

Photo by Russ Dantzler
 Dave Hughes, Norman Hedman, and Butch Berman in New York

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Norman Hedman's Tropique to open this year's KC Jazz Fest

By Tom Ineck

Like last year, the 1999 Kansas City International Jazz Festival will open with the Latin-tinged sounds of an artist hot off a new Arabesque label release produced by the Berman Music Foundation.

Last year it was Andrienne Wilson, in the early stages of a tour behind her recording "She's Dangerous." This time it's the multitasking percussionist Norman Hedman and his Latin ensemble Tropique, just a few months after the release of "One Step Closer."

The 4th annual festival expands to three days this year, returning to the open-air Crown Center Square for the second consecutive year. Performances are from 7 to 11 p.m. June 25, from 2 to 11 p.m. June 26 and from 2 to 11 p.m. June 27.

If Hedman's latest recording and previous performances in Lincoln and Kansas City are any indication, the infectious percussion, piano, vibes and horns of Tropique should light a fire under the opening-night crowd, which is usually in a pretty festive mood.

"One Step Closer" relies heavily on Hedman's composing skills and his ability to make a group of musicians gel with a common purpose. Whether recorded or live, Tropique moves its audience with its overall force, rather than the virtuosic technique of any one player.

Singer Karrin Allyson, who remains in Kansas City after deciding against a move to New York City, will follow Hedman with one of her groups of "friends," doubtless some of Kansas City's best musicians. With five Concord releases and thousands of diehard fans throughout the Midwest, she promises to be a big hit with this year's

festival audience.

Headlining opening night is Chick Corea and his great new outfit, Origin. The band's recent release on Stretch Records was recorded during sets at New York's Blue Note club over 10 nights. It marks an exciting turning point in Corea's adventurous career, a look back at his roots and a bold look ahead to the future of jazz improvisation. (*The CD is reviewed on page 8.*)

The largest ensemble that Corea has fronted for a long time, Origin is a sextet featuring Bob Sheppard and Steve Wilson on assorted reeds -- from saxes and flutes to bass clarinet -- Steve Davis on trombone, Avishai Cohen on bass and Adam Cruz on drums. It's a dynamic and gifted group of musicians who are bound to make things happen on stage, especially under Corea's leadership.

(KCIJF continued on page 16, col. 1)

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The Prez sez

Dear Jazzaronians,

There's an old saying that you can't beat success. Well, Jim Monroe and his wonderful TPAC (Topeka Performing Arts Center) crew made this year's Memorial Day Weekend Topeka Jazz Festival even better than last year's...and that's no mean feat. No kidding - this year's festivities kicked major-league butt with one class-act endeavor. Bravo.

Obtaining additional sponsors and more jazz fans from all of the U.S. (40+ from California alone!), Great Britain, and Canada solidified any doubts that the TJF will enter the new millennium as the "Jazz Party," making true believers of all those who thought Dick Gibson's famed Colorado Springs, Colo. and Odessa, Texas legendary soirees were the only shows in town.

My fave highlights from this holiday weekend superbo experience are as follows:

Again, the Monty Alexander Trio tore up the joint with five knock-out sets. Joined last year by the remarkable duo of bassist John Clayton and drummer Jeff Hamilton (who were again in attendance, but not with Monty), Alexander traveled this year with a new outstanding pairing of bass player Hassan Shakur (son of famed pianist Gerald Wiggins), and from New Orleans - the amazing drummer Troy Davis.

Two piano players (new to the proceedings this year) - Oliver Jones, from Canada, and Englishman Derek Smith, who now resides on the East Coast, blew minds with breathtaking sets. Twelve-year-old Krygyzstani boy genius Eldar Djangirov also showed everyone not to worry, as our jazz future is assured of continued brilliance. This kid really could be the next Bill Evans.

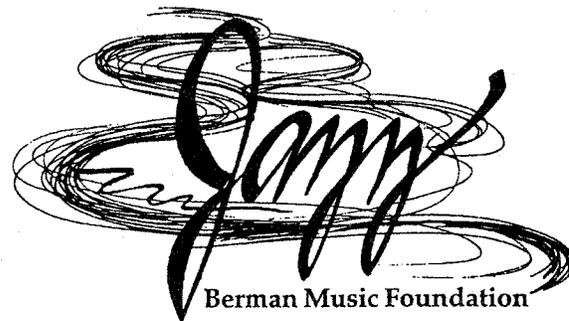
I was also awed by LA session drummer Frank Capp, who with Hamilton showed us all what jazz drumming is really about.

Space limits me from going on and on - but as usual all players were in top form, especially Canadian guitarist Ed Bickert, trumpet marvel Bobby Shew, and reedman extraordinaire Ken Peplowski. Trombonist Bill Watrous played well, but had an unprofessional temper tantrum over the sound crew not miking him to his satisfaction.

MC/jazz historian Dick Wright was great as always and put Mr. Watrous in his place as this was the only odd-vibe moment in this three-day, 30+ hour extravaganza. By the way - the catered food was out of sight, too. Can't wait until next year's as the Junior Mance Trio is set to headline another vast array of luminaries.

Now, onward as we prepare for another one of our "one of a kind, top flight, can't miss" jazz festivals - the Kansas City International Jazz Festival at Kansas City's Crown Center June 25-27 (see complete info in this issue on page 1).

Nobody (I mean nobody) does a better job than
(Prez sez continued on page 3, col. 1)



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The Prez sez *(from page 2, col. 1)*

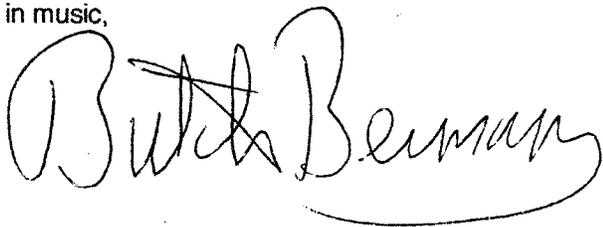
Jo Boehr, Steve Irwin, and John Jessup in making this three-day event another not- to-be-missed happening. My current artist and dear friend Norman Hedman (who reached #10 and hopefully will continue rising in the national Gavin polls) will be opening the festival along with Karrin Allyson, Chick Corea, Kenny Garrett, Bobby McFerrin, and Kevin Mahogany, to name a few. Come join the BMF as this festival, along with Topeka, makes these back-to-back regional events an annual must see.

On the home front - local restaurant Stackwoods now runs jazz regularly with their own house band run by UNL staff guitarist Peter Bouffard with special guests weekly. I met with the managing partner David Colon, and I hope to share more input with him so Lincoln might really have a venue that works on a regular basis. Hopefully - better lighting, a real stage with a proper sound system, and perhaps a house piano, can be eventually budgeted to make this venture thrive. Plans are already in effect to add more seating. We wish them much luck.

On the other hand - it's a shame that Kathy Piper didn't utilize her staff of consultants to make this year's Jazz in June more of an event. Good local acts with Karrin Allyson, always terrific (who will spice up this year's card), were safe no-risk choices, but with the BMF, Tom Ineck, and Larry Boehmer, to name a few, available to be consulted and utilized - Jazz in June could be a bigger, better deal. Time to start returning calls, Kathy. The sum of the parts of this unused team could and would make a big diff. Food for thought (THERE, I SAID IT).

Time to cut out and move and groove. Hope to see a lot of you in KC. Be there, or be square.

Yours in music,



Butch Berman

Tribute to Jaki Byard

By Butch Berman



File photo

Jaki Byard

If this homage to the recently departed Jaki Byard seems a bit late to eulogize - it's only because the grim reality of it all has finally sunk in.

He was one of my piano heroes as my convergence to jazz became apparent, yet I never dreamt this brilliant, bossy, and opinionated - yet superstitious guru - would one day, a few years back, be in my kitchen - just hanging out - preparing for a rare concert of jazz greats - old 'n' new - to treat Lincoln to a grand weekend with a different feel. The Berman Music Foundation brought New York to The Zoo Bar stage in 1995 (when Larry Boehmer, as well as my ex-partner Susan and I, could work together), and it was this event that endeared me to this eccentric gentleman in so many ways.

Let's see - Jaki Byard - an original alumnus of Charlie Mingus's early dynasty - led his own band, the Apollo Stompers, as well as taught his amazing gift and credo to countless numbers of aspiring young musicians...not to forget the too numerous to mention array of recording sessions he either starred on or provided the most of professional of accompaniment.

So eclectic - so real - so funky. His death, still a mystery, as we go to print, just makes no sense.

Listen to Jaki Byard and discover what pristine jazz piano is really all about. When discussing other pianists he called himself the "Boss." He might have been...he might have been.

RIP, Boss!

Topeka Jazz Festival scores 2nd round KO

By Tom Ineck



Photo by Rich Hoover
TPAC head Harold Hansen & festival founder Jim Monroe

As expected, organizers of the Topeka Jazz Festival built on the success of its inaugural year to make the second annual event an equal knockout.

Again, the Topeka Performing Arts Center and the entire Memorial Day weekend were jampacked with music. On May 29 and May 30, it continued nearly nonstop from noon to midnight with two-hour breaks for dinner. On May 31, it went from 11:30 a.m. until 7 p.m. The newly added late-morning brunches helped to fortify the fans for the work ahead.

And what joyful work it was! There is not sufficient space here to tell the whole story, so what follows are some of the highlights of the 1999 Topeka Jazz Festival, attended by more than 500 people.



Photo by Rich Hoover
Trumpeter Bobby Shew

After a Saturday afternoon opening set showing off the talents of Kansas City's best jazz musicians, the first all-star ensemble took the stage for a set of bop tunes. The front line of trumpeter Bobby Shew, versatile reedman Terry Harrington and alto saxophonist Jeff Clayton was backed by a rhythm section consisting of pianist Derek Smith, bassist John Clayton and drummer Frank Capp.

The world-class players immediately began to stretch out and flex their musical muscles on "Broadway." Smith, a businesslike Brit who looks more like a banker than a jazzier, nearly stole the show with his two-fisted technique. Harrington switched from clarinet on "Doxy" to tenor sax on "A Night in Tunisia," which also featured some "Dizzy"-style, high-note trumpet-playing by Shew.

As a memorial tribute to singer Trudy Desmond, who died February 19 after being booked to appear at the festival, bassist Jay Leonhart, guitarist Ed Bickert and reedman Bob Kindred performed a set of George Gershwin tunes. Desmond's last release was "My One and Only: A Gershwin Celebration" on the Justin Time label.

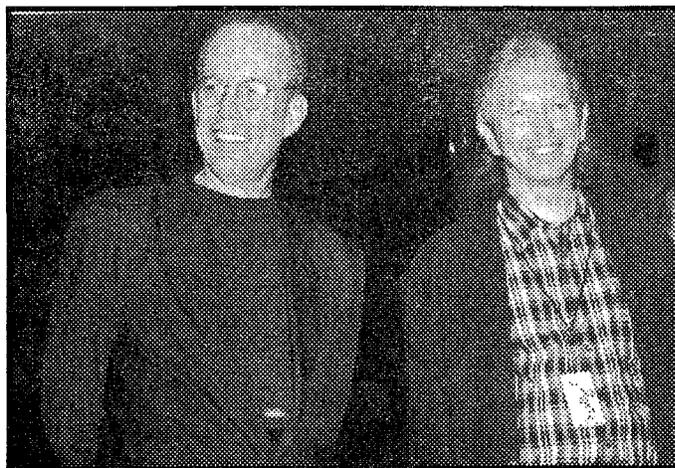


Photo by Rich Hoover
Bassists Jay Leonhart and Gerald Spaits

Leonhart and Bickert showed extraordinary rapport on "Nice Work if You Can Get It," "Someone to Watch Over Me" and "Summertime." Kindred joined them for a soulful rendition of "They Can't Take That Away From Me."

Later in the afternoon, pianist Monty Alexander made his first of five weekend appearances fronting a trio that also included bassist Hassan Shakur and drummer Troy Davis. Like last year, Alexander performed a set of inspirational tunes from his Concord release, "The River." They included "Down By the Riverside," "When the Saints Go Marching In" and "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

After the more sophisticated backing of bassist John Clayton and drummer Jeff Hamilton last year, I was a little disappointed by Alexander's latest trio, but they exhibited some great playing nevertheless.

Singer Karrin Allyson, always a ray of sunshine on stage, brought a pack of new and old tunes and the good news that her sixth Concord CD, "From Paris to Rio," will be



Photo by Rich Hoover
KC singer Karrin Allyson and KC guitarist Danny Embrey

released this fall. Backed by her favorite pianist Paul Smith, bassist Bob Bowman and drummer Todd Strait, as well as reedmen Ken Peplowski and Terry Harrington, she performed "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," "Little Boat," "I Cover the Waterfront" "Social Call," and "Joy Spring."

Trombonist Bill Watrous made his first appearance fronting an ensemble that included trumpeter Tiger Okoshi, Bob Kindred, pianist Oliver Jones, bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Jeff Hamilton. Everybody soloed on "Jumpin' With Symphony Sid," then each of the front-line players was featured on a different tune, a format that was used to good effect throughout the weekend.

Okoshi later fronted a quartet performing his original compositions that yielded some very memorable moments. The trumpeter and brilliant KC pianist Joe Cartwright had some especially sensitive interplay, with strong backing from bassist Spaits and drummer Tommy Ruskin.

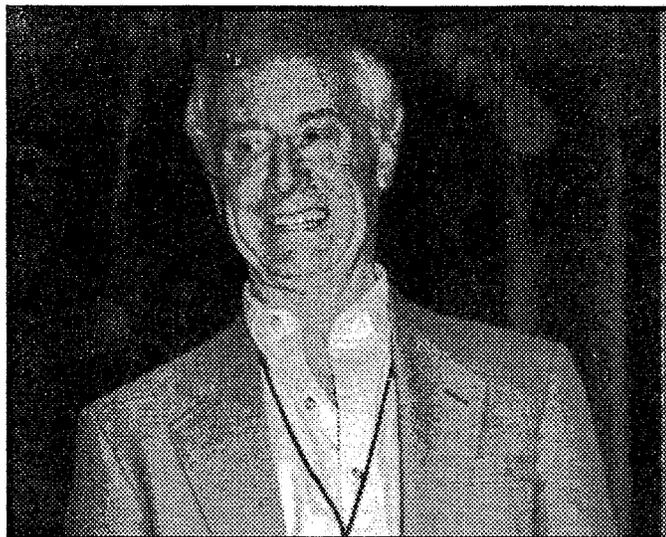


Photo by Rich Hoover
Pianist Derek Smith

At age 90, Claude "Fiddler" Williams, due to some technical problems, seemed a little bewildered on stage. Nevertheless, he performed well in a predictable set that included "Indiana" and "These Foolish Things."

Canadian Rob McConnell, on valve trombone, took the stage with trombonist Watrous and rhythm section for a set that included "Blue Lou," then solo features on "Skylark" (Watrous) and "Imagination" (McConnell). Another Canadian, pianist Oliver Jones, displayed his Oscar Peterson-inspired style in a trio set with Canadian bassist Neil Swainson and drummer Ruskin that included "Street of Dreams" and "Make Believe."

One of the most exciting late-night sets was fronted by Bob Kindred, Jeff Clayton and Bobby Shew, a trio of virtuosos who worked out on Nat Adderley's "Work Song" before taking their feature spots. On alto sax, Clayton showed exceptional skill in squeezing out "lip bends" up and down the scale on a ballad rendition of "Take the 'A' Train." Shades of Johnny Hodges!



Photo by Rich Hoover
Flutist and alto saxophonist Jeff Clayton

Kindred, on tenor sax, and his wife, singer Ann Phillips, serenaded each other on "Embraceable You." Shew showed his bravura trumpet chops on Thelonious Monk's "Well You Needn't."

A round of Sunday morning solo sets were reprised this year. First, pianist Derek Smith exhibited an impeccable sense of proportion, dynamics and logical improvisation with the Ellington tunes "Satin Doll," the bluesy "I'm Going Fishing" (from "Anatomy of a Murder"), the delicate "Lotus Flower" and "Rockin' in Rhythm," on which Smith established a bass pedal offset by dazzling, right-hand runs.

Bassist Jay Leonhart soloed on "How Are Things in Gloccamora," and drummer Frank Capp managed to beat out the melody of "Now's The Time," otherwise known as the popular dance tune "The Hucklebuck."

Switch-hitters Peplowski, Harrington and Kindred were featured on the "Tenors and Clarinets" segment, attacking "Bernie's Tune" with three tenor saxes, then switching to clarinets for "Creole Love Call."

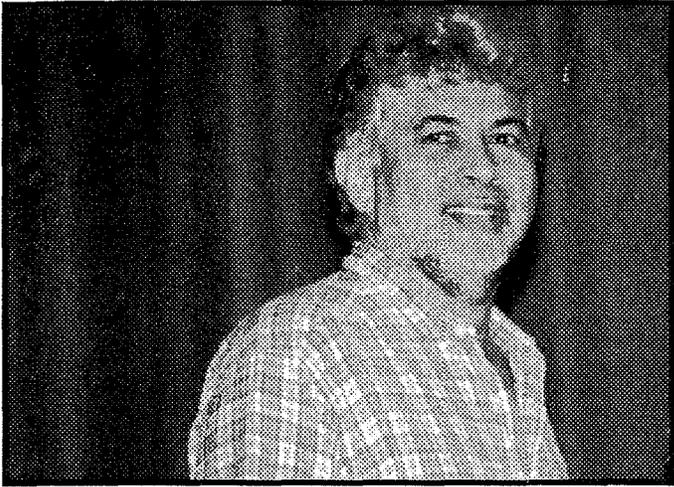


Photo by Rich Hoover
Pianist Monty Alexander

The Rob McConnell Trio – valve trombonist McConnell, guitarist Ed Bickert and bassist Neil Swainson – set up in front of the raised stage for an intimate Sunday afternoon set that included clever couplings of "Maybe September" and "Indian Summer" and of "Last Night When We Were Young" and "Young and Foolish." The masterfully swinging threesome finished with "Royal Garden Blues," including a snippet from "South Rampart Street Parade."

After a mind-boggling, uptempo version of "Just In Time," Monty Alexander turned introspective with an original composition called "Crying," a haunting plea for world peace. Drawing from his 1997 CD "Echoes of Jilly's," Alexander offered up a selection of tunes associated with Frank Sinatra, including "I've Got You Under My Skin," "All the Way," "Chicago," "Come Fly With Me" and a beautiful solo take on "Young at Heart," which he played in a stride style with playful abandon.

Late Sunday afternoon, the Clayton brothers were joined by trumpeter Okoshi, pianist Joe Cartwright and drummer Frank Capp for another virtuosic display of talents. Okoshi opened "Body and Soul" with a stunning solo cadenza and continued to play with a bravura style that never lost its heart. Bassist John Clayton took a majestic arco solo turn on "Prelude to a Kiss." The quintet finished in grand style with another Ellington classic, "Perdido," featuring Okoshi on flugelhorn.

The Monty Alexander Trio returned Sunday evening with a surprise set of vocal music. After a short piano intro to "Sweet Lorraine," Alexander broke into "Too Marvelous For Words," sounding strikingly like Nat Cole, in both tone and phrasing. Bassist Hassan Shakur bowed the melody of "Mona Lisa," then Alexander's wife, Katarina, took the stage to sing a lovely version of the samba "Estate." Like Kindred and his wife a day earlier, Alexander and his spouse serenaded each other on the closer, "This is the End of A Beautiful Friendship."

Another reprise from last year was the two-guitar set, as Ed Bickert and Danny Embrey faced off. (Last year, it was Embrey and Bucky Pizzarelli.)



Photo by Rich Hoover
Guitarist Ed Bickert

Bickert's subtle style seems at odds with his instrument of choice. The Fender Telecaster, with its thin, biting sound, is more common at rock concerts than jazz concerts. But it seemed well matched with Embrey's acoustic guitar and Embrey's more lively attack. The two guitarists traded lead and rhythm roles, took solo spotlights, then joined again for "Darn That Dream" and "Beautiful Love."

The basic piano trio of pianist Oliver Jones, bassist Jay Leonhart and drummer Jeff Hamilton had everyone working at a high level of performance. Jones' smooth, bluesy hesitation style again bore a strong resemblance to that of Oscar Peterson. Leonhart showed his wacky sense of humor, singing his composition "Louis Bellson." Hamilton's sense of time and imaginative use of brushes are second to none, making every tune an exciting adventure.



Photo by Rich Hoover
Hassan Shakur, T. Shareef, Butch Berman, & Troy Davis



Photo by Rich Hoover
Drummer Frank Capp

Trombonist Watrous, trumpeter Shew and pianist Smith fronted the next set, accompanied by bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Todd Strait. A mid-tempo "Yesterdays" featured solos by all three frontliners, while "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" was a chance for Shew to show his ballad sensibilities on trumpet.

A late-night Sunday session featuring Bob Kindred, Tiger Okoshi, Rob McConnell, Joe Cartwright, John Clayton, Gerald Spaits and Frank Capp paid big dividends. The mutual respect and generosity of the musicians was apparent as they afforded plenty of solo opportunities for each other. A dissonant three-horn melody line on "All Blues" had listeners smiling.

Kindred's burnished tenor saxophone tone was featured on "Body and Soul," and Kindred and McConnell took a dual lead line on "Blue Moon." The slow shuffle rhythm of the latter tune was a good showcase for bassist Clayton's bowed solo.

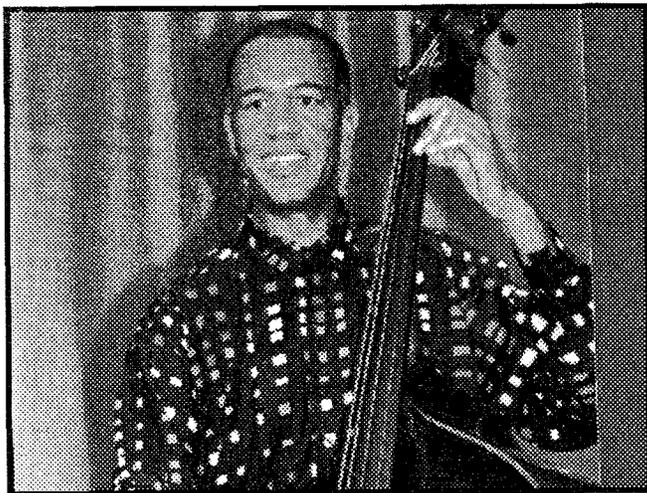


Photo by Rich Hoover
Bassist John Clayton

Karrin Allyson teamed up with longtime KC bandmates Russ Long on piano, Bob Bowman on bass and Todd Strait on drums for another set of sterling -- and stirring -- vocal music. Looking wonderful in a black short skirt and black nylons, Allyson captivated her audience, despite their weariness after a full day of music.

She scatted her way through "It Might As Well Be Spring," then teamed up with Bowman for a tender voice/bass reading of "I Didn't Know What Time it Was." Billy Strayhorn's "Daydream" was followed by a frantic "What a Little Moonlight Can Do," featuring Strait with a flurry of brushes. Allyson showed a penchant for the tunes of Thelonious Monk, following his ballad "Ask Me Now" with the quirky "I Mean You."

No doubt about it, Allyson is at the top of her form, singing well at any tempo and with a sure sense of phrasing and lyric emphasis. She seems equally at home in the role of breezy jazz stylist or smoky chanteuse.

After the second Topeka jazz fest, a rapport has begun to develop among returning musicians, both on stage and off stage. Second-timers included Bob Kindred, Ken Peplowski, Bobby Shew, Monty Alexander, John Clayton, Jay Leonhart, Jeff Hamilton and Karrin Allyson.

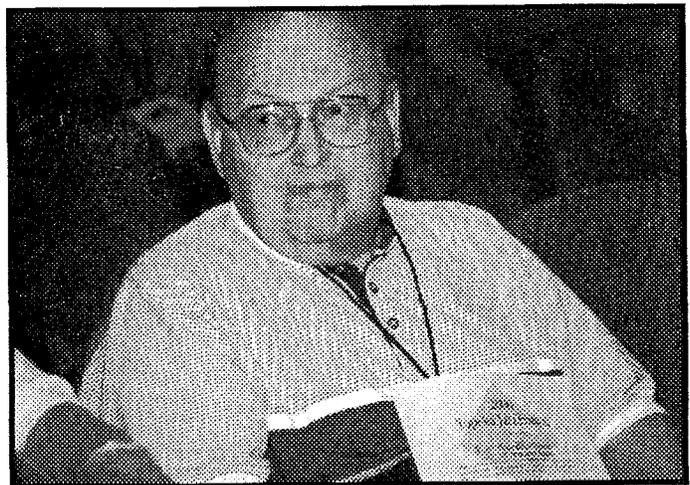


Photo by Rich Hoover
MC/jazz historian Dick Wright

Because the players remain in town for the entire weekend and stay at the same hotel as most of the fans, a camaraderie also flourishes between musicians and music-lovers. They greet each other in the hotel lobby or in the elevator or on the street between the hotel and the performing arts center.

It's as though we're all members of a very exclusive club, a musical cabal with a secret handshake, and the password is jazz.

At the risk of sounding like an ingrate, I have just one suggestion for organizer Jim Monroe. In the future, it would be nice to hear a male vocalist, perhaps Kevin Mahogany, Andy Bey or Kurt Elling.

Next year's festival already is in the making, with pianist Junior Mance and his trio expected to make an appearance. Bring 'em on!

After a century, Duke still swings

By Tom Ineck

No one is truer to the legacy of Duke Ellington than the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra.

The 17-piece jazz repertory orchestra demonstrated that fidelity to the great American composer April 24 in front of a near sellout audience of 2,100 people at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. It was a fitting tribute to Ellington just five days before the centenary date of his birth.

The Smithsonian orchestra performs from painstaking, note-for-note transcriptions of recordings, live performances and unpublished manuscripts, assuring the faithful rendering of Ellington and his co-composer, Billy Strayhorn. A hand-picked ensemble of seasoned players also assures that justice is done.

The two-hour concert was divided evenly, with 10 selections performed in each half, plus an encore.

This was no mere collection of Ellington's greatest hits, but rather a broad range of works from throughout his career (Ellington died in 1974). It was a treat to hear tunes that are seldom, if ever, performed or recorded.

"Harlem Airshaft" and "Drop Me Off in Harlem" represented Ellington's infatuation with Harlem in the 1930s. The later piece was especially effective, with its singing, sweet melody, nostalgic of an earlier age. "Carnegie Blues" was a moody piece featuring three trombones and a dialogue between Loren Schoenberg on tenor sax and Brent Wallarab on trumpet.

"Caravan," written by Ellington and trombonist Juan Tizol, got its typically exotic reading. The only other widely-recognized Ellington tunes played were "Take the A Train," "Cottontail," and "Satin Doll."

"In the Hall of the Mountain King," from Ellington's adaptation of Grieg's "Peer Gynt Suite," proved that the king could swing, with some nice piano work by Russell Wilson. Jimmy Carroll on alto sax played a beautiful rendition of "The Star-Crossed Lovers," taking the place of Johnny Hodges.

Trumpeter Joe Wilder's playing on the ballad "Almost Cried," from the movie soundtrack for "Anatomy of a Murder," was the real thing. The legendary Wilder, the senior player in the ranks of the Smithsonian orchestra, gave the performance an authenticity that could not have been achieved by a younger musician.

Among the other highlights were alto saxophonist Charlie Young's tour de force rendition of the Strayhorn ballad "Isfahan" and the faithful reading of the January 1931 recording of "Rockin' In Rhythm," a classic Ellington composition possessing an irresistible vitality that makes the listener smile.

Jazz on disc

by Tom Ineck

ASTRAL PROJECT

Voodoo Bop
Compass Records

There are only a handful of jazz artists whose recordings I anticipate with the thrill of a child awaiting Christmas morning.

Astral Project is one of them. Even before I saw the band live at Snug Harbor jazz club in New Orleans in 1995, I was familiar with some of the band members from their independent projects, especially guitarist Steve Masakowski, saxophonist Tony Dagradi and drummer Johnny Vidacovich (from his incendiary work with guitarist John Scofield).

But watching them work together (with pianist David Torkanowsky and bassist James Singleton) was something else. Formed in 1978, this combo has perfected its blend of New Orleans rhythms, rock attitude, bop drive and intricate lines to create an exciting hybrid. "Voodoo Bop" is as good a name for it as any.

With only a few recordings to their name (this is the second on Compass Records), Astral Project is far more deserving of attention. "Voodoo Bop" is just the right potion to ward off evil spirits and charm its listeners.

Astral Project performs June 26 with singer Bobby McFerrin at the 4th Annual Kansas City International Jazz Festival. It's like Christmas in June!

CHICK COREA AND ORIGIN

Live at the Blue Note
Stretch Records

Just when you think he's run out of steam and is content to coast on past successes, pianist, composer and bandleader Chick Corea builds another souped-up roadster of a band to carry him into the future in style.

This time it's Origin, a progressive sextet featuring two versatile reed players (Bob Sheppard and Steve Wilson) and a trombonist (Steve Davis) on the front line, in addition to another fabulous rhythm section (bassist Avishai Cohen and drummer Adam Cruz).

With flutes, clarinet and bass clarinet, and soprano, alto and tenor saxes at his disposal, Corea has a broad palette with which to compose and arrange his extended forays into post-modern bop. The shortest tune is nine minutes, and the Latin-tinged "Double Image" clocks in at 17 and a half minutes.

The band is feeling its oats during these very live sessions at the Blue Note club in New York City. Prodded by their leader, Davis, Sheppard and Wilson are especially inventive and intense in their solos. Corea himself seems newly inspired by his latest cohort of young musicians.

Chick Corea and Origin perform June 25 at the 4th Annual Kansas City International Jazz Festival.

NJO salutes KC swing & Kenton

By Tom Ineck

Since the last issue of *Jazz*, the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra has performed two well-attended concerts at the newly remodeled Holiday Inn Hotel in downtown Lincoln.

In the respectful NJO tradition, the band saluted the legacy of Kansas City swing and of Stan Kenton, acknowledging their influence on the history and evolution of big-band jazz.

On April 6, a capacity crowd witnessed a triple-header, with three distinct performances by musicians ranging from middle school to Claude "Fiddler" Williams, the 91-year-old marvel of Midwest swing.

Williams was active at the rise of the so-called "territory bands" of the 1920s, '30s and '40s, first as a guitarist with the Count Basie band in 1936, then as a jazz fiddler in the style of Joe Venuti and Stuff Smith. He helped establish the bluesy Kansas City sound that remains at the heart of swing.

With the hand-picked, Lincoln-based rhythm section of guitarist Steve Hanson, bassist Dave Morris, pianist Jim Cidlík and drummer John Scofield, Williams warmed up with "C Jam Blues," then stretched his vocal chords on "You Got to See Your Mama Every Night."

"Over the Rainbow" got a lovely ballad treatment with Hanson feeding guitar chords to Williams, who fiddled high over the others with superb intonation. The tempo increased for the swinging "How High the Moon." Williams vocalized again on his trademark "Kansas City," then the band took it out at an accelerating pace with "Cherokee."

Williams also joined the regular 17-piece jazz orchestra for the climactic set. First, the band tuned up with Charlie Parker's "Confirmation," featuring short solos by trombonist Dutch Ode, trumpeter Jeff Patton, alto saxophonist Gene Smith and bassist Rusty White.

In the most ambitious tune of the evening -- aptly commissioned by the orchestra for the "Kansas City Legacy" program -- the band debuted Randall Snyder's "Territorial Riffs," which cleverly mixes swing references with comical tidbits from the sappy "sweet music" of Jackie Gleason, Jack Benny and Guy Lombardo.

Williams took the stage again for "Moten Swing," which dates to Basie's early Kansas City days with bandleader Bennie Moten. Pianist Tom Harvill passed the intro to Williams, who played the simple thematic riff, then soloed with verve. "A Foggy Day" was taken at a jaunty clip punctuated by brassy bursts and a synthesized guitar solo by Peter Bouffard that smoothly led into Williams' violin solo.

The band played with more poise and punch than Williams on "Ain't Misbehavin'," which had the fiddler fumbling for the right changes until he regained composure near the end. Williams accompanied the

orchestra on "Up for the Count," a Dave Sharp tribute to the driving Basie sound. You have to give Williams credit for his willingness to try a new tune, even if it is a simple blues composition.

The concert began with a short set by the 1999 Young Lions Big Band, 16 of the best players chosen from Lincoln area middle schools and high schools.

About 300 people turned out for the May 27 concert tribute to Kenton. An expanded, 19-piece NJO raised the roof with the brassy bombast usually associated with the adventurous modernist. The added trumpet and tuba expanded both the tonal palette and the decibel level.

Bill Holman's "Readymix" started things off with a bang, mixing it up with a bright, lilting melody and synchronized trombones. The "Hits Medley" featured such Kenton favorites as "Dynaflow" and the exotic Big Band classic "Artistry In Rhythm."

Kenton arranger Holman nearly obscured the melody of Bob Haggart's ballad "What's New" to create something entirely new. Ed Love's tenor sax solo wove dense clusters of notes.

Tenor saxophonist Seth Schoen, a senior at Lincoln High School and winner of this year's NJO Young Jazz Artist Competition, took the stage for a gritty rendition of Ellington's "Jeep's Blues." With rhythm section only, he was featured on Sonny Rollins' "Doxy," then joined again by the full ensemble for Charles Mingus' "Better Git It in Your Soul."

Trumpets clashed in delightful dissonance on the Latin-tinged "The Peanut Vendor." Opening the second half of the concert in a much "cooler" vein, was Gerry Mulligan's "Young Blood," with a fluent, confident trumpet solo by Brian Grasmick, a robust tenor sax passage by Scott Vicroy and a driving bop statement by Rich Burrows on alto sax.

As arranged for Kenton by Bob Graettinger, the ballad "You Go to My Head" was more like a glimpse at an addled brain, with trombonist Todd Thatcher trying to sustain the beautiful melody while the other horns flitted in and out. Faring better was the standard "All the Things You Are," in which the trombones and tuba were richly voiced and embellished by the sax section.

Finally, the blues got a chance with "A Little Minor Booze," featuring the swaggering, burnished tones of Scott Vicroy on baritone sax and the Coltrane-inspired tenor sax of Rich Burrows. Responding to a season-ending standing ovation, the NJO encored with the uptempo "Intermission Riff."

The NJO likely will perform at several different venues during its 24th season, which begins next fall. The hotel (first the Hilton, then the Ramada and now the Holiday Inn) had served as a host for the band at least since the mid-1980s.

It was a convenient location for concertgoers who wanted to dine in the nearby Haymarket area -- or in the hotel dining room -- before the show. But no matter where the NJO ends up, their fans are sure to follow.

Tomfoolery

By Tom Ineck

Lincoln and the greater Midwest are about to experience the annual summertime flurry of jazz activity, although this time it looks like some of it may be sustained into the fall.

At least, that is the word from Stackwoods restaurant, 5900 Old Cheney Road, the latest venue to attempt a live jazz policy in the Capital City. The \$4.5 million south Lincoln eatery is offering live jazz Wednesdays and Fridays with bookings at least through August.

Based on a single Friday night visit, my reaction is mixed. I salute Stackwoods managing partner David Colon for his financial commitment to the music and for his willingness to work with musicians to book a variety of artists. He is the first owner in a long time who has shown enough respect for the musicians to pay them a decent price for their services.

Colon and Lincoln guitarist-teacher Peter Bouffard agreed to form a house band, The Smokehouse Jazz Quartet. Consisting of Bouffard, trumpeter Darryl White, bassist Rusty White and drummer Greg Ahl, the band is periodically supplemented with guest artists.

Bouffard says the quartet is "delighted and encouraged by the enthusiasm shown by the management at Stackwoods Restaurant in their effort to cultivate an artistic outlet for some of the area's finest jazz musicians."

Since the first performance April 28, guest artists have included saxophonist Ed Love, pianist Tom Larson, reedman and drummer Del Smith, trumpeter Mason Prince, drummer Gayland Prince and trombonist Dutch Ode.

Still to come are saxophonist Scott Vicroy on June 30 and bassist Steve Doyle, who will make two appearances at Stackwoods, June 23 and June 25, during a short visit from his current home in New York City. An Omaha native and former Lincoln resident, Doyle last year released a superb CD also featuring guitarist and Omaha native Dave Stryker.

Jazz performances at Stackwoods are 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Wednesdays and 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. Fridays in the restaurant's lounge. Therein lies the problem.

The high, vaulted-timber ceiling, the bare hardwood floor, the huge stone fireplace and the unadorned walls and glass windows are not conducive to the dampened acoustics that bring out the best in live jazz. Also, the positioning of the band near the door to the patio dining area is unfortunate for musicians and for much of the audience. Only those seated at raised tables or at the bar can see the band, while those at low tables and booths at the other end of the lounge might as well be in another room.

The word is that the room may be remodeled to enlarge the capacity and better accommodate the room's audience. That in itself would help reinforce the

restaurant's commitment to live music.

In all, the room currently seats about 60 comfortably, a good size for the kind of intimacy that this music requires for an enjoyable experience. There is no cover and appetizers are available at reasonable prices, another plus.

Colon already has made changes to the format, moving from the dining room to the lounge and moving the music up an hour for patrons who want to head home early. His flexibility is a hopeful sign. He wants live jazz to work, and is willing to make adjustments to help ensure its success. For that he and Stackwoods should be heartily congratulated -- and patronized.

Likewise for the two Haymarket restaurants that continue their occasional jazz policies, Inn Harms Way and The Oven. "Jazz on the Patio" at Inn Harms Way kicked off in May and will continue through the summer every Thursday evening from 7 to 9 p.m. Local featured musicians include Tom Larson, Peter Bouffard and Kyle Asche. The Oven features jazz every Sunday evening.

Monday Night Big Band performances continue at least through June at P.O. Pears, the third venue for the sight-reading band mixing young and older musicians. The band plays from 7:30 to 10 p.m. and admission is \$4 for adults and \$3 for students.

Deserving of much less praise is this year's ho-hum Jazz in June lineup. With five Tuesday concert slots to fill and enough popular support to warrant a little boldness in scheduling, the sponsoring Nebraska Art Association chose a lackluster list of jazz artists, most of whom have performed at previous Jazz in June shows. (*Reviews of the first two concerts and previews of the rest are on page 11.*)

July brings the Kansas City Blues and Jazz Festival, Friday July 16 through Sunday July 18.

Among other artists, the jazz stage this year features fast-rising singer and pianist Diana Krall on Friday evening. Harmonica virtuoso Lee Oskar, fusion bassist Wayman Tisdale, the swinging Mighty Blue Kings and the Illinois Jacquet Big Band all perform on Saturday, and the progressive New Orleans ensemble Astral Project, fusion pianist Joe Sample and smooth vocalizer Michael Franks perform Sunday. Claude "Fiddler" Williams is scheduled to make an appearance on the smaller Heritage stage Friday evening.

A week later and a lot closer to home is July Jamm, Friday July 23 through Sunday July 25 in downtown Lincoln. Primarily a blues music event on the outdoor mainstage, the indoor Energy Square stage hosts a variety of local acts this year. Jazz artists include The Ed Love Trio on Friday night, the Bill Wimmer Quartet and the Annette Murrell Duo (with bassist Rusty White) on Saturday and the Tom Larson Group and the Gentlemen of Jive on Sunday.

Finally, the Lied Center for Performing Arts' 10th anniversary season will include Bobby Watson and Horizon with Victor Lewis on Oct. 1. (*More on that next issue.*)

Jazz in June '99 has few surprises

By Tom Ineck

In a rare convergence of forces, the evening air and the music were equally cool June 1 at the opening concert of the eighth annual Jazz in June series.

Again, the Sculpture Garden adjacent to the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery in Lincoln was packed with more than 1,000 music fans, picnickers, joggers, bicyclers and hangers-out to enjoy what has become one of the Capital City's most popular early-summer events.

Just five days after the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra's own season finale, the 17-piece NJO hauled out a variety of Big Band charts for what has become an annual Jazz in June appearance.

From Basie's early years came the classic "Moten Swing," with special guest Tom Larson on piano, Ed Love on tenor sax and Bob Krueger on trumpet.

The blues-tinged Charles Mingus compositions "Nostalgia in Times Square" and "Better Git It in Your Soul" both featured brawny tenor sax solos by Scott Vicroy. On the former, trombonist Chris Acker made his NJO debut with a growling plunger-muted solo. On the latter, it was trumpeter Krueger who put the plunger to good effect.

Duke Ellington was well-represented with four numbers. "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)" rumbled with an Afro-Cuban rumba rhythm and featured Love on tenor sax. "Take the A Train" gave solo spots to several players, including guitarist Peter Bouffard, alto saxophonist Dave Sharp and trumpeter Brian Grasmick.

On bass trombone, Tony Hutchins found his way up the scale to some bluesy high notes on "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," while Sharp, Krueger (again on plunger-muted trumpet) and Vicroy contributed some slow-burning solos on "Jeep's Blues."

Gershwin's "But Not For Me," usually performed as a ballad of unfound love, was treated as a midtempo swinger, as though in defiance. From the Stan Kenton songbook came "Waltz of the Prophets," featuring trombonist Dutch Ode.

Sharp brought a new arrangement of "Black Coffee" with him from his new home in Ottumwa, Iowa. It was chiefly an ensemble piece with a well-placed soprano sax solo for Sharp.

The performance ended with the Louis Prima warhorse "Sing Sing Sing," a drum workout best known for the rendition by Gene Krupa and the Benny Goodman band. Mike Murphy was featured on clarinet, but it was drummer Greg Ahl who put the stamp of approval on this flag-waver.

A week later, Kathy Morrow returned to her hometown with a cadre of musicians based in Vail, Colo., where their mix of pop and smooth jazz must be very

popular with the resort crowd. It struck me as a bit too louny, with a lot of unnecessary melodramatics and razzle-dazzle.

Morrow, a surprisingly good musician, played an electronic keyboard to good effect on straight jazz tunes, as well as the more blues- and pop-style stuff. Her band consisted of tenor sax, electric guitar, electric bass, drums and percussion.

Morrow's singing, on the other hand, tends to the shrill and flamboyant, with little in the way of subtlety or dynamics. She has that in common with Dianne Schuur, whose "I Caught A Touch of Your Love" was featured early in the show.

She comped competently on Ramsey Lewis' "The In Crowd," then displayed a pretty good scat-singing technique on "On Green Dolphin Street." She paid tribute to Nat Cole with "Straighten Up and Fly Right," which featured a honking, r&b-style tenor sax solo.

The lounge attitude was too evident in the bossa nova rendition of Cole Porter's "Night and Day." Morrow took a lesson from blues belter Etta James for her take on the Harry Warren composition "At Last."

Her version of "I've Got You Under My Skin" was delivered with more style than substance, unlike the Sinatra version to which she alluded. Sinatra always delivered ample doses of both style and substance. Likewise for "Old Devil Moon."

Finally, a long awaited ballad arrived with "I Love You For Sentimental Reasons." Morrow handled it quite well, though she seemed overmiked and the bass kept feeding back.

"Route 66" opened the second half and showed off Morrow's boogie-woogie piano technique. Freddie Hubbard's "Little Sunflower" was a nice choice and the evening's first instrumental.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln trumpet instructor Darryl White provided the most exciting moments of the evening when he sat in on Herbie Hancock's "Cantaloupe Island" and the Little Rascals' "Groovin'."

The rest of the free Jazz in June concert series continues with the Caribbean sounds of Irie on June 15, singer Karrin Allyson and Friends from Kansas City on June 22 and fusion saxophonist Matt Wallace of Omaha on June 29.

The Omaha-based Irie, with singer-keyboardist Tony Gulizia and multipercussionist Joey Gulizia, are always an upbeat, danceable treat, but their shows are beginning to suffer from over-exposure.

Also returning to Jazz in June, Allyson is an artist of the first rank with a batch of new tunes at her disposal, as she already has recorded her sixth Concord CD for release later this year. Expect a great concert, as always.

After 11 years backing the bombastic trumpeter Maynard Ferguson, saxophonist Wallace has credentials as a fusion player and a straight-ahead improviser. It should be interesting to see what kind of band he brings. And, I hope he doesn't play that god-awful EWI (Electronic Wind Instrument).

Jazz in the venues

Compiled by Dave Hughes

1999 Prairie Jazz and Bluesfest

The Nebraska Jazz Orchestra, with special guest Angela Hagenbach, is set to perform at this year's Prairie Jazz and Bluesfest, Sunday June 27, at Hillcrest Country Club, 8901 O Street.

The NJO is one of the Midwest's premier big bands, playing a variety of traditional big band compositions by the jazz masters, as well as new compositions by orchestra members. Hagenbach, a jazz vocalist and percussionist from Kansas City, is known in the Midwest for her fresh style and velvet voice.

This annual highlight of summer will kickoff at 4:30 p.m. to the sounds of Blue House and King Cool, followed by the NJO and headliner Angela Hagenbach. Tickets are available by calling 402-477-8446 (\$10 for adults, \$9 for seniors, \$5 for students, and family tickets and reserved table seating are also available. Lawnchairs and blankets are welcome.

Monday Night Big Band continues

The Monday Night Big Band is still playing every Monday night at their new location at P.O. Pears.

Originally, the band played at The Ramada (now The Holiday Inn), but most recently met at The Top of the Rock (on the top floor of the Rock 'n' Roll Runza at 14th & P Streets in downtown Lincoln). However, since April 5 the band has been performing at P.O. Pears at 322 S. 9th St. They are slated to continue to perform there at least throughout the end of June.

They are still playing three sets from 7:30 to 10:00 p.m. (doors open at 7 p.m.), and audience members are encouraged to bring their own instruments and sit in with the band during the second and third sets. The cover charge still is \$4, \$3 for students.

For more info, call 402-477-8008.

Jazz at Stackwoods

Lincoln's newest venue for jazz, Stackwoods, at 5900 Old Cheney Road, brings you The Smokehouse Jazz Quartet every Wednesday and Friday nights (see Tom Ineck's column for details).

The music runs from 7 until 10 p.m. on Wednesdays, and from 8 until 11 p.m. on Fridays.

For more information, call 473-8400.

Jazz at The Oven every Sunday evening

On Sunday evenings at The Oven, 201 N. 8th St. in Lincoln, you can still hear the duos of either: Dave Novak & Dennis Taylor; Steve Hanson & Nancy Marshall; TBA (Dave Sharp's old spot) & Andy Hall; or Peter Bouffard & John Carlini. Call 402-475-6118 for more information.

Jazz at KIKI's in Omaha

KIKI's Crab House in Omaha has been featuring

jazz for three days a week for some time now.

On Thursdays the Omaha Jazz Society hosts an open workshop and jam session. On Fridays, there are performances for the happy hour beginning at 5:30 p.m. And, on Saturdays the club features local artists from the Omaha and Lincoln area.

For more information, call 402-391-5454.

Jazz on the radio

By Dave Hughes

New jazz program on Nebraska Public Radio

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

At 11 p.m. on Friday you can still hear National Public Radio's "Jazz Profiles," an audio biography of jazz artists. At 12 midnight a new host brings you a new program that still features some locally programmed jazz. Malley Keelan hosts "Midnight Serenade," a program of easy jazz and other favorites.

On Saturday nights Don Gill hosts "Big Band Spotlight" at 8 p.m., followed by two other NPR programs, "Piano Jazz," with by Marian McPartland at 9 p.m. and "Jazzset," with by Branford Marsalis, at 10 p.m. Also, The Duke Ellington Centennial Radio Project continues to air at 11 p.m. on Saturday nights. And, "Late in the Evening" with host Dave Hughes, brings you an hour of jazz, blues, cajun, zydeco, roots rock, reggae, and world music at 12 midnight.

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

JAZZ PROFILES in July, Aug., & Sept. (Fridays at 11 p.m.)

- 07-02 Clark Terry
- 07-09 Wes Montgomery
- 07-16 Randy Weston
- 07-23 Billie Holiday
- 07-30 Harry "Sweets" Edison
- 08-06 Artie Shaw
- 08-13 Heath Brothers, Part 1
- 08-20 Heath Brothers, Part 2
- 08-27 Sun Ra
- 09-03 Johnny Hartman
- 09-10 Doc Cheatham
- 09-17 Oscar Peterson
- 09-24 Tito Puente
- 10-01 Willie "The Lion" Smith

PIANO JAZZ in July, Aug. & Sept. (Saturdays at 9 p.m.)

- 07-03 Michael Wolff
- 07-10 Lionel Hampton
- 07-17 Jaki Byard
- 07-24 J.J. Johnson
- 07-31 Eden Atwood
- 08-07 Ray Brown
- 08-14 Michel Petrucciani

- 08-21 Renee Rosnes
- 08-28 Darrell Grant
- 09-04 Joe Locke
- 09-11 Michael Feinstein
- 09-18 Eliane Elias
- 09-25 Brad Mehldau
- 10-02 Charles Brown

JAZZSET in July, Aug. & Sept. (Saturdays at 10 pm)

- 07-03 The Chico O'Farrill Orchestra
- 07-10 John Scofield Quartet
- 07-17 Kurt Elling Trio, Charlie Hunter Quartet, Joe Lovano, and Gonzalo Rubalcaba
- 07-24 Darrell Grant Trio, John Blake Quintet, and Bela Fleck
and the Flecktones with Chick Corea
- 07-31 Hank Jones Trio
- 08-07 The Three Baritone Saxophone Band plays
Gerry Mulligan
- 08-14 Ellis Marsalis trio and Nicholas Payton Quintet
- 08-21 Randy Weston Quintet and Branford Marsalis
Quintet
- 08-28 Julius Hemphill All-Saxophone Quintet, Etta Jones
with Claude "Fiddler" Williams, and more!
- 09-04 Danilo Perez, Mili Bermejo, and Mary di Paola Davis
- 09-11 Ray Baretto leads New World Spirit
- 09-18 Cyrus Chestnut and Reggie Workman
- 09-25 The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra with Kevin Mahogany
- 10-02 The Carnegie Hall Jazz Band celebrates Lunceford

Jazz shows on KZUM

KZUM Community Radio, at 89.3 FM in Lincoln, offers some jazz programs Monday-Wednesday afternoons from 1 to 3 p.m., Thursday afternoons from 1 to 4 p.m. and some other days and times.

The weekday afternoon schedule goes like this: on Mondays, Ed Rumbaugh hosts "The Art of Jazz;" on Tuesdays, Herb Thomas guides "Zero Street;" on Wednesdays, Brazilian jazz will be featured with a host to be announced; on Thursdays, Butch Berman, does "Reboppin'" from 1 to 2:30 p.m., and Rachel Principato, programs "Rachel's Jazz" from 2:30 to 4 p.m.

There are other jazz programs scattered throughout the schedule, including: "Dance Bands: When Melody was King," with Con Good from 8 to 10 a.m., "Jazz Journey," hosted by jazz musician Bill Wimmer, and "Hotter Than That" with Warren "Rude Dog" Rudolph from 8:30 to 10 p.m. on Mondays; "NightTown," with Tom Ineck from 8:30-10 p.m. on Thursdays; and, some western swing on the "KZUM Heyride" on Fridays from 7:30 to 9 p.m. with long time host John Schmitz is for you.

If you would like detailed information about the jazz programs on KZUM, or would like to receive a current copy of their program guide, give them a call at 474-5086.

Jazz and blues on KIOS (with Wed. changes)

KIOS at 91.5 in Omaha has jazz (and some blues) every weekday from 1 p.m. until 3:30 pm.

On Mondays at 1 p.m., "Riverwalk: Live from the Landing" starts off the week, then at 2 p.m. is "Blues in the Afternoon" hosted by Mike Jacobs. On Tuesdays, it's the "Brazilian Hour" at 1 p.m., followed by "Jazz in the Afternoon" with Chris Cooke from 2-3:30 p.m. On Wednesdays at 1 p.m. it's "Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz," then 90 minutes of "Jazz in the Afternoon" hosted by Mike Jacobs. On Thursdays, "One Night Stand" with host Chris Nielsen kicks off the afternoon of jazz at 1 p.m., followed by "Jazz Junction" at 2 with Rick Erben. On Fridays "Jazz From Studio 1" starts it off at 1 p.m., followed by another "Jazz in the Afternoon" with Jacobs again that lasts until 3:30 p.m.

On Saturdays: "Marian McPartland" airs again at 8 p.m. on Saturday followed by "Jazz Junction" with Erben again at 9 p.m. and "Last Call" with Cooke again at 11 p.m.

For a free copy of the KIOS program guide, give them a call at 402-557-2777 in Omaha.

Discorama By Butch Berman

JEFFERY SMITH

The Verve Trilogy
Verve

Right off the bat let me tell you - Jeffery Smith is a bitch.

But to begin with, when my old Lincoln buddy Russ Dantzer left the Plains for New York to eventually form and run Hot Jazz Management, little did I know then that Russ's venture, filtered through a mutual lady friend, planted the seed for the BMF.

Now six years later Russ has turned me on to another client of his, and an incredible talent he is. Yeah, you guessed it - Jeffery Smith.

Gigging and woodshedding in Paris - Jeffery returned to New York and under the guidance of one of my iconic faves - Ms. Shirley Horn - crafted his gorgeous first CD, "Ramona," dedicated to his Mom. Ballad laden - but oh so dreamy, backed by the magnificent Shirley Horn Trio (Charles Abels, bass; Steve Williams, drums), this debut sensation steals your attention as well as your heart. Another stellar trio - Kenny Barron, Ray Drummond, and Ben Riley, make "A Little Sweeter" a true believer of any "Doubting Thomas" who challenged his first powerful release.

Now with his new creation - "Down Here Below" - surrounded by a star-studded cast of young jazz masters including: Dianne Reeves, Regina Carter, Talib Kwebe, Rodney Kendrick, James Weidman, and Curtis Lundy, cascaded this baritone crooner to new heights

The first cut, "Afro Blue," engulfs your nervous system in a flash, and paves the way to his third astounding effort.

You have arrived Mr. Smith...and thanks again, Russ.

(Discorama continued on page 19, col. 2)

Friends of Jazz: Sound Environment

(Editor's Note: With this series of articles, we recognize some of the friends of jazz who are helping to keep the music alive.)

By Tom Ineck

Some "Friends of Jazz" help musicians sound better on stage or in the studio by supplying them with the best instruments, the most reliable PA equipment or the best acoustics and engineering for recording.

Others, like Charlie Santmire, Gale Cooper and the rest of the staff at The Sound Environment -- in Lincoln and Omaha -- simply make the music sound better on your home stereo system. Except, it's not that simple.

As with classical music, the dynamic range of jazz demands a high level of reproductive quality to achieve true fidelity. If the CD or LP was recorded in a club, you want to feel as if you're seated at the front table when you listen.

You want to hear the improvisers' interplay with a visceral effect that approaches that of a live performance. You want to hear the sizzle of the ride cymbal, the brassy bite of the trumpet, the burr of the tenor sax and the deep, woody resonance of the bass.

But, Santmire believes it's not enough to deliver high performance. He wants his clients (not merely customers) to feel comfortable with their sound system, to be able to operate it with ease. That has been his guiding philosophy for 29 years, an incredible track record in a very competitive industry.

"I got into this business because I like music," Santmire says. "I was an amateur performer from high school on, so I got into it as much for that reason as the interest in electronics."

An avid fan of all classical music and some jazz, Santmire said anyone can appreciate a good sound system, regardless of the kind of music they listen to.

"The person who is interested in jazz I would take to be just as interested in having very good sound as the person interested in classical music. On the jazz-classical front, it's pretty much the same gear."

Cooper, a well-known Lincoln drummer currently with The Rockin' Fossils, has been with The Sound Environment for 11 years. His own interests tend toward jazz, and he agreed with Santmire's assessment of classical and jazz music.

"They're both complex music forms, and the systems have to be able to bring out subtle details," Cooper said. "Not to put other forms of music down, but if someone wants to listen to rap or rock, maybe there's not quite as much detail-oriented stuff."

Selecting the best components for a system is not that difficult, Santmire said. For most people, he stresses



Photo by Tom Ineck
Gale Cooper (left) and Charlie Santmire (right)

the good-sounding, less-expensive systems.

"We've made quite an effort to find some components at reasonable prices that actually sound quite good. We can do a system for under \$2,000 that's very musical."

Such a "budget" system might include a \$650 Cal Labs CD player, a \$300 Marantz amplifier, \$200 worth of Transparent speaker cable, and a \$650 pair of JPW floor speakers. The speaker cable is especially important. At its best, it will eliminate external interference -- such as radio frequency noise -- and control the energy returning from the speakers to the amplifier.

Systems that exceed \$100,000 are not that rare. The most expensive speakers that The Sound Environment currently carries are upwards of \$20,000 a pair. When a doubtful interviewer questions his own ability to hear the difference, Santmire is quick to disagree.

"Absolutely anybody can hear it in a flash," he says. "What we're doing in our corner of this industry is hidden. People know about \$150,000 automobiles, and they know what they do. Nobody knows about this stuff, so the natural assumption is that it would be so esoteric that you wouldn't be able to hear it. The differences are there if you are allowed to hear them."

The Sound Environment moved to its current location at 5600 S. 59th St. (north of Stackwoods Restaurant) late last year, and some remodeling is still in progress. The move allowed them to design better spaces for a growing number of sound and home theater systems. These rooms give the client a better idea of what the system will sound like in the home.

"We cater to the person who is really interested in music or film, not to the person who is really interested in equipment," Santmire said. "We deal with those people, but I'm much more comfortable dealing with somebody who has a thousand records than somebody who has four demo discs that they get out and play for their friends."



Photo by Butch Berman

The Blue Room in KC's 18th & Vine Historic District

Will Kansas City win a Grammy?

The business of music is a part of the business of entertainment. Music movies, television, and touring entertainers are easily America's largest and increasingly most coveted export. This is a multi-billion dollar industry that emanates from the entertainment capitals of the United States: New York, Nashville, Miami, Los Angeles, Chicago, Austin, Seattle, Atlanta, Memphis, and San Francisco.

At the heart of the music portion of the entertainment industry is the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, the United States fastest growing and largest arts organization. Most people know them as the Grammy's, because of the annual multi-million dollar CBS television show that, in February, went out to a live audience of one and one half billion people in 36 countries. NARAS's 13,000 members are the who's who of the music industry and people who have their eye on the future of recorded music.

"Our area includes all of Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and most of Missouri," says Tom Alexios, Special Events Coordinator for Downbeat, "over the past few months I've traveled most of it, and met a lot of eligible voting members that I had nothing in common with musically, but when the conversation moves to a Recording Academy office, everyone wants to win a Grammy."

A branch of the Recording Academy is a city with more than 150 voting members and a chapter is a city with over 400 voting members. Consider the fact that this area

is a prosperous forward moving section of the United States with mover profitable international corporations per capita than almost any other city in the nation. We are ninth in philanthropy.

"Kansas City has all of the qualifications and historical significance to become not only a branch of NARAS, but a full blown chapter," says Michael Melvoin, former President of NARAS. After only a few hours in Kansas City, Michael Greene, current President and CEO of the Academy decried, "I have already seen the "Kansas City) storefront that I'd like to see our name and logo on."

Downbeat's Tom Alexios is also co-chair of a committee to bring a Recording Academy Office to the area. Ahmed Alaadeen, Chairman of the Mutual Musician's Foundation, has put many hours into the effort to bring a branch office here, and Reed Brinton of the River Valley Festival is designing events that will help the community in the same way that a Recording Academy office will. David Basse of the LaVerne Barker Memorial Fund has coordinated the effort and continues to raise much needed funds to keep the operation rolling along.

Roger Nabor of the Grand Emporium in Kansas City, and Pitch Magazine hosted an event on May 26th that helped raise awareness in the regional musical community about the efforts and celebrate the music that made Kansas City great.

Insure a future for the arts. Help us receive a National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences Chapter this year. It's good for the area, and it's great for tourism. The fine artists of this area deserve a better life and a voice of the international music community.

For more information, call 800-811-2489.



Photo by Butch Berman

The Gem Theater in KC's 18th & Vine Historic District

KCIJF *(continued from page 1, column 2)*

Saturday's activities begin with a performance by the Paseo Academy Jazz Ensemble. Clarence Smith directs the ensemble, which is from Kansas City's high school of the performing arts.

Gerald Spaits, one of KC's premier bassists, will lead a group of local all-stars. There are so many great players in the city now, this is bound to be a cookin' set.

Singer, pianist and composer Dena DeRose is next. Relatively new on the scene, she has been getting high marks from everyone within shouting distance. Among her champions is trumpeter Nat Adderley, who calls DeRose "a vocalist par excellence, in the tradition of the great singers."

The David Sanchez Quartet features another star on the rise. Puerto Rican tenor saxophone sensation Sanchez has several Columbia releases as a leader blending his native Latin sounds with those of hard bop.

Born in 1968, Sanchez moved to New York City in 1988 and was soon performing with such Latin masters as Eddie Palmieri, Paquito D'Rivera, Claudio Roditi and Daniel Ponce. In 1990, he joined Dizzy Gillespie's United Nations Orchestra, touring with the orchestra and with Dizzy's smaller combos.

Chucho Valdes follows with another dose of Latin jazz, this time from Cuba. The renowned pianist is the son of Bebo Valdes, an acclaimed pianist, composer and arranger. He also is the founder of the pioneering Latin jazz group Irakere.

In his keyboard technique, Valdes fuses Afro-Cuban and Caribbean elements with influences from Art Tatum, Bill Evans and McCoy Tyner.

Kenny Garrett, now in his late 30s, is no stranger to jazz fans. The alto saxophonist has performed and recorded with Miles Davis, Art Blakey, Freddie Hubbard, Woody Shaw and the Duke Ellington Orchestra.

A Warner Bros. recording artist, Garrett will front a quintet at the festival. His recent releases include 1997's "Songbook," a collection of his own compositions performed by a bop quartet, and "Pursuance: The Music of John Coltrane," featuring guitarist Pat Metheny.

The Saturday night capper is an intriguing combination of innovative singer Bobby McFerrin and inventive New Orleans quintet Astral Project. With two artists of such ability and creative energy, this could be the highlight of the whole weekend.

A performer of joyous charm and a vocalizer of astounding virtuosity, McFerrin has garnered 10 Grammy awards in his meteoric career. In a sense, he pioneered and perfected a new approach to singing that no one else can match.

Astral Project was formed in 1978 from the cream of New Orleans' modern jazz scene. It has remained a unit for more than 20 years, despite few recordings and the numerous independent projects of its members, saxophonist Tony Dagradi, guitarist Steve Masakowski, pianist David Torkanowsky, bassist James Singleton and

drummer John Vidacovich. Their latest release is "Voodoo Bop" on the Compass label. *(It's reviewed on page 8.)*

On Sunday afternoon, Donald Knaack (alias "The Junkman") will perform with area percussionists on "music sculptures" that he will build during an eight-day residency in Kansas City. This "Junk Jam" is billed as "a rehearsed concert employing jazz, classical, rock and blues musicians." The sound sculpture will remain in Kansas City as a permanent work of art.

Up next is the Dunn-Freeman Mix, a group featuring some of Kansas City's best young, jazz lions.

Singer Vanessa Rubin will take center stage by late afternoon. Rubin has a jazz sensibility combined with an appreciation for more modern pop compositions. A typical Rubin recording, such as 1995's Novus release "Vanessa Rubin Sings," might include tunes by Gershwin and Sting, Kurt Weill and Michel Legrand.

Now in her early 40s, Rubin has a bright, lilting voice that invites the listener into her confidence.

Trombonist Steve Turre is always a treat, with his worldly approach to jazz and his ability to stir up a group of musicians and an audience at the same time. This performance promises to be special, with a string ensemble accompanying Turre.

In a career spanning nearly 30 years, Turre has worked with everyone from Ray Charles (on the 1972 road tour) to Art Blakey, Cedar Walton, Woody Shaw, Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra, Elvin Jones, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Lester Bowie, Dizzy Gillespie and McCoy Tyner. With his own band Sanctified Shells, Turre pioneered the use of conch shells and multiple trombones to create a new sound.

Turre is followed by Maynard Ferguson and his Big Bop Nouveau band. Since the late 1980s, this outfit has been adding new chapters to the high-octave trumpeter's legend. For much of that time, Omahan Matt Wallace has been an integral part of the band, playing tenor sax, composing and singing. Ferguson and company always deliver an exciting and crowd-pleasing show, blending formidable chops with a fusion-oriented approach.

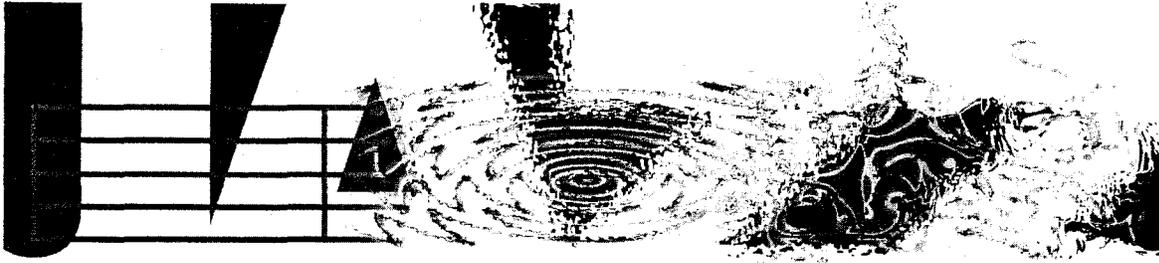
Finally, Kansas City's favorite son, singer Kevin Mahogany, will close the festival Sunday night. Since the Berman Music Foundation brought him to Lincoln several years ago, his fame and popularity have spread far beyond KC and the Midwest, making him a regular feature at jazz festivals worldwide. Down Beat readers named him Male Vocalist of the Year last year, another indication of his general acclaim.

Mahogany's third and latest Warner Bros. release is last year's "My Romance," an exquisite collection of romantic ballads that beautifully displays the singer's warmth and massive talent.

Tickets for the 4th Annual Kansas City International Jazz Festival are \$10 a day in advance and \$12 a day at the gate. A three-day festival pass is \$25 in advance. For advance tickets, contact: Central Ticket Office (UMKC), 4949 Cherry Street, Kansas City, MO 64110. The phone number is (816) 235-2700.

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June 25, 26 & 27, 1999
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Friday June 25, 1999 7-11 p.m.
Norman Hedman's Tropique
Karrin Allyson
CHICK COREA & ORIGIN



Saturday June 26, 1999 2-11 p.m.
Paseo Academy Jazz Ensemble
Gerald Spaits Quartet
Dena DeRose
David Sanchez Quintet
Chucho Valdes
Kenny Garrett Quintet
BOBBY McFERRIN w/Astral Project



Sunday June 27, 1999 2-11 p.m.
Junk Jam '99!!
The Dunn - Freeman Mix
Vanessa Rubin
Steve Turre w/Strings
Maynard Ferguson & His Big Bop
Nouveau Band
KEVIN MAHOGANY



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GATES OPEN:
FRIDAY - 6:00 p.m.
SAT. & SUN. 1:00 p.m.

TICKET INFORMATION: \$10.00 Per Festival Day - Advance
Patrons Ticket Holders: \$25.00 3-Day Pass - Advance
Festival Program Recognition; \$50.00 Patrons Ticket - Advance
Reserved Area Front of Stage \$12.00 Per Festival Day at Gate



Blues corner

By Rich Hoover

Here we are headin' for the heart of the summer entertainment season and I'll tell ya, it's been a good one to date. The blues things are poppin' up all around,

National Geographic, of all places, has a 27-page article entitled "Traveling the Blues Highway" written by Charles E. Cobb Jr. in the April '99 issue. The article is an overview of the history of the south-to-north migration of the culture that invented the blues. The article is chock full of bits of info on influential artists from the beginning of the blues. The recorded history part starts in the late teens, and goes to the present day, with the writer sitting in the Checkerboard Lounge in Chicago listening to John Primer play "Sweet Home Chicago" on the harmonica.

There are, of course, a group of great photos by William Albert Allard showing bits of the culture and society the blues encompasses. Included are photos of Luther Allison, Spiritual Kings, Keb' Mo', Big Jack Johnson, Lynn White, Jessie Tolbert, Rufus Thomas, Johnny Clyde Copeland, and Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown. Most of these artists and hundreds more blues artists have performed and can be seen again here in Lincoln at Larry Boehmer's internationally renowned Zoo Bar.

At the end of the article there is a web address that can be accessed for more blues info and to add a blues story of your own. It is:

www.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/9904

Blues festivals: The short list

6/11-19 Riverbend Fest Chattanooga TN 423-265-4112 or 423-756-2212

Nine, count em', nine days of Blues, Soul, and Rock. June 14th is Bessie Smith day and gets extra Blues and BBQ.

6/19 2nd New Bedford Whaling Blues Fest New Bedford MA 508-993-2517

Matt 'Guitar' Murphy, Roomful of Blues, Tony Lynn Washington, Johnny Hoy & the Bluefish.

6/25-26 Port Townsend Country Blues Fest Port Townsend WA 360-385-3102

A weeklong workshop precedes the fest. Headliners are Saffire - the Uppity Blueswomen, Cephas & Wiggins, Jerry McCain, Otis Taylor, and many more with clubs active, too.

6/25-27 14th Monterey Bay Blues Fest Monterey CA 831-394-2652

Gladys Knight, John Lee Hooker, Etta James, Koko Taylor, Keb' Mo', Charlie Musselwhite, Magic Slim, and many, many more.

7/2-4 Mississippi Valley Blues Fest Davenport IA 800-747-7800

I don't have a lineup but have heard many good things about it in the past years.

7/10-11 North Atlantic Blues Fest Rockland ME

Bobby Rush, Denise LaSalle, Rod Piazza, Chris Cain, Shemekia Copeland, Lil' Ed /Blues Imperials plus more.

7/16-18 Kansas City Blues & Jazz Fest Penn Valley Park Kansas City MO 800-530-5266

Dozens of national acts on three stages, I've always had a good time there.

7/30-31 Poconos Blues Fest Big Boulder Lake PA 800-468-2442

No lineup posted but has been a big deal for some time.

8/1-9 W. C. Handy Music Fest Florence AL 800-47-BLUES

This IS the big deal of the blues year.

8/14 2nd Acoustic Blues Showcase Kansas City MO 931-381-2163

Last year was great, this year they want to be better.

8/26-29 4th Blues 2000 Weekend Swan Lake NY 877-BLUES-2000

Little Charlie & the Nightcats, Debbie Davies, Carl Weathersby, Tutu Jones, plus many more.

To get more festival info check out:

www.bluesfestivals.com/listings

Blues on disc

By Rich Hoover

JOE LEE WILLIAMS

Going back to Crawford
Arhoolie

This is an example of the essence of the blues/folk tradition with Big Joe returning home to gather with friends and relatives, just singing and playing, but in this case recording. According to the liner notes, the material on this CD was recorded in 1971 after Big Joe had sent a recording of some of his friends to Chris Strachwitz, owner of Arhoolie records, which motivated Chris to go to see Big Joe and record the first 19 tunes of this 26-tune CD. The last seven tunes on this disc are from the recordings that Big Joe sent to Strachwitz in the first place.

Big Joe was born in 1903 on a farm near Crawford, Mississippi. His father was Cherokee and his mother African-American, and he had 17 brothers and sisters. He left home at 12 years of age to become an entertainer, and by 1918 was working for Doc Bennett's Medicine Show from Mobile, Alabama.

In the 20s Williams was touring with the Birmingham Jug Band and the Rabbit Foot Minstrels. Big Joe always played anywhere from street corners to successful tours of Europe and the US. Big Joe was always helping other musicians making connections and

promoting/producing whenever he could throughout his career, which had plenty of ups and downs of its own. In November of 1982, a month before his death he received a Pioneer of the Blues award and made his last public appearance at the W.C. Handy awards ceremony in Memphis.

Along with Big Joe on vocals and guitar are: Austen Pete, vocals and guitar; John "shortstuff" Macon, vocals and guitar; Glover Lee Connor, vocals; and Amelia Johnson, vocals.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Fish Tree Water Blues
Bullseye Blues & Jazz

This is a benefit CD for EarthJustice, a legal defense fund primarily set up to save the Great Northwest of the U.S. The songs are all about the environmental struggles to save what's left.

J.J. Cale starts off with "Stone River," a tune he wrote for the project. Ani DiFranco does her poem "Fuel." Keb' Mo', along with Tim Kimber wrote "Victims of Comfort." Joe Louis Walker & Branford Marsalis co-wrote "The Road You Choose." John Lee Hooker & John Hammond team up on a John Lee Hooker classic "Highway 13." Tracy Nelson does the classic "Mother Earth." Roomful of Blues showcase their new lineup with guitarist Chris Vachon's song "Blue, Blue World." Mavis Staples & Melvin Seals show the power of spirit in "I'll Fly Away." Loudon Wainwright III relates use and misuse with "Hard Day on the Planet." Alvin Youngblood Hart does a Library of Congress version of "Rollin' River." The Robert Cray Band offers up a previously unreleased live version of "The Forecast (Calls for Pain)." Ruth Brown does the Johnny Otis tune "Ice water in Your Veins." Charlie Musselwhite joins Bob Weir and RatDog for an exclusive version of Al Green's "Take Me to the River." As a concluding piece Etta James delivers a soulful rendition of The Eagles "Take it to the Limit."

The CD also has a CD-ROM multimedia presentation of EarthJustice Legal Defense Fund's Fish-Trees-Water campaign. It's a great collection for a good purpose.

SNAKEFARM

Songs from my Funeral
RCA/Kneeling elephant

Is it blues, or is it not? Well, it is musical art, that's for sure with me. Maybe you should listen for yourself. There is a website <www.kneelingelephant.com>, that probably is worth the visit.

Snakefarm is:

Anna Domino - vocals/vocal FX, electric guitar, & accordion
Michel Delory - electric, acoustic, & classical guitars, dobro, banjo, & keyboard & drum programming
Paul Dugan - upright, arco & fender bass
Stephen Ulrich - electric guitar solos & FX

Paul Shapiro - tenor sax, flute, and recorder

Song on the disc include these traditional tunes:
St. James - Rising Sun - This Train I Ride - Frankie and Johnny - Laredo - John Henry - Black Girl - Tom Dooley - Banks of the Ohio - Pretty Horses

I've listened six times or more and there will definitely be more. Just thought I'd let you know.

Discorama *(from page 14, column 2)*

JUNIOR MANCE TRIO

Junior Mance and the Floating Jazz Festival Trio '97
Chiaroscuro

Maybe it was seeing Erroll Garner as a kid, perhaps it was discovering Jerry Lee Lewis on American Bandstand, but the piano has always been my main ax. So, its no surprise that for me - in the world of jazz - the piano trio reigns supreme.

So - the word "supremo" totally fits the vibe put forth from the Junior Mance Trio - Junior on piano, bassist Keter Betts, and the classiest drummer alive, Jackie Williams - now that's saying something.

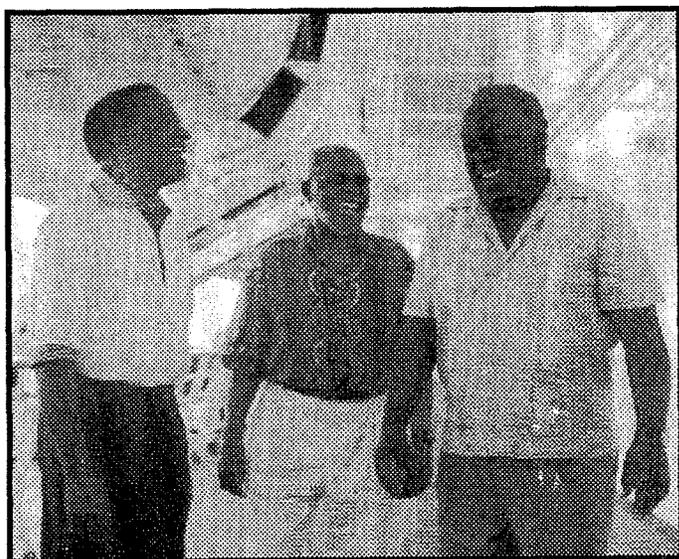
A big chunk of jazz history has been carved out by the combined work of these fab players. Natch - their new Chiaroscuro release verifies what I'm trying to get across.

This CD smokes - and with special guests - Red Holloway and Henry Johnson, only adds more fuel to the fire. All killer, no filler here, folks.

If you're cruisin' for a new hot jazz experience - these veteran cats blow with an inner fire you might only expect from pros half their age.

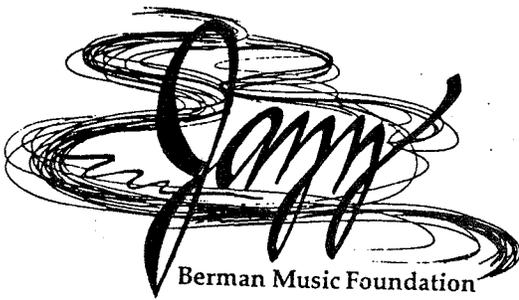
Set sail with Junior Mance and the Floating Jazz Festival Trio '97, and you're traveling with some of the best there is.

Amen, brother!



File photo

The Junior Mance Trio



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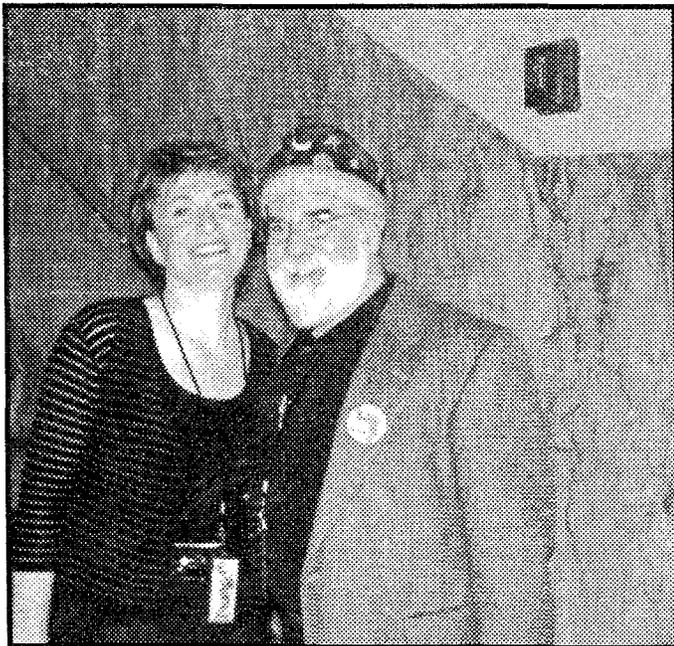
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Photo by Rich Hoover
Doris Abbott and Butch Berman at the Topeka Jazz Festival

Thanks for supporting jazz in the Lincoln area!