. “South of Mason” is a breezy swinger with Harris switching from brushes to sticks and Watson making an inspired melodic statement.

The 10-minute, aptly titled “Start it Up” accelerates quickly, opening up to allow a blazing guitar solo reminiscent of the transcendent playing of Mahavishnu John McLaughlin, one of Kleinhaut’s most evident influences. Watson seems equally inspired, following with a whirling dervish of a saxophone solo before rejoining Kleinhaut in a beautifully executed unison ending. “Erikita” is a gorgeous Latin-tinged ballad that Kleinhaut introduces on guitar, and then hands over to Watson, who caresses each turn of phrase with deep sonority in an extended solo statement.

“Summers” is, by turns, bright and cheerful, meditative and melancholic, blustery and ominous, sort of like summer, that most fickle of sea-

sons. It is a fitting finale to a very diversified, unpredictable and satisfying disk by a much underrated composer-guitarist.



**KELLY ROSSUM QUINTET
Renovation
612 Sides**

On “Renovation,” former Lincoln resident Kelly Rossum fronts a Twin Cities-based, crack quintet with enduring echoes of electric-era Miles Davis. The tricky, contrapuntal rhythm lines and interweaving solo statements immediately signal a bold and unconventional approach that, nevertheless, sounds somehow comfortably familiar.

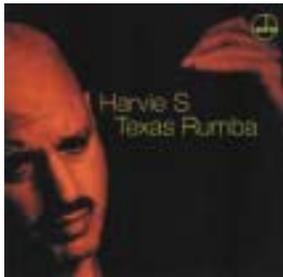
Trumpeter Rossum knows his way around the horn, but like Davis, he respects the poetic weight of silence, the judicious use of pause and stutter and even the occasional fluffed note. It’s what sets them apart from the merely proficient.

Keyboardist Chris Lomheim is equally capable on acoustic piano and the Rhodes electric keyboard, a nearly forgotten instrument that still creates a sound unlike any other. Similarly, bassist Michael O’Brien doubles on acoustic and electric instruments. Tenor saxophonist Chris Thomson lends a beefy foundation to the quintet with his soulful convolutions. Drummer J.T. Bates (formerly of the Motion Poets) holds it all together.

For the best examples of innovation and imagination, check out “Cheap Cigars,” “Lead Soldiers” and “Life on Mars.” The titles tell the story. The quintet, however, is most

engaging on the more introspective tunes, such as “Fly Away,” a lovely rendition of the Jimi Hendrix composition “Little Wing,” the brief “Hennepin Bridge” and the 10-minute “The Two of Us.”

Unusual for a jazz recording, four tunes run under 2½ minutes each. These inspired nuggets seem to rise out of nowhere only to return there when the burst of inspiration has dissipated, like an irresistible force of nature.



HARVIE S
Texas Rumba
 Zoho Music

Bassist Harvie S leads his band with authority and energy, just what you need to keep these muscular Latin rhythms moving. “Texas Rumba” is a live recording at Sweet Rhythm in New York City, lending the immediate excitement that is essential to the music.

The title track and the following “Good News” set the pace with gusto. Harvie S takes of the bow for “From Now On,” but soon switches to a pizzicato flourish with saxophonist Scott Robert Avidon, one of a team of very capable but relatively unknown band members, who also feature trumpeter Gregory Rivkin, pianist Daniel Kelly, drummer Adam Weber and percussionist Renato Thoms.

“Curved Corners” illustrates the band’s affinity for a powerful, bluesy style. Avidon tears it up on a blustery tenor sax solo before handing it over to Kelly for a fist-pounding keyboard

attack that has the crowd shouting like a revival meeting. It’s back to the irresistible rumba rhythms for “Blindside,” with a duo lead statement by Avidon on soprano sax and Rivkin on trumpet. Harvie S follows with a deft bass solo against Kelly’s percussive piano pulse.

Harvie S wrote nine of the 11 tracks, in addition to Thelonious Monk’s “Monk’s Mood” and Kelly’s “Momentano,” an opening solo piano statement to Harvie S’s “Before.” It is a masterful, evocative performance by the duo. The band returns for “Facil,” another Latin foot-tapper. Harvie S gives the familiar Monk tune a twist with a two-minute solo bass rendition, leading into “Underneath it All,” a complex, 10-minute tour de force.



KATHLEEN HOLEMAN
Don’t You Wonder?

Singer Kathleen Holeman makes in impressive recording debut with “Don’t You Wonder?” Holeman, who calls St. Joseph, Mo., her home, has chosen a compatible group of accompanists, including such familiar Kansas City musicians as pianist Paul Smith, guitarist Rod Fleeman, bassist Bob Branstetter and drummer Al Wiley.

You can’t fault her choice of material, a strong list of pop standards old and new. Tempos for the 14 tracks vary enough to keep things interesting from the opening swinger “That’s All,” on which Holeman’s voice is overdubbed, allowing her to scat with herself. The title track is a Holeman

original and a tale of lost love with a very personal slant.

“Blues Skies” gets the full swing treatment, while “Ev’ry Time We Say Goodbye” is exquisitely essayed by voice and acoustic guitar in an ultra-slow version of this ballad. It’s no surprise that Holeman names Judy Garland as one of her influences. She belts “Get Happy” with full-throated gusto, but swings more convincingly than Garland ever did. “How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved by You)” shows Holeman’s soul-shouting ability.

Swinging is Holeman’s forte. Her straight version of the ballad “What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life?” leaves something to be desired, but when she attacks Van Morrison’s “Moondance,” she enlivens every line and ignites Fleeman’s solo statement. She gives “Mood Indigo” a sultry, bluesy feel and finally soars effortlessly into the soprano range. It seems just right for the tune.

Holeman is most endearing on three consecutive tunes, beginning with the old-timey “I Don’t Want to Set the World on Fire,” on which she takes a trombone solo! Her tongue-in-cheek style seems only half in jest, as it does on “Take Me Out to the Ballgame,” another tune from simpler days. Finally, she plays piano and romps through the old favorite “Exactly Like You.”

Holeman approaches some songs with cabaret flair, sometime exaggerating the lyrics with a vocal lilt, a trick card that can get annoying if overplayed. Holeman usually avoids that trap. She is a superb scat singer with a gift for exact intonation, as we hear on “This Masquerade,” among others.

With credentials that include work in jazz, country, gospel and salsa bands, Holeman is capable of great things. “Don’t You Wonder?” is a debut on which to build a long career.



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BMF meets with Topeka brass



Photo by Rich Hoover

The BMF met with Topeka Jazz Festival representatives in Lincoln to discuss the future of the TJF. From left, they are BMF attorney Tony Rager, TJF's Rob Seitz, Grace Sankey Berman, Butch Berman, TJF's Mark Radziejewski and Tom Ineck.

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