

BERMAN MUSIC FOUNDATION



"The Rest of the Story" by Ahmad Alaadeen, offers music instruction and jazz history.

New book tells "The Rest of the Story"

By Grace Sankey-Berman

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—Ahmad Alaadeen has written a jazz instruction manual called "The Rest of The Story," which the Berman Music Foundation helped to publish. It is a collection of music and lessons the Kansas City saxophonist compiled over many years, with fascinating stories about his music career. On Aug. 2, I attended a book-signing event at the Musician Mutual Institute.

It was also a celebration of Alaadeen's 75th birthday. A cross section of the Kansas City arts community was in attendance, including Stan Kessler of the Sons of Brasil and Sharon Valleau of Kansas City Barbeque and All That Jazz, which provides hospitality services for visitors who want to combine the food and the music that have made this city famous.

As I walked into the room, Alaadeen was sitting at the back of the music room with his saxophone sitting on a stand next to him. He was dressed to the nines—black suit, gold tie and handkerchief and a fedora hat. His appearance was very distinguished and the whole atmosphere of the room reminded me an old jazz club.

Alaadeen credits his family for pushing him to write and practice mu-



Ahmad Alaadeen and Fanny at book-signing in Kansas City

sic from an early age, but said that he could not have published this book without the persistence of his long-time partner and manager, Fanny. His face lit up when he spoke of Fanny, whom he refers to in his book as "the heartbeat next to mine."

He also credits her for saving his life. He had met Fanny after a gig when she asked him if he could introduce her to someone who could teach her how to play the saxophone. He volunteered to be her teacher and they've been together ever since. At that time he was sick and wouldn't go to the doctor, but Fanny insisted that he go. The news was not good. When he finally got to the doctor, he found out he had bladder cancer. She helped to nurse him back

Book-signing continued on page 2

Photo by Grace Sankey-Berman

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In this issue

BMF history documented.....	3
Lincoln Center Jazz review.....	4
John Kay & Steppenwolf review.....	5
Andrea Marcovicci review.....	6
Wycliffe Gordon review.....	7
Mulgrew Miller Trio review.....	8
Mark Eisenman Quintet review.....	9
Les Paul memorial.....	10
Johnny Smith birthday tribute.....	11
Tomfoolery: Trip to Toronto.....	12
Jazz on Disc reviews.....	14
Jazz Essentials, Part 1.....	17
Feedback: Letters to the Editor.....	19
From the Photo Archives.....	20

Book-signing continued from page 1

to health.

His goal for writing a jazz manual is to encourage upcoming jazz musicians to play from the heart and to be more creative. Most of them train at “jazz factories” where they learn to play technically well but, he asked, “Where is the beef?” The music usually lacks feeling, he said. Yet, he remains excited about the future of jazz because of the many young musicians—like former Alaadeen apprentice Logan Richard, a senior at the Paseo Academy of Visual and performing Arts—who are producing great jazz.

His earlier influences include Charlie “Bird” Parker, John Coltrane and Miles Davis. He first met Bird in 1951 at a night club in Kansas City. He said the alto saxophone master was a big guy who could play any song with any band without practice. That night Bird played with Woody Herman and when Woody asked Bird about what songs they should play he replied, “Whatever you want to play.” And they went on to play great music.

Alaadeen plays tenor and soprano saxophones, but alto mastered the flute, clarinet and oboe. He was overjoyed to play with old-timers like Ella Fitzgerald, Billy Holiday, Rufus, and Jay

McShann in Kansas City. Over the years he played in Chicago, Houston, New York, Denver and San Antonio. While living in Chicago he became a Muslim, which he credits for changing his life. He even had a chance to play with Miles but turned it down because of his new-found religion.

A great band consisting of some of Alaadeen’s students and Roger Wilder on piano played throughout the evening. Alaadeen sat in with the band and played two songs from his 2005 “New Africa Suite” CD. The band continued to play with various KC musicians sitting in while Alaadeen autographed books.

Alaadeen book combines instruction and jazz history

By Tom Ineck

Ahmad Alaadeen’s skill as an educator has been acknowledged by the Berman Music Foundation at least since December 1998, when the BMF brought the renowned saxophonist from his home in Kansas City to conduct a series of workshops at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Music.

You can read my account of that appearance in the January 1999 issue of the BMF newsletter. It was part personal jazz history and part demonstration of jazz style, with pianist Tom Larson and bassist Rusty White accompanying Alaadeen, who also proved a witty storyteller.

Noting that “jazz has been elevated to America’s classical music,” he related his own less dignified introduction to the music. He said his parents and their generation thought you would go to hell if you listened to jazz.

“Well, welcome to hell,” Alaadeen deadpanned.

His new book, “The Rest of the Story: Jazz Improvisation and History,” combines instruction for advanced students and a fascinating view of Kansas City jazz in the 1930s, 1940s and

1950s. Like his lectures, it includes personal philosophy and an insider’s glimpse of some of the greats. He modestly claims to be a “street musician or one who learned from the oral tradition by listening to the musicians on the street, asking questions, going to jam sessions, and experimenting through trial and error,” but he also received formal training at R.T. Coles High School, where he studied music four hours a day.

Alaadeen stresses the importance of an individual sound, a sound that is impossible to achieve by acquiring academic technique alone. The book offers many tips on how to reach that unique sound, that personal identity.

“I’m a firm believer in the rule of discovery,” he writes. “I never give my serious students a complete outline of what they should be playing as a soloist. I only give examples of what I was taught or other harmonies or chord formations that I discovered by extending my mind past what was given to me.”

The book ends with a series of vignettes and historic photographs featuring Jay McShann, Miss Brown’s after-hours club, R.T. Coles High School,

Musicians Union Local 627, the Orchid Room, and Miles Davis.

As fellow Kansas City saxophonist and educator Bobby Watson writes in his testimonial blurb: “With this book, Alaadeen has opened the door to the complex mind of the jazz musician. The information inside this book is extremely personal and informative at the same time. It is very specific but still leaves room for the user to discover for themselves their own paths to self expression using the information provided.”

For more information or to obtain a copy of “The Rest of the Story,” contact Fandeen Publishing Company at 6610 W. 67th St., Overland Park, KS 66202 or visit www.alaadeen.com.

Recommended listening:

- “And the Beauty of It All: Ballads,” Alaadeen, ASR Records (2007)
- “New Africa Suite,” Alaadeen, ASR Records (2005)
- “Time Through the Ages,” Ahmad Alaadeen, ASR Records (1997)
- “Plays Blues for R.C. and Josephine, Too” Alaadeen and the Deans of Swing (1995)

BMF history documented online

"No negative thinking can be allowed, if our jazz garden is going to continue to bloom. If everyone is aware of how cool this really can be, it will be a gasser."

-- Butch Berman, BMF newsletter, November 1995

By Tom Ineck

Thus wrote Butch Berman in his first contribution to the BMF newsletter. He was addressing the need for community support of live music, especially jazz, but he also was expressing the hope that this publication would make a difference. With the latest developments, we are trying to ensure that his vision for the BMF remains alive.

All available issues of the BMF newsletter—65, at last count—are now online in PDF format. For the first time since the foundation was formed in the spring of 1995, website visitors can peruse its entire documented history. Artist interviews, features on recording sessions, concert and CD reviews, travel stories, original photographs and commentary of every sort are included, creating a panoramic view of a whole era of jazz and other American roots music, not only in Lincoln and Omaha, but in Kansas City, Mo., Topeka, Kan., Chicago, San Francisco, New York City and beyond.

Originally, the newsletter was published in a hard-copy edition only, and then mailed to hundreds of jazz fans nationwide. As it grew in size—often exceeding 20 pages—the cost of printing and postage became prohibitive, so in January 2003 it became an online-only publication. Since then every issue has been archived on the BMF website, but earlier issues remained rare and unavailable to the general reader.

Since its ragged but righteous, four-page debut in October 1995, the newsletter has gone through many changes. It quickly grew to eight, 10 and 12 pages monthly, primarily as a



BMF newsletters from October 1995 (left) and July 2009

listing of upcoming local performances, brief CD reviews and editorial columns. The design became more attractive, going from two columns to three and adding more original photos, eventually in full color. Most recently, we adopted a new BMF logo for the newsletter, designed by a longtime friend of the foundation, Lincoln graphic artist Reynold Peterson. A more generic symbol, it affirms the BMF mission to protect and promote all forms of American music. It soon will be adapted to the website.

My association with the Berman Music Foundation began with the newsletter's July 1996 edition, for which I wrote a couple of CD reviews, an overview of that summer's Jazz in June concert series and a review of a recent performance by the Dave Stryker Quintet in Omaha. From the perspective of more than 13 years later, it was an inauspicious beginning to a very important part of my life. It is very satisfying that—finally—readers, friends and fans of the Berman Music Foundation have the complete BMF opus at their fingertips. Read on!



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Concert Review

Marsalis name draws full house at Lied

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—No other name on today's jazz scene has the provenability to fill nearly all of the 2,200 seats at the Lied Center for Performing Arts except Wynton Marsalis. He has done it before and he did it again Oct. 7, fronting the formidable Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra.

As the debut performance of the Lied Center's 20th anniversary season, it couldn't have been a more auspicious occasion. The 15-piece big band has been the resident jazz orchestra at Lincoln Center since 1988, and under the leadership of the famed New Orleans-bred trumpeter it has established a worldwide reputation for excellence in composing, arranging and instrumental proficiency.

No prima donna, Marsalis leads the band from a seat in the back row, just another player in a star-studded trumpet section. He modestly played the leadership role simply by introducing the tunes and offering brief comments and proper credit for his many talented arrangers and soloists.

As an introductory nod to the Midwestern setting, the band kicked off with a swinging version of the familiar children's song "Old McDonald Had a Farm." Saxophonist Ted Nash's arrangement included simulated barnyard cried from the horns, a tenor sax solo by Walter Blanding and a growling, slurred trumpet statement by Marsalis, who deftly employed a derby mute for vocal effect. Remaining in the nursery, the band followed with a creepy Marsalis arrangement of "Itsy Bitsy Spider." It could have been sub-titled "The Arachnid Blues," with its crawling pace, its colorful use of two flutes and clarinet and a plunger-muted trom-



Courtesy Photo

Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis (middle, with trumpet)

bone solo.

Marsalis finally tapped the standard jazz repertoire with Wayne Shorter's "Free for All," which had outstanding solos by Victor Goines on tenor sax, Elliott Mason on trombone and Marcus Printup on trumpet. Lou Donaldson's "Blues Walk" was a tribute to the uniquely American music style that Marsalis referred to as "our national anthem." Indeed, the arrangement by alto saxophonist Sherman Irby was rife with the blues, as he and pianist Dan Nimmer exchanged classic call-and-response phrases.

The orchestra opened the second half of the concert with a piece Marsalis wrote for the Vitoria Jazz Festival in Spain. Rhythmic hand claps conveyed a flamenco feel, leading to a Marsalis trumpet solo, a swaggering baritone sax statement by veteran Joe Temperley and a trombone solo by Vincent Gardner. A pair of Thelonious Monk tunes began with a Gardner arrangement of "Light Blue," imaginatively featuring piccolos and clarinet and Nimmer faithfully rendering the melody before contributing an original piano solo. Trombonist Chris Crenshaw arranged "Epistrophy" to feature Ted Nash on alto sax, Carlos Enriquez on bass and Ryan Kisor on trumpet.

Kisor, 36, a native of Sioux City,

Iowa, is no stranger to Nebraska jazz fans who first witnessed his astounding skills as a teenaged guest soloist with the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra. Confirming what we have known about Kisor for many years, Marsalis described him as "a freak of nature" on his horn, capable of playing difficult lip exercises that no one else can perform. Considering the source, that's quite a compliment. Marsalis also thanked Kisor's parents, who were in the audience.

From Duke Ellington's late-period "New Orleans Suite," Marsalis introduced "Portrait of Mahalia Jackson" with a slow, bluesy trumpet obbligato, muting the horn with a plunger. The trombones "shouted" in gospel fashion, and Irby turned in a soulful flute solo in keeping with the African-American spiritual. It must be noted that drummer Ali Jackson contributed to every performance with a wide array of percussion skills, while remaining tasteful and unobtrusive.

A standing ovation brought a sextet of players back to the stage for a brief set combining a mid-tempo blues tune and a bebop blazer. Marsalis led the charge, with saxophone, trombone, piano, bass and drums in hot pursuit, a nice contrast to the earlier orchestral jazz.

Concert Review

Steppenwolf continues to rock and rebel

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—The Labor Day appearance by John Kay and Steppenwolf at the Nebraska State Fair was almost as good as that magic carpet ride we first took more than 40 years ago.

These hardened road warriors have shortened their tour schedule and even spoken of retirement in recent years, so it was a rare privilege to once again witness the full power and prowess of The Wolf, their youthful, 65-year-old leader stalking the stage like the band's lupine namesake, growling the familiar lyrics in his trademark baritone. John Kay remains one of the most vital proponents of the music genre now known as Americana, a blend of blues, roots rock, folk and country influences.

Ironically, Kay (born Joachim Fritz Krauledat in Tilsit, East Prussia) was first introduced to American roots music via U.S. Armed Forces radio after the family moved to East Germany. When he was 14, they relocated to Toronto, where he formed the band Sparrow. After a brief stay in New York City, the band finally landed in Los Angeles, changed their name to Steppenwolf—after the novel by Hermann Hesse—and released their first record in 1968. The single “Sookie Sookie” was the soulful cover of a song by Don Covay and Steve Cropper, but it was the follow-up hit, “Born to be Wild,” that put the band on the map.

In 2009, Kay and his veteran bandmates still kick off their concerts with “Sookie Sookie.” From there, they sampled the best from the entire Steppenwolf songbook. “Rock Me” and “Rock and Roll Rebels” captured



John Kay

the band's tradition of original good-time tunes. They paid homage to the blues with “Hoochie Coochie Man” and “Hey Lawdy Mama” and even dipped into country with the Hank Snow classic “I’m Movin’ On,” which Kay first recorded for his 1972 solo release “Forgotten Songs and Unsung Heroes.” It is his deep-seated respect for the history of American music that makes Kay one of the great interpreters of song, as well as a formidable composer.

His most lasting contribution as a songwriter may be “Monster,” a nine-minute suite that encapsulates the history of America—the good, the bad and the ugly. As Kay said in his stage introduction, the song continues to resonate 40 years after its release as the title track of Steppenwolf's



John Kay and Steppenwolf

most overtly political album.

“And though the past has its share of injustice,
Kind was the spirit in many a way,
But its protectors and friends have been sleeping,
Now it's a monster and will not obey.”

Or as Kay reminded his audience, “The Constitution does not say ‘We the corporations’ or ‘We the lobbyists.’ It says ‘We the people.’”

The set list also included fine performances of Hoyt Axton's anti-drug song “Snowblind Friend,” “Who Needs Ya,” “Ride With Me” and “Screaming Night Hog,” dedicated to the band's many biker friends. Saving the best for last, they concluded with “Magic Carpet Ride,” “Born to be Wild,” and an encore rendition of “The Pusher,” also written by Axton.

The multitalented Michael Wilk has anchored the essential keyboard role since 1981, as well as providing harmony vocals and bass lines and even maintaining the band's website. Drummer Ron Hurst has been with the band since 1984 and guitarist Danny Johnson joined in 1996. With Kay adding rhythm guitar, slide guitar and harmonica to the mix, these guys have developed a high level of musical compatibility and obvious camaraderie.

For the complete Steppenwolf story, narrated by Kay, see the 2008 DVD “A Rock ‘n’ Roll Odyssey.” Using archival footage and interviews with past and current band members, it chronicles the 40-year journey of one of the great American rock bands.

Courtesy Photos

Concert Review

Cabaret chanteuse Marcovicci toasts Astaire

By Tom Ineck

BROWNVILLE, Neb.—By osmosis, the classic compositions of Tin Pan Alley are firmly ingrained in the American psyche. Even if we don't know their origins, the melodies and words of the Great American Songbook are everywhere—in film, in television and in the very roots of our shared pop culture.

It is important for us to know where they came from and acknowledge the composers and singers of the Golden Age of popular song, roughly 1920 to 1950. Through the years, cabaret singers have served as genial instructors and exemplars of the song form, faithfully carrying on the tradition, chiefly in big city night clubs, dinner theaters and concert halls.

Occasionally, they make an appearance at the Brownville Concert Hall in rural Nebraska, a former church in its 19th year presenting a series of world-class performers, including some of the great cabaret singers. Most recently, Andrea Marcovicci and pianist Shelly Markham came to town for three performances celebrating songs associated with Fred Astaire. We were there for the two-hour, Sept. 13 matinee.

In the grand tradition of cabaret, Marcovicci's act is an audience-pleasing mix of vocal talent, flamboyant costumes, music history, personal storytelling, humor and good-natured flirtation. For "Andrea Sings Astaire," she began by taking a framed portrait of the renowned singer-dancer from the grand piano and relating her long-time crush on the man and his music. She noted with pride that Astaire had personally autographed the portrait.

Still caressing the photo, Marcovicci launched into "Night and



Marcovicci travels with a framed, autographed portrait of Fred Astaire.



Marcovicci sits atop a grand piano for dramatic effect.

Day" and "Something's Gotta Give." In rapid order, she delivered classic renditions of "A Foggy Day," "Isn't This a Lovely Day (To Be Caught in the Rain)," and the gorgeous "This Heart of Mine." From the musical "Funny Face," she performed a syncopated "Let's Kiss and Make Up."

A devoted musicologist with a rare sense of humor, Marcovicci told of the popularity of dance numbers as they were written and choreographed for the

movies, from "The Carioca" to "The Continental" to the nadir of the genre, Irving Berlin's "The Piccolino."

She also included lesser-known tunes, like "A Needle in a Haystack," "I've Got My Eyes on You," and "I Used to Be." No tribute to Astaire would be complete without Gershwin. She obliged with takes on "He Loves and She Loves," "S'Wonderful," and "They Can't Take That Away From Me." She sang the last one while seated on the piano and followed it with a stirring rendition of "One for My Baby (and One More for the Road)."

The second half of the show was devoted to the art of the dance. Marcovicci sported a black tuxedo, white dress shirt and black tie and carrying a top hat. It made her look even sexier than she did in the earlier, more revealing costume. She brilliantly essayed the terpsichorean muse with the standards "Steppin' Out," "Let's Face the Music and Dance," "Dancing in the Dark," "Cheek to Cheek," "Change Partners" and the more obscure "You're So Near and Yet So Far."

Markham, who until now had performed discreetly as piano accompanist, sang harmony on "Since I Kissed My Baby Goodbye." Marcovicci lavished praise on Markham for his extensive work as her music director and record producer. They closed with "You Were Never Lovelier" and "The Way You Look Tonight."

In a well-paced show, Marcovicci alternated between song and story, including a discussion of the relative merits of Astaire's dance partners, from his sister, Adele, to Ginger Rogers, Eleanor Powell, Rita Hayworth, Audrey Hepburn and others. She also noted that

Photos by Tom Ineck

Astaire and Rogers were a perfect vocal match, implying that their Midwestern roots—Astaire in Omaha and Rogers in Missouri—had made them

compatible by nature.

As a singer, Marcovicci combines the best of the cabaret style, a full-throated voice with lots of technique,

dramatic effect and a deep respect for lyrical content. After “Andrea Sings Astaire,” her audience left feeling both entertained and informed.

Concert Review

Trombonist Gordon swings the jazz tradition

By Tom Ineck

BROWNVILLE, Neb.—Wycliffe Gordon’s bluesy, tradition-laden trombone sound has been ubiquitous since he first came on the scene as an important element in the Wynton Marsalis Septet of 1989. He established his reputation in that historic group, as well as the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, and since 1996 he has recorded nearly 20 CDs under his own name.

Gordon is a well-traveled road warrior. In addition to several appearances with the Marsalis combo and big band, I have seen him in performance with fellow trombonist Ron Westray in Kansas City, Mo., and as a guest soloist at two Topeka jazz festivals (in 2002 and 2004). Most recently, Gordon brought his road show to the Brownville Concert Hall for a July 12 matinee, along with KC-based accompanists T.J. Martin on piano, Bob Bowman on bass and the young Ryan Lee on drums.

Though somewhat unfamiliar with his bandmates, Gordon’s thorough professionalism and charming stage presence helped them rise to the occasion. It also helps that much of his repertoire is drenched in the swing tradition and is well known to most jazz musicians.

The familiar opener, “It Don’t Mean a Thing (If It Ain’t Got That Swing)” set a casual mood and set the audience at ease. He utilized the plunger mute for a bluesy introduction, vocaliz-

ing on the horn and even singing a few lines in the raspy, soulful manner of Louis Armstrong. Martin, Bowman and Lee got enough solo time to establish their own credentials.

A mid-tempo “I’ll Remember April” proved a goldmine for an adventurous piano solo and some expert drumming, as Gordon’s lyrical trombone soared to the upper ranges. Thelonious Monk’s “Rhythm-a-ning” began with some fancy triple-tonguing trombone, lead to an aptly angular piano solo and finished with a Gordon solo that shifted to double time and stop-time while building in intensity.

“Amazing Grace” seemed especially appropriate for a Sunday concert, and it received the deluxe treatment, including a growling plunger solo, a great bowed bass solo, stately piano chording and a final horn solo that “testified” with shouts and moans. As a tribute to the Kansas City jazz tradition, the band finished the first set with “Moten



T.J. Martin, piano; Wycliffe Gordon, trombone, Bob Bowman, bass and Ryan Lee, drums, at Brownville Concert Hall

Photo by Tom Ineck

Swing,” taken at that familiar Basie jump blues tempo. Again, Gordon used the plunger to create soulful wah-wahs and growls then joined with Bowman as he walked the bass.

The second half began with a mid-tempo “Just Friends,” with Martin essaying a breezy, Garner-like flow during his solo. Gordon sang “On the Sunny Side of the Street” with the

irrepressible joy it deserves. Martin stated the theme of Dave Brubeck’s “In Your Own Sweet Way” on the piano before turning it over to Gordon and Bowman for their own solo statements and finishing with his own variations.

Gordon’s ballad “Savannah Song” was a complex composition beginning with a brief piano intro, the trombone stating the melody along with some lovely Arco bass, and then another piano solo before Gordon’s trombone brought it to a close on a high note. Lee showed his sensitivity on brushes during a moving rendition of “Body and Soul,” with Gordon stating the familiar melody and the piano taking the bridge.

Finishing in grand style, Gordon gave “Hello Dolly” and “It’s a Wonderful World” the Armstrong treatment, singing, scat-singing and blowing the horn with everything he had. It was a rousing finale to a memorable performance. In its 19th season, the Brownville Concert Hall series is still bringing world-class music to rural America.

Concert Review

Jazz Showcase maintains 62-year reputation

By Tom Ineck

CHICAGO—The venerable Congress Plaza Hotel on Michigan Avenue by Grant Park is definitely on this city's hectic, well-beaten path. But just a few blocks off the beaten path, at 806 S. Plymouth Court, is one of the world's most famous jazz clubs.

The Jazz Showcase has been operated by Joe Segal since he started booking music for Roosevelt University in 1947. That's right. Segal, 83, has been at the helm for 62 years, bringing the best jazz available to Chicago, moving from one venue to another as necessity dictated but never abandoning his mission to present live, world-class jazz. I was last at the Showcase in 1988, when the club was housed off the lobby of the Blackstone Hotel. It was the place to be after performances of the 1988 Chicago Jazz Festival wrapped up and musicians sought a more informal club setting.

Much has changed since then, but not that special vibe at Joe Segal's Jazz Showcase, as my wife and I discovered when we walked from the Congress Plaza Hotel to the club July 19 for a 4 p.m. Sunday matinee performance by the Mulgrew Miller Trio. Despite the daylight hour, the 170-seat club maintained that soft-lighted ambience conducive to live jazz, and the walls displayed dozens of old photos and other memorabilia.

The jazz matinee is a relatively new phenomenon across the country, with clubs attempting to augment their aging audiences by encouraging folks to introduce their children and grandchildren to this priceless American art form. At the Showcase, there are special matinee discounts for students, musicians, seniors and members of the



Photo by Tom Ineck

Mulgrew Miller Trio at Joe Segal's Jazz Showcase in Chicago.

Jazz Institute of Chicago. Children ages 12 and under are admitted free. The early Sunday show also allows jazz fans to get home by a reasonable hour.

On the day we were there, the policy appeared to work pretty well, with some obvious grandparents and grandchildren in attendance and quite a few others, as well. Of course, a performance by pianist Mulgrew Miller is reason enough to make the effort.

Miller was accompanied by young bassist Ivan Taylor and the amazing drummer Karriem Riggins, a former member of the Ray Brown Trio who has also performed or recorded with Betty Carter, Diana Krall, Oscar Peterson, Bobby Hutcherson, Ron Carter, Cedar Walton and others.

Miller himself has 15 recordings of his own since his debut as a leader in 1985, plus dozens of others as a sideman with Art Blakey, Donald Byrd, Betty Carter, Freddie Hubbard, Johnny Griffin, Benny Golson, James Moody, Dianne Reeves and Woody Shaw. One of his most memorable associations was with the great Tony Williams Quintet of the mid-1980s, which I saw at the

1987 Russian River Jazz Festival.

So, it was with much anticipation that I awaited the performance of this piano master, perhaps as close to Oscar Peterson's heir apparent as we're likely to hear. He began with a lyrical, mid-tempo rendition of "A Sleeping Bee," and proceeded to accelerate mightily on "You and the Night and the Music," with Riggins effortlessly driving the tempo. Miller's "Carousel" was a Latin tune featuring a bass interlude and slyly quoting a children's ditty.

Miller launched into "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life" in a gorgeous ballad style before moving uptempo. Riggins, on brushes, proved a master at any speed. The drummer locked into a solid, soulful pocket on a bluesy, mid-tempo "What a Difference a Day Makes." Duke Jordan's classic bopper "Jordu" was taken at a blazing tempo, allowing Miller to illustrate his mastery over the entire keyboard.

A gentle, soft-spoken man, Miller thanked the audience for coming out on a Sunday to listen, suggesting that jazz was an alternate form of worship "if you didn't go to church." Amen.

On a somewhat bizarre, and discordant, note, Segal then took the stage to briefly thank the audience for their patronage, and proceeded to harangue them about what he sees as the demise of jazz. Alluding to the recent death of Michael Jackson, he blamed the King of Pop and Elvis Presley for “destroy-

ing music.” As we left the club, he was still arguing his point with a Jackson fan at the bar. Perhaps it is his crankiness that has kept the curmudgeonly octogenarian going all these years.

Butch Berman shared his impressions of Joe Segal and the Jazz Showcase in the October 2003 BMF news-

letter. He and Grace had just returned from their honeymoon trip to Chicago, where they had spent two evenings at the club (with drummer Roy Haynes one night and clarinetist Buddy DeFranco the next). He was understandably enthused.

Concert Review

Toronto's live jazz scene depends on The Rex

By Tom Ineck

TORONTO—Travel plans to a city I've never visited always involve researching available music venues. Preparing a trip to Ontario's capital city, I found there are few jazz clubs in this metropolis of 2½ million people (5½ million in the greater Toronto area).

In fact, only one club stood out from the rest. The Rex Jazz & Blues Bar, adjacent to The Rex Hotel at 194 Queen Street West, is a night spot favored by local jazz buffs for 20 years. One loyal patron told me it is the last great jazz club in Toronto, which used to boast several world-class venues. The Rex hangs on, making the most of a prime downtown location and a policy of heavy jazz and blues booking. For the month of July, the club listed 72 shows on its calendar! Most are local artists who vary greatly in quality.

During my three-day stay in the city, the schedule included a group of jazz veterans that caught my attention. The Mark Eisenman Quintet featured Pat LaBarbera on saxophones, a New York native and older brother of drummer Joe LaBarbera and arranger/trumpeter John LaBarbera. He toured and recorded with Buddy Rich, Elvin Jones and others. Since moving to Canada in 1974, he has recorded with Rob McConnell, Kevin Mahogany, Ranee Lee, and Gap Mangione. He also has



The Mark Eisenman Quintet at The Rex in Toronto

half a dozen recordings of his own.

I decided that any band that included the reed virtuoso was worth checking out, and I was not mistaken. The rest of the quintet consisted of leader and prolific composer Mark Eisenman at the piano, trumpeter John MacLeod, bassist Steve Wallace and drummer John Sumner. In format, it was a typical bebop quintet, but its front-line soloists were atypically imaginative and accomplished. LaBarbera and MacLeod ran unison lines with ease, then alternately soared on their respective horns in extended, frequently exciting solo passages.

After a brisk, 20-minute walk from my room at The Bond Place Hotel, I paid the cover charge for the 9:45 p.m. show and slipped into the last remaining seat—just inches from the bandstand and directly in front of LaBarbera and MacLeod! My vantage point had me alternately peering over their music stands in an attempt to see the musi-

cians and flinching in fear of flying spittle from their horns. While the sound was grand from that proximity, I later moved to the bar for a better view.

I arrived as the band was counting off the first tune, Cole Porter's “Everything I Love.” Eisenman introduced one of his cleverly titled compositions, “Fathom,” as a tune based on

the changes for “How Deep Is the Ocean.” The beautiful “Ballad for Benny” is a tribute to saxophonist Benny Golson. The hard-bopping “Apparition” is the title track from the pianist's 2006 release on Cornerstone.

A rather unusual but effective choice was Dave Frishberg's “Saratoga Hunch,” sans lyrics. LaBarbera was featured on soprano sax on the waltz “My Mind,” based on the classic “On Green Dolphin Street.” Eisenman's “Bird's Assurance” is another cleverly titled tune, obviously inspired by Charlie Parker's “Confirmation.”

Despite its cramped quarters and somewhat down-in-the-heels condition, The Rex Jazz & Blues Bar has a comfortable, well-worn ambiance and a well-deserved reputation, drawing an enthusiastic Thursday night crowd of jazz lovers. Many of them gathered afterwards to chat with the musicians and enjoy one more for the road.

Photo by Tom Ineck

Colorado Correspondent

Growing up with guitarist Les Paul (kind of)

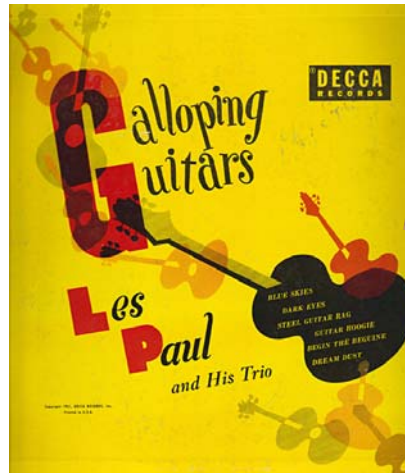
By Dan DeMuth

PUEBLO, Colo.—It's a very small farm community in east central Nebraska during that idyllic time between the end of WWII and the Korean conflict. My only access to hearing music is coming from some old 78s and radio. Available radio music fare includes some Polish and Czech ethnic stations in the region, with a handful from Lincoln and Omaha offering occasional programs on the popular hits of the day and, perhaps, hillbilly and western.

The closest thing to jazz would be finding a network feed of Martin Block's "Make Believe Ballroom." Songs dominating the various "hit parades" bore such innocuous titles (with lyrics to match) as "Cruising Down the River," "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo," and "Dear Hearts and Gentle People." These "hit parades" were loosely compiled stats from requests to disc jockeys, band leaders and from plays on juke boxes. In Omaha, Todd Storz of the brewery family would not initiate the nation's first "top 40" radio format on KOWH until 1955.



The sheet music for "Mockin' Bird Hill," by Les Paul and Mary Ford



Clockwise from left are "Galloping Guitars," by Les Paul and His Trio, "Jazz Me Blues," by Les Paul and "How High the Moon," by Les Paul and Mary Ford.



On radio in 1948, a definitive sound separate from all others could occasionally be heard, and the pop charts confirmed that the listening public was taking notice. Lester Polfuss, better known as Les Paul, had charted with "Lover" and "Brazil." We didn't hear much the next year but by 1950 he had teamed up with Colleen Summers, aka Mary Ford, and the hits started coming. A pioneer in multiple-track recordings, Les' fantastic guitar runs and Mary's dubbed harmonizing literally created a sound like no other. Mary was no slouch on guitar, either.

With their respective backgrounds of country corn to jazz for Les, and Mary's western-tinged pop, they achieved a unique sound. Most records would feature a Les instrumental on one side with Les backing a Mary vocal on the other. At times, both sides were getting significant airplay and they were masters at having one hit on the way up as the one preceding had maxed out. As an example, "Mockin' Bird Hill" entered Billboard's charts at No. 9 the

week of March 17, 1951, reaching No. 1 five weeks later and remaining in the top 10 through the week of July 21. Meanwhile, "How High the Moon" was in the top 10 from May 12 through July 21. By the first week of October they were back with "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise."

And so it went, throughout the early 1950s—"Josephine," "Whispering," "Tiger Rag," "Carioca," "Just One More Chance," "Meet Mr. Callaghan," "Bye Bye Blues," "Sitting On Top Of The World," "I Really Don't Want to Know," "I'm A Fool To Care" and perhaps the most memorable of all, "Vaya con Dios." Actual recording dates are not known as they recorded virtually everything at home.

Generational tastes and buying habits change, as did my listening preferences. Came the rock and roll juggernaut of the mid 1950s and the duo's popularity waned. In a rather cruel twist of fate, Les' pioneering guitar work would later be hailed as a major influence ushering in rock and roll which in

turn ushered them out to the pasture of has-beens. They were not alone there—names such as Johnnie Ray, Ella Mae Morse and Guy Mitchell come to mind. Ultimately the rigors of touring and attempting to please the fickle tastes of the listening public took its toll on their personal life. They divorced in 1964 and Mary died in 1977 at the too-young age of 53.

For me, it wasn't until later years

in searching out jazz that I ran across some of Les' earlier works, which included backing such diverse artists as blues singer Georgia White in the 1930s (over 80 years ago!), Bing Crosby, Dick Haymes, and performing with numerous jazz masters, particularly on Norman Granz' JATP recordings. A serious collector might want to find the four sides issued on the Montgomery Ward label from 1936 on 78 rpm under the name

of "Rhubarb Red," which are Les' first solo records. (If you've got 'em, let's talk!) My last vinyl purchase was the "Chester (Atkins) & Lester" LP issued in 1976. Though I lost track of them over the years, Les (and Mary) were certainly a large part of my listening and learning experience.

Les kept performing up until the end, which came on Aug. 13, at the age of 94.

Colorado Correspondent

Jazz twofer celebrates guitarist's 87 years

By Dan DeMuth

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo.—Local jazz fans in the Colorado Springs area were treated to a great twofer on June 27, through the efforts of members of the Pikes Peak Jazz & Swing Society. A guitar quartet, if you will, paid tribute to and led the 87th birthday celebration for the legendary Johnny Smith, a gentleman who has called Colorado Springs home for many years.

Headlining this quartet was Gene Bertoncini, a long-time friend of Johnny's whose bio is as impressive as anyone's actively performing today. Gene was augmented very ably by three other guitarists, the well-known Dale Bruning, who makes his home in the Longmont, Colo., area; Alan Joseph, who teaches and performs in the Colorado Springs and Denver areas; and Wayne Wilkinson, also a local performer with impeccable credentials.

Getting the call on drums and bass were Richard Clark and Marc Neihof, two sterling musicians culled from the incredible pool of jazz musicians in this area, a real honor indeed. And while Johnny doesn't pick up the guitar anymore, his spirit was definitely in the air throughout the evening.

The SRO crowd at Giuseppe's was comprised not only of listening fans, but many musician fans as well, with



Johnny Smith and his birthday cake

some of both groups having brought albums to get autographed and perhaps a photo op with Johnny, who graciously filled all requests. And while the performances featured some of Johnny's hits, each guitarist was allowed to showcase a bit of their own talents, along with some occasional banter recalling their friendship and learning experiences with Johnny.

Respect was the word of the evening. A comfortable jam session feeling prevailed with each of the guitarists calling out tunes and the others joining in after the lead-off (controlled

improvisation?). Our table was in proximity to the guest of honor, and I was able to note the look of quiet satisfaction as he heard his music and the tributes throughout the night.

In the relatively short time I've lived in this area I have been fortunate to meet and call many of the local jazz professionals my friends. Five years ago, Johnny granted me an interview (which appears in the BMF Winter 2004 online newsletter), at which time he autographed my 78 rpm on the

Royal Roost label of his first solo hit "Moonlight in Vermont." A copy of that label graced the tables at his celebration. In addition, some of his LPs from my collection

were a part of the front desk display. I felt extremely honored.

In the interim between compiling my notes and the publication of this piece, we lost Les Paul. In retrospect, it is intensely gratifying to have been present at a function honoring a living guitar legend.



Smith (left) with guitarists Gene Bertoncini and Dale Bruning

Photos by Claus Weidner

*Tomfoolery****Trip includes Chicago, Toronto, Falls, friends****By Tom Ineck*

ON THE ROAD—By the time Mary Jane and I left Lincoln, Neb., for a two-week road trip in July, our long-term plans to visit friends in rural Pennsylvania had morphed to include stops in Chicago, Niagara Falls and Toronto, with a return jog through Cleveland to see the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.

Jazz club experiences in Chicago and Toronto are chronicled elsewhere in this newsletter, but travel is never ALL about jazz, is it? Here are just a few none-jazz highlights.

We had just two nights in Chicago, with full-day drives before and after, so our visit there was limited to a few good meals, a walk to the downtown shopping district, a visit to the Art Institute and a pleasant stay at the Congress Plaza Hotel on Michigan Avenue, which is a short stroll from Grant Park and the lake.

Knowing that we would cover a lot of unfamiliar territory, we had purchased a GPS system in an attempt to avoid getting lost, failing to acknowledge that some of the most interesting and memorable experiences happen while trying to figure out where the heck you are and how you will get to where you want to go. After the sweet, female-voiced GPS (which we dubbed Candy Kane) sent us on a wild-goose chase across Michigan and through Canada to get to Niagara Falls, N.Y., we learned to take everything she said with a healthy dose of skepticism. Interstate 90 along Lake Erie would have gotten us to our destination with less grief, in less time, but we wouldn't have seen as much of the Canadian countryside.

Niagara Falls is everything it's cracked up to be in the guide books



Photos by Tom Ineck

Niagara Falls at twilight from the observation deck*Hanover House B&B in Niagara Falls**Niagara Falls at night*

and brochures. Despite its tourist trappings, the roaring cataract still inspires awe at first sight. The U.S. side of the falls is less developed and more pristine, saved from most of the commercial glitz by the fact that it was named a state park in 1885, making it America's oldest. From the Hanover House bed and breakfast, it was a five-minute walk to the Niagara River and another 10 minutes downstream to the falls itself. Like most first-time visitors, we purchased the all-in-one admission, which covers the Maid of the Mist boat ride, the Cave of the Winds walk under the falls, the Dis-

covery Center and other attractions. Still, it was the primordial power of nature as we stared transfixed above American Falls and Bridal Veil Falls that continued to amaze.

Crossing the border—again—we made our way to Toronto for three nights at the centrally located Bond Place Hotel, where we simply parked our car and relied on the excellent mass-transit system and our legs to get us around the city. On a rainy day, we were able to catch the subway near the hotel and ride up-town to the door of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), where a special

exhibition of the Dead Sea Scrolls had just opened.

During our stay in Toronto, we enjoyed several excellent meals, including dinner at the Baton Rouge restaurant and two breakfast stops at Eggspectation, both near the hotel. One afternoon we rode the elevator to the observation deck of the 1,800-foot CN Tower (even for the world's tallest building, a rip-off at \$24 each), then dined at a quaint East Indian bistro nearby before heading to The Second City for a hilarious performance of the new recession-inspired comedy "0% Down, 100% Screwed."

After three hectic days in the city, it was nice to head south across the border—again—this time bound for Kane, Pa., a borough of about 4,000 people with charming Victorian homes, one of which is owned by our friends Greg and Suzy. Much time was spent simply relaxing over eats, drinks and conversation, but one of the highlights of our weekend visit was a day trip to see the remains of the historic Kinzua Bridge, which at the time of its construction in 1882 was the tallest and longest railway bridge in the world. In 2003, a tornado collapsed much of the span as it was being restored. We narrowly missed a stop at the Zippo/Case Museum, a 15,000-square-foot building



The Second City cast of "0% Down, 100% Screwed"



A scary view through the glass floor of the 1,800-foot CN Tower in Toronto

housing rare Zippo lighters and Case knives. Maybe next time.

Saying farewell to Greg and Suzy and their gracious hospitality, we began our westward return home, but not without a side trip to Cleveland.

Arriving mid-afternoon, we got a room about a mile from the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. After a brisk walk, I had just 2½ hours to spend at the museum before closing time. It was even more entertaining and educational than I had anticipated, containing hundreds of historic instruments, outrageous stage costumes, rare photographs and other definitive rock 'n' roll memorabilia.

It's an experience that should be shared with a fellow rock fan, and I couldn't help thinking how much fun it would have been with Butch Berman along. He never made it to the museum, but I know he would have loved it.

There is no better way to reconnect with America—and Canada—and experience the rare joy of travel than a long road trip with no deadlines and only a rough itinerary. Our reinvigorating sojourn encompassed 11 nights and 12 days, with overnight stays in six cities and a round-trip journey of 2,600 miles. But such bare statistics don't fully reflect the value of the open road. I heartily recommend it.



Photo by Greg Page

Tom and Mary Jane at the remains of the Kinzua Bridge in Pennsylvania

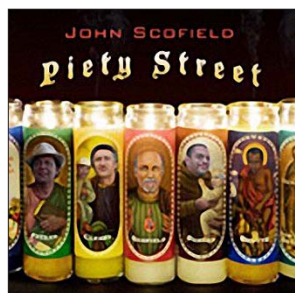


Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland

Jazz on Disc

Scofield embraces Crescent City gospel sound

By Tom Ineck



JOHN SCOFIELD
Piety Street
EmArcy Records

At least since he hired New Orleans drummer Johnny Vidacovich for his 1989 recording “Flat Out,” guitarist John Scofield has frequently displayed a penchant for the sounds and rhythms of the Crescent City. That inclination arrives full-blown from the first notes of his latest release, “Piety Street.”

This time, the New Orleans City vibe is informed by the traditions of gospel music, but you don’t have to be a born-again Christian to enjoy the soulful nature of this enterprise. Recorded at Piety Street Studios in the Big Easy, it veritably reeks of that city’s long musical tradition, steeped as it is in elements of the blues, jazz, soul, country and the island rhythms of the Caribbean.

Like 2005’s “That’s What I Say: John Scofield Plays the Music of Ray Charles,” the guitarist has chosen to augment his distinctive fretwork with guest musicians and singers befitting the occasion. Most notable is the significant presence of Jon Cleary on vocals, piano and organ. Cleary’s rough-hewn voice perfectly conveys the yearning and redemptive spirit of “That’s Enough,” “Motherless Child,”

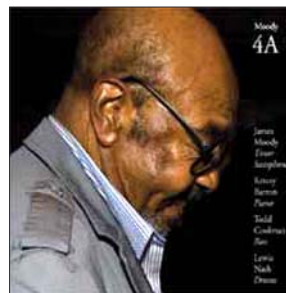
“Just a Little While to Stay Here” and “Walk With Me.”

Also making important contributions to the overall sound are George Porter Jr. on bass, Ricky Fataar on drums, John Boutte on vocals and Shannon Powell on tambourine and drums. For full gospel-choir effect, everyone joins in backing vocals and hand-clapping as The Hard Regulators.

Most of the 13 tracks are drawn from the annals of the gospel tradition, but Scofield adds to that tradition with his compositions “It’s a Big Army” and “But I Like the Message.” The former is a rousing gospel march with guitar and piano playing the roles of call-and-response preacher and congregation. “Message” is a soulful instrumental strut.

Among the familiar classics of the genre are “His Eye is On the Sparrow,” Thomas Dorsey’s songs “The Old Ship of Zion” and “Never Turn Back,” Rev. James Cleveland’s “Something’s Got a Hold on Me” and the traditional “I’ll Fly Away.” One of the most moving interpretations is Scofield’s version of “The Angel of Death,” a country classic by Hank Williams. At nearly seven minutes, it is the emotional centerpiece of the project, with an absolutely hair-raising vocal by Cleary.

At any tempo, Scofield digs into these numbers with a passion. Utilizing the wah-wah and his usual bag of sonic tricks, he wrenches every morsel of the blues from them, squeezing off notes and bending strings as if vocalizing the lyrics—and lyrical improvisations—with his guitar.



MOODY
4A
IPO Recordings

In its hip shorthand, “4A” speaks volumes, and the artist identified simply as Moody needs no introduction. It is the first release of a stellar James Moody quartet captured in two recording sessions on consecutive days.

Moody, age 83 at the time of this July 2008 recording, is in top form, his phenomenal breath control, keen harmonic sense, melodic invention and sly wit intact. And, he is ably accompanied by pianist Kenny Barron, bassist Todd Coolman and drummer Lewis Nash.

Nash unexpectedly kicks off “Secret Love” at a medium march tempo that indicates much fun will be had by all. Moody’s own solo statements brim with humor, tossing off quotes from “On the Trail” and “Bebop” while keeping the mood relaxed. Barron and Coolman contribute brief but sterling solos before Nash returns with military precision.

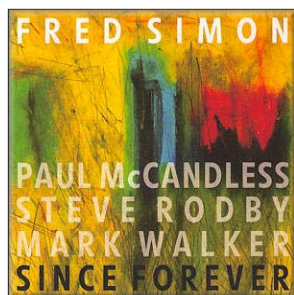
Barron’s classic “Voyage,” a favorite of Stan Getz, Phil Woods and other reed men, inspires the best from all. The tune’s odd chord changes invite harmonic experimentation. “Round Midnight” gets yet another reverent ballad reading, with everyone fully engaged in its overt romanticism. The rhythm section swings uptempo with

assurance on “Without a Song,” allowing Moody to stretch his bop chops.

Another familiar favorite, “Stella By Starlight,” gets a sprightly Latin treatment. “East of the Sun” is a gorgeous duet between Moody and Barron, perhaps the highlight of the set. It reminds this listener of “People Time,” a collection of live, profoundly beautiful duets between Barron and Getz shortly before the saxophonist’s death in 1991.

Moody pays his respects to another saxophonist with “Stablemates,” a Benny Golson standard taken uptempo. The quartet offers its farewell in waltz time with “Bye Bye Blackbird,” on which Moody turns up the heat in a blazing romp, both Barron and Coolman deliver brilliant solos and Moody returns for a coda.

Needless to say, we await “4B” with much anticipation.



FRED SIMON
Since Forever
Naim Jazz

Pianist Fred Simon’s keyboard style has been unfairly labeled “fusion” or “new age,” with all of the negative connotations those narrow confines imply. His lyrical touch and keen melodic sense transcend the merely meditative, and his original tunes haunt the memory without ever seeming trite.

Simon’s latest release, “Since Forever” has been haunting me for several weeks now. I find myself returning to it day after day, always discovering some subtle rhythmic change or some exquisite harmonic phrase that I had missed the last time. Conversely,

his tunes often sound timeless on first hearing. That is a true composer’s natural gift and a listener’s delight.

Over a period of 30 years, Simon’s musical associations have ranged from guitarists Larry Coryell, Ralph Towner and Fareed Haque to violinist Jerry Goodman, bassists Steve Rodby and Michael Manring and reed virtuoso Paul McCandless. For his latest, he again taps some of his longtime cohorts, creating a seamlessly cohesive quartet that also features McCandless, Rodby and drummer Mark Walker.

“Since Forever” has an elegiac quality. In fact, three of the 12 tracks are memorials. Yet, the recording eschews cheap, maudlin sentimentality for a more profound, sadness-tinged celebration of life. The title track, a gorgeous anthem for folksinger and social activist Pete Seeger, is a well-earned tribute to a living American hero.

Simon and McCandless work so well in unison, it’s hard to tell them apart sometimes. On “No War Nowhere,” with McCandless on soprano sax, they simultaneously play the joyous melody, and then go their separate ways for solo statements. Rodby and Walker are perfectly in synch with the tune’s shifting time signature.

Simon pays homage to his late sister with “Even in the Evening,” on which McCandless weaves intricate oboe lines against dark piano chords, sustained by a bass ostinato and flashing cymbals. “I Know You Know” is a tantalizing jazz waltz with an irresistible melody that sends McCandless soaring on soprano.

The sole non-original tune is “In a Silent Way,” included as a memorial to its composer, Joe Zawinul. It is a hard to imagine a more touching tribute. “More Often Than Not” is a memorial to friend Patti McKenny, a Chicago playwright who died of a heart ailment in June 2008, at age 57. “Simple Psalm” is a new version of a tune first heard on a Windham Hill recording many years ago. Walker and Rodby are allowed

some very free playing as Simon and McCandless, on oboe, adhere to the simple folk melody.

“Same Difference” is a piano-oboe duet with yet another memorable, haunting melody. Rodby is featured on “Ways of Seeing,” exploring the bass’ harmonic range from top to bottom in counterpoint to the piano and soprano sax. “What’s the Magic Word?” is a delightfully uptempo ramble. Simon infuses a Middle Eastern sound on “Song of the Sea,” with McCandless adding to the mood on the duduk and oboe.

At nearly 64 minutes, “Since Forever” is a generous offering from underappreciated composer and pianist Fred Simon.



QUARTET SAN FRANCISCO
QSF Plays Brubeck
ViolinJazz Recordings

A classical string quartet playing the music of Dave Brubeck? Sure, why not? It’s no stranger than the Kronos Quartet paying tribute to the music of Bill Evans and Thelonious Monk on classic recordings that iconoclastic foursome made more than 30 years ago. In fact, given Brubeck’s own classical influences and proclivities, it makes perfect sense.

Quartet San Francisco’s approach is adventurous, while remaining true to the original tunefulness and wit of Brubeck’s familiar melodies. It is immediately apparent that violinists Jeremy Cohen and Alisa Rose, violist Keith Lawrence and cellist Michelle Djokic

Jazz on Disc continued on page 16

Jazz on CD continued from page 15

bring the requisite technique and sense of humor to the project, injecting flights of fancy throughout the opener, the lilting “Three to Get Ready.”

“Strange Meadowlark,” the longest track at nearly eight minutes, yearns with the somber beauty and romanticism of its title, but the QSF shows its willingness to improvise with pizzicato passages, unconventional counterpoint and imaginative harmonies. A sawing rhythmic groove kicks off “The Golden Horn” and eventually shifts it into jazzy overdrive. In a delightful arrangement by Brubeck’s son, Matt, the quartet teases with Ellington quotes—“Don’t Get Around Much Anymore,” “I’ve Got It Bad (And That Ain’t Good)” —before launching into “The Duke.”

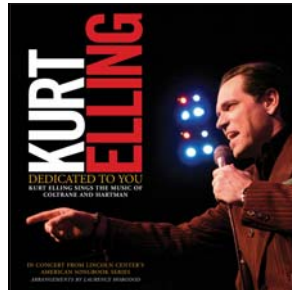
Of course, no Brubeck tribute would be complete without a rendition of “Take Five,” which was actually written by alto saxophonist Paul Desmond during his halcyon days with the quartet. While the others keep the rhythmic riff pulsing, a violin soars high above before returning the theme to the cellist. A brisk waltz tempo enters more than a minute into “Kathy’s Waltz,” keeping the listener on his proverbial toes in three-quarter anticipation.

The centerpiece is the virtuosic “Blue Rondo a La Turk,” with its driving tempo, interweaving lines, alternating themes and soulful solo improvisations as the QSF morphs into a blues band. The more obscure “Bluette” is a gorgeous ensemble piece of delicate beauty and grace. Another highlight is the brief foray into hillbilly jazz with “Unsquare Dance.” Ragtime also gets its due with a spirited reading of the Brubeck classic “It’s a Raggy Waltz.”

“Forty Days” is a workout for the ensemble, with beautiful harmonies and a haunting melody line. The CD ends oddly with a lovely take on the Christmas chestnut “What Child Is This?”

Brubeck himself gives this project his stamp of approval. “I got a kick out

of hearing these talented musicians interpret my music in such an inventive way,” he writes inside the CD jacket. “It’s an honor for a composer to have his music re-visited by a group such as Quartet San Francisco.” We concur.



KURT ELLING
Dedicated To You: Kurt Elling
Sings the Music of Coltrane
and Hartman
Concord Jazz

As Karrin Allyson paid homage to Coltrane’s classic “Ballads” release of 1962, Kurt Elling turns his attention to the timeless “John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman” LP of the following year. To the rhythm section of pianist Laurence Hobgood, bassist Clark Sommers and drummer Ulysses Owens, he adds tenor saxophone great Ernie Watts and a string quartet and performs it for a live audience at Lincoln Center in New York. The result is magical.

Commissioned by the 2006 Chicago Jazz Festival for the commemoration of Coltrane’s 80th birthday, Elling’s tribute is a brilliantly paced program that pays its respects to the iconic recording while adding something of its own.

The original recording lasted only 31 minutes in six tracks, so Elling and arranger-pianist Hobgood added several other standards often associated with Coltrane, most notably the opening “All or Nothing at All,” on which Watts demonstrates his own sound, never attempting to mimic the master.

Elling’s penchant for dramatic spoken interludes is well served as he sets the scene of the March 1963 Coltrane-

Hartman session with “A Poetic Jazz Memory,” a historical narrative—with lush string accompaniment—that increases our anticipation. It documents the fact that although the two principals had met only the week before, their combined masterpiece would be completed in just three hours, with no charts and no rehearsal. Most tunes were recorded in one take.

The story introduces a medley that begins with a rambunctious rendition of the song “Dedicated to You,” featuring an outstanding piano solo by Hobgood. Pizzicato strings embellish the tune with bright percussive flashes. Watts returns for a lush instrumental version of “What’s New,” another addition to the original program and a perfect segue into Billy Strayhorn’s mournful “Lush Life.” Elling and Hobgood state the opening verse before the rest of the band enters. The singer is especially impressive as he soars into a beautifully controlled falsetto. The medley ends with Watts creating a nocturnal mood on “Autumn Serenade.”

“Say it (Over and Over Again)” is another great vehicle for Watts’ controlled power and improvisational skills as he caresses the ballad with an extended solo, setting the stage for Elling’s own vocal magic. The rhythm section proclaims “They Say It’s Wonderful” with swaggering confidence, and Hobgood delivers another stunning solo.

A second medley begins with “My One and Only Love,” as Elling’s voice pairs off with the string quartet in a call-and-response dialogue. It segues nicely into a smoothly swaying “Nancy with the Laughing Face.” Elling and company finish with one of the most memorable songs from the Coltrane-Hartman recording, “You Are Too Beautiful.”

By nature, Elling’s voice is pitched higher than Hartman’s smoky bass-baritone, but he is capable of sliding easily through several octaves. It may not have seemed a likely project, but it retrospect it works beautifully. Elling has scored another triumph.

*Jazz Essentials***Banner year in jazz history is celebrated**

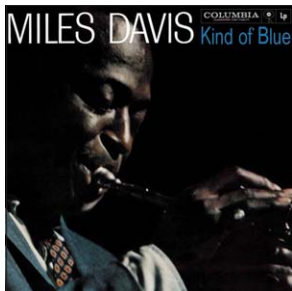
By Tom Ineck

I have been asked many times over the years to suggest a list of essential recordings for listeners who want to assemble a basic jazz collection but don't know where to begin. Such an enterprise is subjective by nature, but there are probably 50 or 100 recordings that nearly everyone acknowledges as classics of the genre.

Beginning with this edition of the BMF newsletter, my goal is to recommend at least five classic jazz recordings in each issue. In my opinion, these belong in any jazz library worthy of the name, which is not to say that everyone will find them equally compelling. Whenever possible, my comments are based on the best edition of the CD in question.

For the debut of this column, the five selections virtually chose themselves. Like the year 1939 in film history, 1959 was a banner year in jazz history, especially on the Columbia label. As a result, the label's Legacy imprint has produced lavish, re-mastered multi-disc packages celebrating the 50th anniversary of some landmark releases.

The first three CDs below fall into this category—"Kind of Blue," by Miles Davis, "Mingus Ah Um," by Charles Mingus, and "Time Out," by the Dave Brubeck Quartet. The other two are equally historic releases of that same year, John Coltrane's "Giant Steps" and Art Pepper's "Modern Jazz Classics." It was a very good year, indeed.



MILES DAVIS
Kind of Blue
(50th Anniversary Edition)
Columbia Legacy Records

The recording that introduced the world to jazz improvisations based on simple "modal" chord changes, "Kind of Blue" is as much about moods as modes. Ranging from slow to mid-tempo and built on mesmerizing, repeated phrases voiced by trumpeter Miles Davis with typical nonchalance, it still is a relaxing antidote to the frenetic pace and rapid chord changes of early bop. Davis' gifted collaborators on these historic sessions included saxophonists John Coltrane and Cannonball Adderley, pianists Bill Evans and Wynton Kelly (on "Freddie Freeloader" only), bassist Paul Chambers and drummer

Jimmy Cobb.

The first of two discs in this anniversary set contains all of the original recordings from sessions in March and April 1959, plus an alternate take of "Flamenco Sketches" and several brief studio sequences. Among these timeless tunes are "So What," "Blue in Green" and "All Blues," which stretches beyond 11 minutes.

For listeners already familiar with these classic recordings, the second disc is the real revelation. It contains five tracks recorded in the studio nearly a year earlier in preparation for the final sessions, including the standards "On Green Dolphin Street," "Stella by Starlight," and "Love for Sale," and two versions of Davis' "Fran-Dance." Finally, the Legacy edition adds a 17-minute performance of "So What," recorded live in Holland in April 1960 with a quintet minus Adderley.

In addition to rare photographs and informative liner notes by jazz critic Francis Davis, the package contains a digital booklet with an essay, transcriptions of the session dialog and special commentary.



CHARLES MINGUS
Mingus Ah Um
(50th Anniversary Edition)
Columbia Legacy Records

Recorded in the same 30th Street Studio where "Kind of Blue" was "waxed" just a few months earlier, these four productive sessions of May and November 1959 resulted in two classics, "Mingus Ah Um" and the follow-up, "Mingus Dynasty," plus four tracks that were first released on a 1979 LP called "Nostalgia in Times Square" and three tracks that were later released on the Mosaic label. At more than 150 minutes, it is a staggering output of music from THE iconoclastic jazz giant at the height of his powers as com-

Jazz Essentials continued on page 18

Jazz Essentials continued from page 17

poser, arranger, bassist and bandleader.

The shifting lineup of the band included Booker Ervin, John Handy, Shafi Hadi, Benny Golson and Jerome Richardson on reeds, Jimmy Knepper on trombone, Richard Williams and Don Ellis on trumpets, Horace Parlan and Roland Hanna on piano, Teddy Charles on vibes and stalwart drummer Dannie Richmond. Among the immortal tunes they documented are “Better Git It In Your Soul,” “Goodbye Pork Pie Hat,” “Fables of Faubus,” “Self-Portrait in Three Colors,” “Open Letter to Duke,” “Bird Calls,” “Pussy Cat Dues” and “Jelly Roll.” As though to warn—or entice—the listener, the two-disc package contains the descriptive disclaimer, “There are shouts and howls on tracks rooted in earthy blues and gospel.”

This 50th anniversary edition also offers detailed notes by producer Michael Cuscuna, rare photographs, and a digital booklet that includes original album notes, previously unpublished Columbia memos and assorted correspondences.



DAVE BRUBECK QUARTET
Time Out
(50th Anniversary Edition)
Columbia Legacy Records

The jazz hit of 1959 was “Time Out,” which contains not only the memorable “Blue Rondo à la Turk,” the lovely “Strange Meadow Lark” and the whimsical waltz “Three to Get Ready,” but the first million-selling jazz instrumental on the Billboard Hot 100, Paul Desmond’s “Take Five.” With its so-

phisticated, quirky, yet light-hearted approach, the collection of original tunes put the Dave Brubeck Quartet—pianist Brubeck, alto saxophonist Desmond, bassist Eugene Wright and drummer Joe Morello—on the map.

The original 38-minute LP sequencing remains intact on the first of three discs here. Disc two contains nearly an hour of music recorded live in Newport, R.I., in 1961, 1962 and 1963. In addition to extended versions of “Blue Rondo” and “Take Five,” it includes the quartet’s unique takes on the standards “St. Louis Blues,” “Pennies From Heaven” and “You Go to My Head,” plus Brubeck originals “Waltz Limp,” “Since Love Had Its Way,” and “Koto Song.” Like the other 50th anniversary Legacy editions, there are lots of rare photos and new liner notes, here written by jazz historian Ted Gioia.

A bonus disc is a DVD featuring an interview with Brubeck on the making of “Time Out,” an animated photo gallery and an interactive, multi-camera-angle piano lesson. But don’t expect to play like Dave Brubeck. His unique style has yet to be matched!



JOHN COLTRANE
Giant Steps
Atlantic Records

Shortly after working with Miles Davis on “Kind of Blue,” John Coltrane entered Atlantic Studios to create his own masterpiece. Primary sessions for Coltrane’s landmark “Giant Steps” recording were in May and December 1959, and the LP was released in January 1960. The mind-boggling title track has become a rhythmic conundrum for

many musicians who have tried to match its effusive spirit and odd meter. The date also produced such classic Coltrane originals as “Cousin Mary,” “Countdown,” “Spiral,” “Syedda’s Song Flute,” the haunting love song “Naima” and “Mr. P.C.,” a tribute to bassist Paul Chambers.

The core group consisted of tenor saxophonist Coltrane, pianist Tommy Flanagan, bassist Chambers and drummer Art Taylor, with pianist Wynton Kelly and drummer Jimmy Cobb sitting in on “Naima.” The alternate takes of “Giant Steps” and “Naima” that are included in the deluxe edition were recorded in April 1959 with pianist Cedar Walton, Chambers and drummer Lex Humphries.

With “Giant Steps,” his first set of all-original material, Coltrane took a giant leap forward and distinguished himself as a formidable composer, arranger and bandleader. Jazz fans already knew he could play the horn.

The 1990 pressing contains remastered tracks and five alternate takes, but is an otherwise modest package that recycles the original liner notes by jazz critic Nat Hentoff.



ART PEPPER + ELEVEN
Modern Jazz Classics
Contemporary/OJC Records

Not the household name that Miles, Mingus, Brubeck and Coltrane have become, alto saxophonist Art Pepper is, nonetheless, a major figure in jazz history, and “Modern Jazz Classics” is one of his finest hours. To some extent, it picks up where Miles Davis’ “Birth of the Cool,” let off a decade earlier,

employing a large, brassy ensemble and complex arrangements in a bold refinement of an earlier, more informal bop style. It even begins with the same tune that kicked off the 1950 Davis classic, Denzil Best's infectious "Move."

Recorded in March and May 1959, "Modern Jazz Classics" features 12 tracks, including wonderful reinterpretations of such modern jazz standards as Dizzy Gillespie's "Groovin' High" and "Shaw 'Nuff," Horace Silver's "Opus de Funk," Thelonious Monk's "Round

Midnight," Jimmy Giuffre's "Four Brothers," Gerry Mulligan's "Walkin' Shoes," Lieber and Stoller's "Bernie's Tune," Sonny Rollins' "Airegin," and Charlie Parker's "Anthropology" and "Donna."

In addition to Pepper's own inspired playing, the recording's classic status can be attributed to the superb Marty Paich arrangements, which evoke great performances from a West Coast band of thorough professionals, even though they are virtually devoid

of "star power." Among them are trumpeters Pete Candoli, Jack Sheldon, and Al Porcino, trombonist Dick Nash, saxophonists Bob Enevoldsen, Herb Geller, Bud Shank, Charlie Kennedy, Bill Perkins, Richie Kamuca and Med Flory, pianist Russ Freeman, bassist Joe Mondragon and drummer Mel Lewis.

A Japanese re-mastered pressing was released in 1998 and contains three alternate takes and the original liner notes, again by Hentoff.

Feedback

Readers respond to latest news and website

Hey Tom,

I just got your latest BMF newsletter notice and had a chance to take a look. It's really great to see that you and the others are not only keeping Butch's dream alive, but continue to grow it. The new space looks very cool. I look forward to checking it out next time I make it out that way.

Anyway, I just wanted to commend you on your dedication to the music and the project. Thanks for keeping me in the loop on what's happening back home. Be sure to give me a shout whenever you come this way.

Jeff Newell
Director, New-Trad Productions
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Hi, BMF Friends,

*How is one of my favorite gangs doing? This newsletter was a breath of fresh air for me – **thank you!** It's well-written and I'm so*

happy to see the new BMF digs (not to mention a home for the ping pong table, Blue Note 7 and Madeleine Peyroux review). Butch would be very proud to see all that you have accomplished.

Dawn K. DeBlaze
St. Louis, Mo.

Kassie Riordan and I were lucky enough to be Grace's guests for a tour of the new office\museum. What a lovely space it is, second floor of the Burkholder. Besides the history held there, the design of the rooms, colors, and furnishings are a joy to behold.

We four, Kassie, Butch and Grace, and myself, went to lunch on occasion.

Thanks to all who put together this musical treasure.

Ruth Thone
Lincoln, Neb.

Keep on keepin' on for Butch!

Paul Mehling, leader
Hot Club of San Francisco
Oakland, Calif.

Hi There !

Thanks for the cool newsletter. We appreciate it. Would you be able to put the KIOS web address on your website? We have our playlists and other jazz related links on our site and we publish our own monthly newsletter that folks can sign up for. It's all at www.kios.org.

Thanks!

Mike Jacobs
Music Director, KIOS
Omaha, Neb.

Editor's Note: *We have added a new section to our Jazz Links page called "Jazz on the Radio," with links to Nebraska stations KIOS, KZUM and NET.*



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From the Archives

BMF and Alaadeen enjoy a longtime friendship



File Photo

Butch Berman and the Berman Music Foundation began a longtime relationship with Kansas City legend Ahmad Alaadeen in 1998, when the BMF brought the saxophonist and educator to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for a series of workshops on jazz history and improvisation. Alaadeen also played on the BMF-sponsored Norman Hedman recording "Taken By Surprise" and performed at Jazz in June in Lincoln and at the Topeka Jazz Festival, with financial support from the Foundation.

How can you help the foundation?

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

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