



Academy of Rock gets BMF gift

By Tom Ineck

"If someone had given Charlie a guitar instead of a gun, he might have been a great musician instead of a killer."

— Butch Berman, on the 50th anniversary of Charlie Starkweather's murderous rampage, which began on Dec. 1, 1957

LINCOLN, Neb.—Butch Berman understood the importance of music as a stabilizing force in his own life. As his words quoted above indicate, he also saw music's potential for good in the lives of others, especially troubled youth.

Butch would be pleased to know that his **Berman Music Foundation** has donated \$1,000 and many of his own instruments and musical equipment to Lincoln's Academy of Rock program. About 140 students from kindergarten through high school currently are enrolled in the program, which is headquartered at the Northeast Family

Center, with citywide outreach.

Donated instruments include a Fender electric bass, an upright bass, a Yamaha electric piano, an Epiphone acoustic guitar, a conga drum, maracas and a tambourine. Among the equipment donated are various amps, speakers, foot pedals, music stands, microphones and guitar cords. It all came from Butch's basement music room, where visiting musicians often would jam after a BMF-sponsored performance elsewhere in town.



Jason Schmit

The \$1,000 BMF grant paid for additional acoustic guitars and small guitar amps for the academy's practice rooms.

"Now we can serve more kids per class, and there are never any kids who have to sit around at practice," said Jason Schmit, director of the academy. "They're always working on something, and that's directly because of the donation. We don't get donations like this very often. It's been

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Photo by Tom Ineck

Student at Academy of Rock plays BMF-donated bass. The conga and tambourine also were donated.

January 2009
Vol. 14, Number 1

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huge for us.”

Gifts of a single guitar or a set of drums are not uncommon, but the size and diversity of the Berman collection is unprecedented, Schmit said. The Northeast Family Center operates on a budget of \$655,835 for the current fiscal year, of which the Academy of Rock receives \$144,600.

Schmit began the Academy of Rock several years ago, while working with after-school programs for middle-school students at the YMCA. The kids would gather in a room and “hang out,” he said, but there were no activities to inspire them.

“We felt like it wasn’t really targeting the kids who needed it most. We started to set up very specific, special-interest clubs that the kids could be a part of, where the kids would do everything from cooking and creating their own little ‘café’ to film-making and comic book writing and flag football and fashion design.”

When some of the students indicated an interest in rock music, Schmit approached Doug Fenton at Dietze Music House, who helped launch the rock academy. The rest was up to Schmit, program coordinator Bob Okamoto, other staff and, of course, the kids.

“They’re looking for something to do,” Schmit explained. “They want to start bands. They want to play rock ‘n’ roll. Let’s give them a positive place to do it, with good mentorship and get them playing music.”

Beginning with just eight kids, the Academy of Rock grew to 45 by the end of the first year. Schmit left Lincoln for Portland, Ore., where he set up similar after-school clubs, but he liked the idea of a program solely devoted to music. The Northeast Family Center gave him the opportunity to return to Lincoln as director of the Academy of Rock.

The academy now has programs



Photos by Tom Ineck

Academy of Rock practices at Campus Life North with Yamaha electric piano, acoustic bass, conga and tambourine donated by the Berman Music Foundation.



Program coordinator Bob Okamoto uses his own Gibson guitar to demonstrate vintage Ampeg amp and guitar pedals donated by BMF.



Students use donated bass guitar, conga and tambourine.

citywide, meeting at Mickle, Irving and Dawes middle schools, Brownell Elementary School, Willard Community Center, and Campus Life North (The Edge). After-school sessions run from 3-5 p.m. and evening sessions from 5-7 p.m. The young musicians also meet for Saturday practice sessions.

“Each month there is a different genre of music that we study,” Schmit said. “The staff selects one song that they have to play. If they can get through it, the kids get to pick a song that they want to do. Then they get to perform them live around town.” These public performances include

gigs at Ribfest, the Nebraska State Fair and popular Lincoln music clubs.

Understandably, most of the young rock wannabes want to play punk, metal or classic rock, but they are also introduced to the blues, country, pop and hip-hop styles. Weeklong summer camps are even more diversified.

The more advanced musicians write and perform their own songs.

“We work with them, going through the trials and tribulations of being in a band, and try to get them to the point where they can have a great musical product but they’re also smart in business and promoting themselves,” Schmit said. “We get them



At a recent performance at Meadowlark Coffee House, Evan Potter plays an Epiphone guitar identical to the one donated by the BMF. Butch's conga is in background.

to the point where they're ready to go out and do their own thing." Among the many original bands that have emerged from the Academy of Rock are Silent Havok, The Story Killers, Learning to Fall and Dodging Bullets. Successful "graduates" of the academy include the bands Valley of the Impaled and Exit 48.

A special projects class produces newsletters and T-shirts for the shows and learns how to run the sound system and lighting that is essential for the total rock experience.

Many of the students are on need-based scholarships, but enrollment is open to all. Those who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches through Lincoln Public Schools automatically qualify for a reduced rate at the academy.

"Most of our kids are disadvantaged in the fact that they feel kind of like they're outcasts in their own schools," Schmit said. "It's not based on money."

On hearing Butch's comment about Charlie Starkweather, Schmit agreed.

"Exactly," he said. "I've heard people say, 'If that kid hadn't gotten involved, I don't know what would have happened.' They're able to focus. We have some kids that have written some pretty creepy things, but they're writing about it, getting it out of their systems."

That's a concept that Butch Berman would understand perfectly.

For more information on the Academy of Rock program, go to www.academyofrock.org.

The following is a list of upcoming Academy of Rock performances:

Friday, Jan. 9–Duggan's, 440 S. 11th St., original bands concert, 5:45-9 p.m., admission \$5

Thursday, Jan. 15–Hot Topic, 26 Gateway Mall, acoustic show for two original bands TBA, 6-8 p.m., admission free

Saturday, Jan 24–Campus Life North, 6400 Cornhusker Highway, Invisible Children Snow Ball Formal, original bands TBA, 8-11 p.m., admission TBA

Saturday, Jan. 31–Box Awesome, 815 O St., opening for Harptallica, JediRadio, Dodging Bullets, Silent Havok, 6–9 p.m., admission TBA

Friday, Feb. 13–Knickerbockers, 901 O St., original bands concert, 5:45-9 p.m., admission \$5

Friday, Feb. 27–Campus Life North, 6400 Cornhusker Highway, core program concert, 7-10 p.m., admission \$3

Friday, March 13–Box Awesome, 815 O St., original bands concert, 5:45-9 p.m., admission \$5

Friday, March 27–Campus Life North, 6400 Cornhusker Highway, core program concert, 7-10 p.m., admission \$3

Friday, April 17–Sidewinders, 17th & O streets, original bands concert, 5:45-9 p.m., admission \$5

Friday, April 24–Campus Life North, 6400 Cornhusker Highway, core program concert, 7-10 p.m., admission \$3

Saturday, May 30–Campus Life North, 6400 Cornhusker Highway, core and original final concert, 6-10 p.m., admission \$3



Jazz is published online at: www.bermanmusicfoundation.org
The office of **The Berman Music Foundation** is at 719 P St., Suite C-1, Lincoln, NE 68508.

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Contributing writers: Tom Ineck, Dan DeMuth, Tanner Gruba and Don Holmquist

Photographers: Tom Ineck, Dan DeMuth, Mike Wilson and others (File Photos)

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

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Concert Review

Fans experience Hendrix vicariously in tribute

By Tom Ineck

OMAHA, Neb.—Experience Hendrix is not just a clever name for the family-owned corporation that controls the rights to the transcendent music and iconic image of legendary guitarist Jimi Hendrix. It is a traveling tribute to the evolution of the blues and the immense role that Hendrix played in furthering that evolution.

The 2008 Experience Hendrix tour stopped at the venerable Orpheum Theater in Omaha for an Oct. 29 performance featuring such well-known Hendrixian guitar slingers as Kenny Wayne Shepherd, Jonny Lang, and Eric Johnson, along with more obscure players Eric Gales and Mato Nanji. Blues legends Buddy Guy and Hubert Sumlin reminded listeners that Hendrix also had his influences—up to a point.

Headlining the event were the two surviving members of The Jimi Hendrix Experience, bassist Billy Cox—best known for his important contribution to the live Band of Gypsies recording of New Year's Eve 1969—and drummer Mitch Mitchell, who was just 19 when he joined Hendrix and bassist Noel Redding to become perhaps the most influential band in rock history.

Mitchell was a shadow of his former self during the Omaha show, playing lackluster licks and occasionally mumbling incoherently into the microphone. Sadly, it may have been an omen of things to come. Mitchell, 61, died Nov. 12 in Portland, Ore., shortly after completing the 19-city tour.

In retrospect, the Experience Hendrix tour was also a fitting tribute to Mitchell, whose top billing was



The Jimi Hendrix Experience in 1967



"Are You Experienced?" was the 1967 debut recording by The Jimi Hendrix Experience

a testament to his significance as Hendrix's timekeeper of choice. In just four years, the Experience turned the rock music world on its ear, and its influence continues to this day. Mitchell was little more than a figurehead during the Omaha appearance, but his legacy was apparent throughout the performance.

The lion's share of the percussion duties was ably handled by Chris "Whipper" Layton, Stevie Ray Vaughan's drummer of choice from 1978 until Vaughan's death in 1990. Layton proved an excellent substitute for Mitchell, moving easily be-



Courtesy Photos

The left-handed Eric Gales

tween the blues and blues rock styles that formed the foundation of Hendrix's sound. His crackling snare technique and effortless fills never got in the way, but were always essential ingredients, tastefully executed.

It was Gales who unexpectedly set the mood for the night, opening with an aptly outrageous rendition of "Purple Haze," accompanied by Cox and Layton. A left-handed guitarist, Gales also proved an excellent singer in the soulful tradition of Hendrix. Guitarist Mato Nanji of the group Indigenous joined the trio for "Foxey Lady," then Cox belted out "Stone Free." Nanji sang and played lead on the bluesy "Hear My Train a Comin'."

Eric Johnson was undoubtedly the technical master of the evening, tearing it up on "Love or Confusion." With Cox on bass and Mitchell added on drums, he did a jazzy take on "Up From the Skies." Johnson and Gales

traded solos on an astounding version of “May This Be Love.” Johnson also performed memorable versions of “Bold as Love” and—the best of all—“Are You Experienced?” Three drummers kept the ominous march time going as Johnson convincingly mimicked the backward-looped guitar sounds that made the original 1967 recording so ground-breaking.

Despite his technical proficiency, Johnson tended to push the tempo, contrary to the laid-back, hesitation beat of the blues or the relaxed pulse of soul that influenced Hendrix. Johnson’s thin, high-pitched voice is also a far cry from the Hendrix model of sexy cool.

Johnny Lang, now 27, released his first recording while still in his mid-teens, but there’s little in his playing to set him apart from dozens of other Hendrix-influenced pickers, and his voice is even more limited than Johnson’s. He did a credible job on “Fire,” with help from Aerosmith’s Brad Whitford, a fine guitarist who usually plays second fiddle to Joe



Eric Johnson coaxes feedback from a Marshall speaker.



Guitarist Kenny Wayne Shepherd and singer Noah Hunt combine in a dramatic performance.



Guitarists (from left) Brad Whitford, Buddy Guy and Ric Hall trade Hendrix licks with bassist Billy Cox.

Perry. Lang and Whitford also delivered “The Wind Cries Mary,” with Mitchell joining Layton on drums, and “Spanish Castle Magic,” with Layton only. By the way, Scott Nelson did a great job on bass whenever Cox wasn’t on stage.

Kenny Wayne Shepherd played the role of rock “guitar god,” striking flamboyant stage poses for dramatic effect on “Come On,” “I Don’t Live Today,” “Voodoo Chile” and “Voodoo Child (Slight Return).” Outstanding singer Noah Hunt added a professional sheen to the Shepherd set, despite an occasional lapse into hyper-blues pretentiousness.

Guitarists David Hidalgo and Cesar Rosas of Los Lobos fame seemed out of place amid the blues-

rock pyrotechnics of the other string virtuosi, but they delivered soulful versions of “Can You See Me,” “Little Wing,” with Mitchell and Cox added, and “Them Changes,” which was dedicated to the late Buddy Miles, the tune’s composer and Omaha’s native son. Mato Nanji joined the group for a solo on the last tune.

Oddly, the show ended with the evening’s weakest set. Rather than begin chronologically with the blues and track the evolu-

tion to Hendrix’s jazzy, audacious rethinking of the blues, the program’s order was reversed.

It came to a close with 76-year-old Hubert Sumlin hobbling on stage to perform “You Should Have Quit Me,” followed by Buddy Guy and “The Best Damn Fool You Ever Saw.” Guy’s a fine guitar player, but he also possesses a huge ego, making it difficult for him to share the stage with others. That was apparent on “Red House,” where he was joined by Brad Whitford, Billy Cox and Mitch Mitchell, and on “Hey Joe,” with Hidalgo and Rosas. Among the under-recognized standout players were guitarist Ric Hall, keyboardist Marty Sammon, and drummer Tim Austin.

Everyone played with obvious respect, even adoration, for the music and legacy of Jimi Hendrix. But even after three hours of familiar riffs delivered with mind-boggling technique, the listener was left with a feeling of inadequacy. None of these skilled performers could match the musical audacity, the revolutionary guitar style, the lyrical experimentation, the soulful intensity or the cosmic humor of the original. That’s what makes Hendrix so great, and so greatly missed.

Courtesy Photos

Concert Review

Bill Watrous brings challenges to NJO

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—The Nebraska Jazz Orchestra opened its 2008-2009 season with a zinger Nov. 7 at The Cornhusker, putting legendary trombonist Bill Watrous squarely in the spotlight in a program of tunes that continually challenged the big band throughout the evening.

Justifiably billed as an “L.A. Legend,” Watrous claimed his fame more than 30 years ago with a pair of classic jazz recordings on Columbia, 1974’s “Manhattan Wildlife Refuge” and 1975’s “The Tiger of San Pedro.”

As a West Coast studio musician and guest artist on dozens of recordings, he has maintained his standing among the greats on his instrument, a standing he confirmed with his latest NJO appearance. His association with the NJO actually goes back 30 years, to a 1978 concert with the band, then known as the Neoclassic Jazz Orchestra.

The band kicked things off with the provocatively titled “I’ve Got the #@4++\$?% Blues,” by Rex Cadwallader, a longtime contributor to the NJO songbook.

Watrous joined them for a clever up-tempo reworking of “After You’ve Gone” called “Before You Left,” composed by Tom Kubis, an obvious favorite of the trombonist’s. The sax section got its first of many workouts, with Ed Love on soprano and Paul Haar taking a brawny solo on tenor. Watrous displayed his gorgeous honey tone and faultless facility during his solo statement.

Perfectly at ease in the role of master of ceremonies, Watrous told the story of his minor league baseball career being cut short by a draft notice from the Selective Service Sys-



Photo by Tom Ineck

Trombonist Bill Watrous performs a set of challenging tunes with the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra Nov. 7 at The Cornhusker hotel in Lincoln.

tem. He then surprised the audience of 300 by displaying a versatile voice on a Kubis arrangement of “When You’re Smiling.” After singing the refrain, he dove into a horn solo of leaping octaves and intricately articulated lines.

An easy-swinging Kubis arrangement of “Who Can I Turn To?” had the sax section playing a beautiful group solo before turning it over to Haar and Darren Pettit for individual tenor sax solos and a series of four-bar trades. Watrous settled into the familiar changes with lilting trombone phrases and a lush tone.

Humorously giving fair warning to musicians and audience alike, Watrous introduced the tricky Gordon Goodwin tune “I Got the ZZZ’s” by saying “Gordon’s charts are the great sobriety tests of all time.” The devilishly difficult changes again had the saxes playing in unison, followed by a pairing-off of Haar on tenor and Love on soprano.

After the break, the band re-

turned with Duke Ellington’s “Blues for New Orleans,” arranged by NJO alumnus Dave Sharp.

Tom Kubis’ “Space Available” was a snappy, up-tempo swinger, but Haar stayed on top of it with a scintillating tenor solo. Watrous again showed his prowess with a brilliantly articulated solo.

Guitarist Peter Bouffard delivered an imaginative solo on the Basie-style bluesy swinger “It’ll Count If it Goes,” also by Goodwin. The entire brass section got a workout on this one. “Exactly Like This,” a Tom Kubis take on “Exactly Like You,” featured Brad Obbink on a Harmon-muted trumpet solo and Love on a fluid flute statement.

But the crowning glory of the evening was the driving, funky “Mama Llama Samba,” with snaking modulations and infectious rhythms boiling underneath as soloists Pettit, Bouffard and Watrous negotiated intricate solos.

Concert Review

Dylan returns home for historic concert

By Tanner Gruba

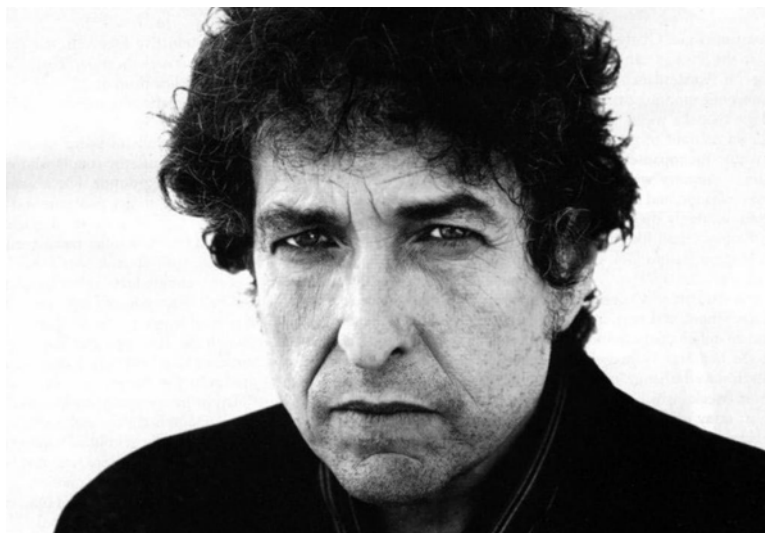
MINNEAPOLIS—On the eve of a historic presidential election, the be-all and end-all, Bob Dylan, returned to his native Minnesota to put on nothing short of an epic show. Dylan and his band played at the University of Minnesota's Northrop Auditorium to a near-packed house of roughly 4,000 long-time fans, students, and everyone in between.

The Nov. 4 show consisted of a diverse collection of his songs, from albums old and new. The majority were drastically altered from their original sound, with altered styles, time signatures, and tempos. As many would have expected, the concert had a politically centered theme.

Dylan kicked off the show with his now-common, steel guitar-driven opener "Cat's in the Well," something of a lesser-known song from his 1990 album "Under the Red Sky." He moved into a not instantly-recognizable "The Times They Are a-Changin'." The crowd's roar reached a peak during each refrain of the Dylan classic.

He brought the crowd back to various earlier albums with songs like "Tangled Up in Blue," "Stuck Inside of Mobile with the Memphis Blues Again," and "Highway 61 Revisited." "Masters of War" was played as a brooding, dark ballad, a contrast with the original acoustic recording. "It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)" on the other hand, was turned completely upside down, recognizable only by its masterful lyrics.

Dylan played primarily keyboard for the entire evening, a consistent practice of his in recent shows. His band was tight, with Tony Garnier providing sonorous and driving bass



Courtesy Photo

Bob Dylan

lines. Stu Kimball provided solid rhythm guitar, and Denny Freeman played the lead guitar parts. George Recile held down the tempo with precision on drums, and Donnie Heron displayed multiple talents in violin, viola, banjo, and steel guitar.

As the 17-song set list continued into the night, Bob played more songs from his new album, "Modern Times." He also included the touching "Shooting Star" from "Oh Mercy," in which halfway through, he strapped on an electric guitar for the only time during the show. For the rest, Dylan stuck to keyboard, which was quite prominent in the mix. He even soloed a couple times on the organ-voiced keys.

Dylan played the somber "Ain't Talkin'" before leaving the stage. While the crowd was cheering for an encore, many people were eagerly checking their phones for election data. Bob finally returned to the stage for the inevitable "Like a Rolling Stone." Before his final song, he had a few words to say regarding the spe-

cial circumstances of the evening.

"I was born in 1941, the year they bombed Pearl Harbor," he said. "I've been living in a world of darkness ever since, but it looks like things are going to change now." The song "Blowin' in the Wind" then filled the auditorium, a perfectly appropriate end to an incredible show.

As the audience proceeded out of the auditorium into the entrance hall, a titanic TV was projecting the results of the presidential election. The hall erupted into a euphoric cavalcade. There were people crying, couples embracing, and a wave of incessant noise. A massive congregation soon followed outside the hall in the middle of the campus square to conclude the concert aftermath.

Dylan played a fantastic and charged set that evening, making it a concert like no other. The fact that he had returned to his old college on such an important occasion made the show memorable beyond mortal dream.

Colorado Correspondent

“Sutton’s Pianorama” lives up to its billing

By Dan DeMuth

DENVER—The weekend of Oct. 18-19 in Denver provided beautiful weather and music as Sunnie Sutton hosted the 9th annual Rocky Mountain Jazz Party at the downtown Denver Marriott Center.

This series actually dates to 1989 at the Jerome Hotel in Aspen, with Sunnie and her now deceased husband Ralph taking over the baton in 2000. This year’s party, dubbed “Sutton’s Pianorama,” lived up to its billing with Dick Hyman and Derek Smith, sharing the stage with two pianists perhaps not so well known in the states as in Europe, Rossano Sportiello and Louis Mazetier.

Chuck Berghofer, Jay Leonhart, Frank Capp, Jake Hanna, Bucky Pizzarelli, John Allred, Ken Peplowski, Houston Person, Warren Vache—all names that individually and certainly collectively wouldn’t ordinarily be considered supporting players occasionally filled that role as the pianists put on a memorable performance. With seating limited to 250, these parties lend an intimacy to the musician’s relationship with the approving audience, much as a club setting allows. Alternating from solo performances through duets, trios and on up to the full-blown monte, we jazz aficionados were treated to one of those events permanently encoded in our grey matter.

Hyman is a master of virtually all keyboard styles and able to play imperturbably while doing so. He simply makes everything look too easy. Smith counters with a display of great enthusiasm which doesn’t detract from his equally great versatility. And, even after coming to the states over



Photo by Mike Wilson

Dick Hyman at the piano



Rossano Sportiello and Louis Mazetier

50 years ago he still speaks with that beautiful British accent. Sportiello and Mazetier, generally recognized as being the best in their craft in perhaps all of Europe, are now spreading the word here in the U.S. Simply as a matter of comparison, their techniques fall somewhere between Hyman and Smith.

The multitude of piano perfor-

mances ranged from ballads to boogie, with such tunes as “Exactly Like You,” “Can’t We Be Friends,” “Just You, Just Me,” “After You’ve Gone,” “St. Louis Blues,” “Drop Me Off In Harlem,” and “Diga Diga Doo” as a sampling. For me, the high points involved the four pianists playing simultaneously on two facing concert grand pianos (I’ll do the math, that’s eight hands or forty fingers) while rotating one at a time to the next bench without missing a beat. I must add they were able to do this on everything from a Gershwin ballad to a raucous 10-minute improvised version of something they called “Eight-Hand Boogie Woogie.”

I asked Dick Hyman his opinion of these two young lions and he responded saying they were more than ready to take over and assume any mantle he and Smith might eventually leave behind. The respect these four pianists had for each other would have

been obvious to anyone who could hear, sight not being a requirement.

There were the usual mixed pairings in virtually every possible configuration throughout, and while some of these artists seem to have been on the scene forever their talent has not waned. Bucky ripped off some amazing guitar runs both as a soloist and providing rhythm. And he still has that great smile. While cornetist Warren Vache doesn't dote on making happy faces, the occasional impish grin sneaks out, belying the fact he enjoys playing the curmudgeon role. With a career that now spans about 35 years, listening to him play in the high altitude of Denver and requiring the assistance of a cane because of hip issues that force him to play sitting down, he still has the beautiful, clear forceful tones. He told me he is able to do this simply because one doesn't play his horn with his face; it's all in controlling the breathing.

Jay Leonhart—great bassist, fertile mind. Over the years a virtual who's who of more than 80 artists has appeared at these parties without any vocalists, unless one includes the in-



Louis Mazetier takes a turn at the keyboard during "Sutton's Pianorama."

imitable Jay. He had just penned and performed a new composition about the failure of Dutch tulips in the securities markets, a takeoff on our financial fiascos. You'd have to hear it to understand and then walk away shaking your head.

Ken Peplowski continues to be the clarinetist with the mostest on the jazz circuits and also blows a pretty sax, as well as displaying the "let's have a good time up here" mindset. Tenor man Houston Person performed mainly with rhythm backing, which is obvious given his style, except for the finale, which we'll get to shortly. He told me that despite the breathy tones he is so well noted for, he was influenced as a youth by some of the honkers such as Big Jay McNeely, Joe Houston and Earl Bostic.

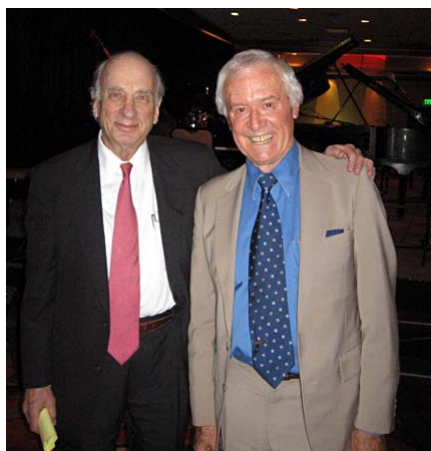
Trombonist John Allred plays comfortably in any style and left a few wet eyes with a solo rendition of Dorsey's "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," dedicated to the attending family of the recently deceased Tom Dorsey (Tommy's son), a longtime Denver resident and faithful attendee at these jazz parties. This was my first exposure and good fortune to hear bassist Chuck Berghofer, who started with bandleader Skinny Ennis

and has among his many credits touring and recording with Sinatra.

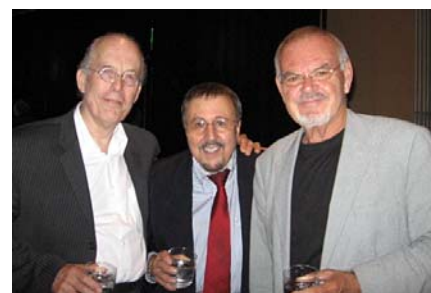
Drummers Frankie Capp and Jake Hanna are ageless. Neither is prone to bombastic solos, content in the rhythm backup role or occasionally driving the assemblage when required. In a lighter moment, when asked to solo, Capp did a very short interlude with tom toms in no particular meter and said "that's what I think about drum solos." Artie Shaw would have loved it.

The final set of the last night started with a tongue-in-cheek performance by the four pianists, with everyone else on stage except, unaccountably, Bucky. It was allegedly "O Sole Mio," which quickly segued into some stride and boogie woogie and then was transmuted into a no-holds-barred version of "The Saints." This again had the four pianists doing their rotation, Berghofer and Leonhart sharing the bass and Capp and Hanna sharing drums. And yes, here was the cool Houston Person blowing on one of the oldest tunes in the book in a front line that also featured Peplowski on clarinet along with Allred and Vache.

As Butch Berman used to say, "Life is a gas. You just have to inhale once in awhile."



Dick Hyman and Derek Smith



Bassist Jay Leonhart, drummer Al Capp and bassist Chuck Berghofer

Colorado Correspondent

Whitesell and the All Stars make the joint jump

By Dan DeMuth

BOULDER, Colo.—Oct. 25 found us in Boulder, catching up with the hottest jump blues band this side of the North Pole. Yes, jump blues, as epitomized by such artists as Louis Jordan, Big Joe Turner, Johnny Otis, Joe Liggins, Roy Brown and Omaha's own Wynonie Harris.

George Whitesell's All Stars is a Colorado Springs-based group that has been playing selected gigs up and down the Front Range for about two years. Members are comprised of musicians who often front their own groups, both blues and jazz, a true all-star group with George providing the guitar licks, male vocals and occasionally blowing some alto sax.

This type of music requires a sax section supremo, and they don't disappoint. Brad Eastin, whose resume' includes such diverse names as Frankie Laine, Cab Calloway, Rosie Clooney and the USAF Falconaires arranges for the band and holds court on tenor, much as he does in several local jazz groups.

Relative newcomer Marty Sarlette, another graduate of the USAF bands, also blows a mean tenor and has added some, shall we say, "choreography" to the reed section circa the Louis Jordan era, which adds to the authenticity and general good feeling this band exudes.

Providing a contrast to the tenors, while proving a baritone can also honk, is Chris Wojtecki. His folio also includes working with such luminaries as Lesley Gore and Sam The Sham and the Pharaohs and playing with many excellent local groups.

Drummer Dave Deason gives a 3D performance without too much



George Whitesell and the All Stars with vocalist Jill Watkins at Classics



George Whitesell

panache—a noble trait. The same can be said of bassist Santi Guarnera and keyboardist Tim Zahn—drivin' the bus and makin' no fuss.

Ah, but they haven't forgotten the great female artists during this late '40s and early '50s era. Talented Jill Watkins, who has fronted her own group, as well as performing with others, handles this end with all of the embodiment and embellishment one would expect with this group.

Jill has a voice that can nail the shingles to the roof or coax the fuzz off a peach. Whether providing countenance to the likes of Ruth

Brown, Etta James, Camille Howard or LaVern Baker in the "mean mamas" mode, or enticing the aforementioned peach fuzz in the manner of Sylvia Robinson of the Mickey and Sylvia duo on the classic "Love Is Strange" (Reviewer's note: George, you need to get this in your repertoire!), Jill brings talent along with personality.

Space doesn't allow me to list the roster of songs they put into the too-short two hours on stage, but I want to list just a few. George handled the vocals on Berry's "You Never Can Tell," Little Richard's "Baby," Joe Turner's "Oke She Moke She Pop," and Cleanhead Vinson's "Kidney Stew."

Jill ably took care of Etta's "At Last" and "Tell Mama," and her renditions of "I need A Young Man" and "Dr. Feelgood" had all of the ladies feeling good about whatever it is the good doctor does.

Intersperse all of this with some great instrumentals by a band really digging what they're doing, and it's a great revue. A short clip of the band is at <http://www.myspace.com/georgewhitesell>.

Photos by Dan DeMuth

Concert Review

Lindley and Katz continue grand Zoo tradition

By Tom Ineck

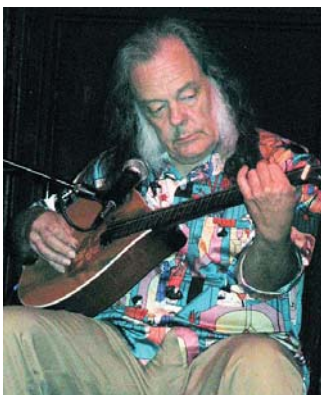
LINCOLN, Neb.—I am frequently reminded how precious a home-grown, hometown live-music club can be, especially one with an eclectic booking policy and a loyal clientele. Such is the Zoo Bar, Lincoln's most intimate and—for the adventurous music fan—most consistently satisfying venue since it opened its doors in 1973.

Two recent visits perfectly illustrate the reasons for the Zoo's excellent reputation and my continued patronage. Multi-instrumentalist and storyteller par excellence David Lindley returned for a Sept. 21 solo performance, and on Oct. 24 jazz and blues organist and piano player Bruce Katz brought his band back to the Zoo for a spectacular show.

Lindley, perhaps best known for his many years playing guitar and recording with Warren Zevon and Jackson Browne, has hammered out a solo career over many arduous years of one-night stands at small clubs just like the Zoo. Already on the road for six weeks before his Lincoln appearance, the 64-year-old road veteran seemed a little weary, but neither his musicianship nor his sense of humor seemed to suffer.

Utilizing at least seven acoustic, stringed instruments

over the course of the evening, Lindley performed Zevon's "Seminole Bingo," Bruce Springsteen's "Brothers Under the Bridge" and Steve Earle's "Copperhead Road," in addition to the traditional gospel tune "What is the Soul of a Man?" and the Eastern exotica



David Lindley at the Zoo

Photo by Reynold Peterson



The Bruce Katz Band swings the blues at the Zoo Bar.

Photo by Tom Ineck

"Tasin," on which he demonstrated improvised scales on the oud. In describing the challenges of the fretless instrument, he said, "You gotta play it like an ant."

Reprising his popular novelty "Backstage Food," Lindley added a new chapter to the continuing saga about the often-unappetizing meals served to traveling musicians who are at the mercy of their employers. While strumming a slide guitar on his lap, he told of "driving 600 miles for a 45-minute show," then related a story from bassist Leland Sklar about a cooking trip to

China, where he was offered a burlap bag full of human feet, "gray with yellow toenails."

"Disgusting!" you may say, but the way Lindley tells a story, it was also delightful fun, like a roomful of kids having a "gross out" contest.

The Bruce Katz Band, on the other hand, was all business. Katz earned his stripes playing with Ronnie Earl and the Broadcasters, as well as early stints with Barrence Whitfield and the Savages, Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry, and Jimmy Witherspoon. At 56, he has half a dozen recordings under his own name and a touring band that always tears it up.

Katz was cooking that night at the Zoo, switching easily from funky jazz organ to boogie-woogie piano to bluesy accompaniment for an equally versatile guitarist. Among the many favorites performed were blistering renditions of "Hep-ology," "Norton's Boogie," "Mississippi Moan," "Jackalope Bar-B-Q," "Elmore's Glue," and the classic cover version of "Compared to What."

It's a testament to the Zoo Bar's staying power that both of these shows were very well attended. Here's hoping that the Zoo continues to stake its reputation on musical diversity and the relatively small, but very hip fan base that has nurtured it for so many years.

Memorial

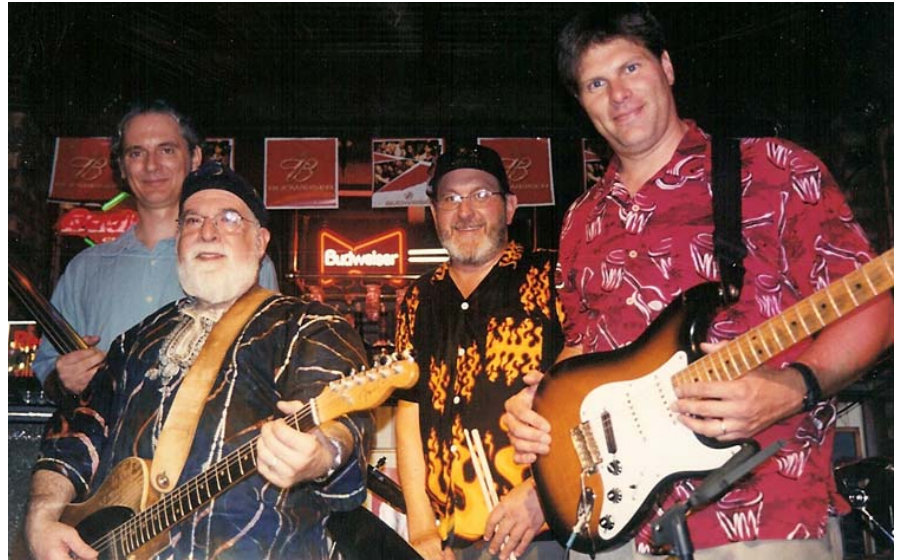
A brother in music pays tribute to Butch Berman

By Don Holmquist

Editor's Note: Don Holmquist was the drummer in Butch Berman's final band, *The Cronin Brothers*. Formed in 2004, the Cronins were also the longest-running band that Butch was ever in, a considerable accomplishment in a professional music career that spanned 44 years and more than 20 bands. Don lives in Lincoln, Neb.

LINCOLN, Neb.—It has been almost a year now since I lost a brother to the hereafter. I did not lose him in life because Butch lived it to the fullest and his love, creativity and enthusiasm live on.

Butch Berman and I were brothers in music and in a band. Butch always referred to his band mates as brothers. We could talk for hours about music, spirituality, psychology, recovery, health, sojourns, love, life and loss. We were not always in agreement, but that was perfectly fine with Butch. He appeared to welcome conflicting per-



File Photo

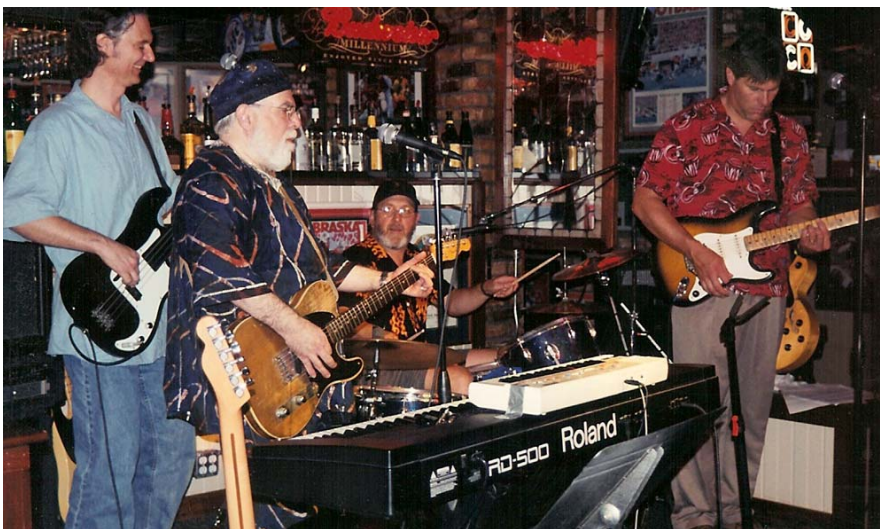
The Cronin Brothers (from left) were bassist Craig Kingery, guitarist and keyboardist Butch Berman, drummer Don Holmquist and guitarist Bill Lohrberg.

spectives and, in fact, almost thrived on conflict. There were times when I wondered if we would ever be able to mend the fence after he would reel off one of his infamous acerbic “insight”-oriented e-mails, but we always did. We tossed around barbs much like

many siblings toss around the football. But in the end, we knew it was just a game. We agreed that our conflict was just a function of two alpha males jockeying for a position that wasn't there.

This publication's esteemed editor gave me some perspective on my conflicts with Butch. He tells a story about a time Butch was hanging with an old friend. He looked over at the guy and said something like, “You know, I think that you are one of the only people that I have never been mad at... and that bothers me.”

Butch had such a zeal for his own ideas that very few people ever had the gumption (or alpha audacity) to contradict what sometimes seemed to be distorted thinking. He had an incredible ability to think in another dimension. And he didn't understand why people seemed to follow and agree with his thinking, but then disagreed behind his back. He would ask me, “Why wouldn't people tell me that they don't agree with me?” I would



File Photo

The Cronins rock the house in live performance, with Butch Berman doubling on guitar and keyboards, Don Holmquist on drums, Craig Kingery on bass and Bill Lohrberg on guitar.

reply, "Butch, you're a difficult person to have an argument with." He told me on more than one occasion that it was the confrontational honesty that he admired in our relationship. That honesty strengthened our bond. And I learned that despite our different views, there was magic imbedded in his thinking.

Butch had an insatiable thirst for everything decadent and wonderful. In this too, we were brothers. In fact, each of our unbridled searches for altered states led to the name of our band. In 1993, in need of some help, I called him about a "therapeutic health spa" that he had been to. I wondered whether he thought that it was worth it and asked about his experience. He replied, naturally thinking I was wondering about the amenities, "Oh man, they have great food—and did you know that Eric Clapton was just there?!" Well, of course, that was all I needed to hear. I lived in the same place Butch (and Eric Clapton) had, the Cronin unit.

That shared experience gave us a bond and a band name. When our band formed, it became the Cronin Brothers. In the Cronin spirit, Butch strove to be "au natural" during many

periods of his life and he did an exceptional job in his attempts. His band mantra reflected this perspective. He would say, "The Cronin Brothers, it's a state of mind."

In those last weeks, he didn't waver from that. I found out about Butch's last health battle over the phone. He rang me up and said, "Hey, guess what I did over the weekend?" I asked, "What'd you do this weekend?" to which he replied, "I had brain surgery." I thought to myself, "Oh man, Butch, you have had a multitude of creative ways of looking at things in the past, but this is a new one!" He literally had undergone a cranial exploration with a biopsy. "Wow," I wondered, "What'd they see in there?" I told him that I had always wanted to look inside his head to see from whence his funky ideas emanated.

His magical, positive state of mind carried him through his illness, along with the support of his wonderful wife and friends. I vividly remember him saying, "I'll beat this thing, I'll show those bastards!" He had an uncanny knack for surrounding himself with people that made him feel good, which I always admired. And he made others feel good, too—thousands, even,

with his music and support of music.

I feel very blessed to have been initiated into Butch's music fraternity. In his world, anyone who had anything to do with music was part of the fraternity, and he realized that you don't have to like everyone in your fraternity, but you are brothers nonetheless.

The Cronin Brothers was Butch's last band. We played our last gig about a month before his last breath. With all of the ups and downs we had throughout the years, I'm grateful that the very last words I said to him were, "I love you, buddy." He was just as I love to remember him, sitting at the piano with his guitar around his neck. As I departed our sacred practice room that night, I didn't know that would be the last verbal communication I would have with him.

Although those were my last words, they were not the last of our communication. Butch still speaks to us often. I often find people saying, "Butch would...", as if he were in the room reminding us. Just the other day, my mother and I were driving past the turnoff to his house and, in near perfect unison, we uttered "Hi, Butch." Thanks for the memories, brother, past, present, and future.

NJO continues 2008-2009 concert season

LINCOLN, Neb.—The Nebraska Jazz Orchestra continues its 2008-2009 concert season, featuring nationally-known guest instrumentalists, popular big-band favorites and new arrangements.

General admission tickets for individual concerts may be purchased in advance or at the door for each concert. Ticket prices are \$20 for adults \$20 and \$10 for students. Concert times and locations follow.

"Learning From the Master,"
Thursday, Jan. 22, 7:30 p.m.,
Cornhusker Marriott, 333 S. 13th St.
Young talent will be featured along

with Mike Tomaro, multi-talented woodwind performer, composer, arranger, and director of jazz studies at Duquesne University. Tomaro will perform with the NJO and the 2009 Young Lions All-Star Band.

"It's Not Rocket Science,"
Tuesday, March 24, 7:30 p.m.,
Cornhusker Marriott, 333 S. 13th St.
With a degree in aerospace engineering, Dana Hall now leads a number of his own groups and performs with the Chicago Jazz Ensemble. Included in this concert will be a local jazz ensemble as part of the "Jazz 101" program.

"Plays Well with Others,"
Tuesday, May 19, 7:30 p.m.,
Cornhusker Marriott, 333 S. 13th St.
This concert will feature one of L.A.'s most highly sought and award-winning trumpet players, Wayne Bergeron, and the winner of the 2009 NJO Young Jazz Artist Competition.

The NJO season also includes a popular annual event, a Valentines Day dinner and dance on Saturday, Feb. 14, at 6 p.m. at the Cornhusker Marriott. The concert features Big Band classics and is not included with season membership.

By Tom Ineck

Memorial

BMF friend, consultant Hedman dies at 63

By Tom Ineck

Master conguero, composer and bandleader Norman Hedman, a long-time friend and consultant of the **Berman Music Foundation**, died Sept. 29 in New York City after a struggle of many months with acute myeloid leukemia and pneumonia. He was 63.

BMF founder the late Butch Berman was a tireless advocate for Hedman and his band, Tropique. The foundation was the executive producer of several CDs by Hedman's rhythmically-charged tropical jazz group, including "One Step Closer" in 1999, "Taken By Surprise" in 2000 and "Garden of Forbidden Fruit" in 2006. The BMF also helped to fund flutist-singer Andrienne Wilson's "She's Dangerous," a 1998 release on which Hedman played a prominent role as co-producer and percussionist.

Over the years, the BMF brought Norman Hedman's Tropique to Lincoln, Neb., for several performances, including Jazz in June appearances in 1997 and 2003, and a concert in March 2001 opening for Jerry Gonzalez and the Fort Apache Band at the Lied Center for Performing Arts.

The foundation also brought the band to the Kansas City International Jazz Festival in June 1999 and the Topeka Jazz Festival in 2005, when Butch Berman was the event's music director.

Born July 17, 1945, in Jamaica, the West Indies, Hedman began playing the congas as a young teenager growing up in Brooklyn, after he retrieved a drum from a neighborhood garbage can. Blending the irresistible beats of the Caribbean with the American sounds of jazz, funk, soul, and rhythm 'n' blues, his diversity later



File Photo

Norman Hedman, 1945-2008

would land him gigs with The Spinners, Daryl Hall, The Main Ingredient, New Kids on the Block, Chico Freeman and Alicia Keys, among many others.

Before pursuing a career in music, Hedman graduated from Brooklyn College with a business major in marketing. But after leaving the Army he worked as a studio musician for several decades, primarily in pop music, before forming Tropique in 1995. He performed on five number one hits and three movie soundtracks. He was preparing to accompany Keys on her 2008 world tour when he was diagnosed with cancer.

In April, representatives of the Berman Music Foundation traveled to New York to attend a benefit for Hedman at the Jazz Standard. Hedman was too ill to attend the event, which raised more than \$7,500 toward his medical expenses.

Hedman is survived by his wife

of 36 years, Michelline, his mother Ruby, son Norjon, and daughter Misha; brother Tony; sister Barbara Codrington and two grandchildren, Norjon Hedman and Taija Law.

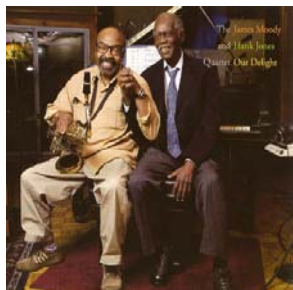
A funeral Mass was celebrated Oct. 3 at Holy Cross Church in Manhattan, followed by burial at Calverton Cemetery in Long Island. In lieu of flowers, tax deductible donations may be sent to Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, P.O. Box 27106, New York, NY 10087. Please include your full name and address, and specify that the gift is in memory of Norman Hedman in support of leukemia research. Ask them to notify the Hedman family at 484 W. 43rd St., Apt 3-S, New York, NY 10036. Checks should be payable to Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

Editor's Note: Thanks to Dawn DeBlaze for providing some of the information for this story.

Jazz on Disc

Moody, Jones collaboration "Our Delight," indeed

By Tom Ineck



JAMES MOODY/HANK JONES
Our Delight
 IPO Recordings

It is, indeed, "Our Delight" to listen to this historic recording pairing the still-vibrant jazz masters James Moody and Hank Jones.

At the time of the date in June 2006, Moody was 81 and Jones was 87, but they play with the vitality and imagination of young lions. With a generous program largely comprised of tunes by Dizzy Gillespie and Tadd Dameron, IPO Recordings has again produced a well-polished gem of lasting value.

The quartet is completed with bassist Todd Coolman and drummer Adam Nussbaum, excellent choices for a swinging, tasteful session that stays mainly in the mid-tempo range.

On the title track, by Dameron, Moody leaps in with his trademark tenor sound as Jones comps and fills with grace and assurance. Jones' own solo echoes Moody's mood. "Birk's Works" gets a laid-back, bluesy treatment and features a bass solo on which Coolman pays his respects to Ray Brown.

Jones delves deeply into the changes on "Con Alma." Moody's tenor caresses the melody on Dameron's "Lady Bird," then explores all the harmonic possibilities in

an extended solo. Jones takes his cue and ups the ante with deft turns of phrase.

Taken at breakneck tempo, Sonny Stitt's "Eternal Triangle" is the most challenging tune here, pressing Moody through the changes and keeping Jones on his toes. They meet the challenge with surprising gusto and quick reflexes, and Nussbaum's four-bar breaks stoke the fire. Moody and Jones pair off for a lovely, romantic reading of "Body and Soul."

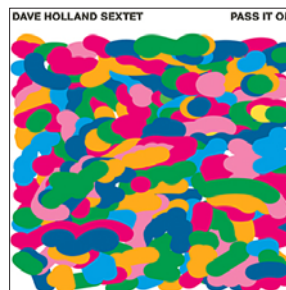
"Good Bait," written by Dameron and a familiar favorite of Gillespie's, swings breezily, thanks to Nussbaum's constant support. Moody switches to flute on his sly and witty composition "Darben the Red Foxx."

Back on tenor, he evokes a sultry, breathy noir ambiance on a nine-minute version of Dameron's "Soul Trane." The tempo accelerates one more time for Gillespie's "Woody 'N' You," a showcase for Jones and for Nussbaum's effortless percussion.

"Old Folks" is another duo, this time with Moody stating the classic melody on flute and Jones sensitively providing the accompaniment.

As an added bonus, Jimmy Heath's "Moody's Groove" is sung by Italian native Roberta Gambarini, who draws convincingly from the vocal tradition of Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan and Carmen McRae, right down to the graceful scatting.

An instant classic, "Our Delight" is nearly 80 minutes of delightful musical repartee between two legends of jazz history. It comes in an attractive gatefold package with color portraits of Moody and Jones and informative notes by bassist Coolman.



DAVE HOLLAND SEXTET
Pass It On
 Dare2 Records

After a decade in which bassist Dave Holland's format of choice was a quintet also consisting of saxophone, trombone, vibraphone, and drums, he has changed the formula to a six-piece band that adds trumpet and piano to the mix, while dropping the vibes.

It may seem like a subtle shift in emphasis, but the results are magical on "Pass It On." The three-horn front line creates fuller harmonies and the piano is a more harmonically rich and rhythmically muscular instrument than the vibes. Once again, Holland has found a way to keep the music fresh and exciting.

As always, Holland leads a sonically democratic outfit, allowing his bandmates plenty of room for improvisation and group interplay, even though he wrote all but one of the nine tunes. With a lineup that includes Antonio Hart on alto sax, Robin Eubanks on trombone, Alex Sipiagin on trumpet, Mulgrew Miller on piano and Eric Harland on drums, Holland can rest assured that they will deliver.

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Eubanks' aptly titled opener, "The Sum of All Parts," immediately establishes the value of the sextet by "building" the group from its various "parts," beginning with trombone and percussion, then gradually adding alto sax, trumpet, bass and piano in funky syncopation. Eventually, the band comes together to state the melody en masse, followed by a brilliant bass solo and more group dynamics. It's an ingenious technique for introducing the new band and the new sound.

"Fast Track" has the horns bursting out of the gate uptempo, but the tune also is a showcase for Miller's wonderful keyboard work. Holland introduces "Lazy Snake" with a slithering bass solo, before turning the melody over to the horns. A longtime Holland employee, Eubanks takes the first solo, followed by Sipiagin and Hart. The tempo accelerates again for "Double Vision," a rhythmically complex piece that features another inspired Eubanks solo and some incredible drum pyrotechnics.

Miller begins "Equality" with a sensitive piano statement, later joined by Hart on the melody, with tasteful accompaniment by Holland and Harland. The other horns enter near the end, but only as accompaniment to Hart's soulful, extended improvisation. "Modern Times" is a bouncy, mid-tempo tune that beautifully harmonizes the horns over a pulsing rhythm. Eubanks and Miller get brief solos, but the ensemble is the star here.

At nearly 14 minutes, "Rivers Run" begins with Hart blowing like Coltrane over an intense modal riff. A true melodic theme doesn't emerge until after Holland solos, about halfway through the tune. Eubanks, Harland, and Sipiagin take solos between accelerating en-

semble passages that seem to mimic the dangerous rapids implied by the title. The stately "Processional" showcases Sipiagin's deft trumpet work, and the title track closes the proceedings with a funky urgency and a reiteration of Holland's high standard of group interplay, as bandmates alternately weave harmonies and take solos.



DENISE DONATELLI
What Lies Within
Savant Records

With her sophomore release, Denise Donatelli beyond a doubt establishes herself as one of the brightest vocal stars on the horizon. "What Lies Within" is a recording of astounding depth, with exciting arrangements by pianist-producer Geoffrey Keezer and imaginative performances by all involved.

Donatelli's voice is exhilarating as it takes flight in the compatible company of Keezer, reed master Bob Sheppard, guitarist Peter Sprague, bassist Hamilton Price and omnipresent drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith. Other noteworthy contributions come from trumpeter Carl Saunders and percussionist Alex Acuna.

The listener leaps to attention with the comparatively brief opener, an exuberant three-minute reading of "My Shining Hour." Donatelli delivers the lyric and a scat interlude with confidence and aplomb, as Keezer on piano, Sheppard on tenor and Sprague on guitar set the solo

performance standard at a very high level. The Ivan Lins tune "Sails (Velas Icadas)" is given a funky, syncopated backbeat that draws inspired solos by Keezer and Sheppard on alto sax. Then Donatelli and Sheppard lock melody lines in tandem.

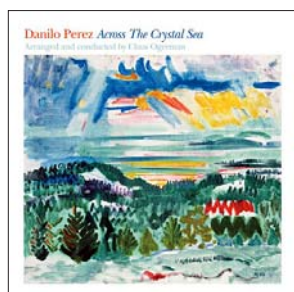
Perhaps the highlight of the entire recording is Donatelli's exquisite rendering of Chick Corea's "Crystal Silence," with lyrics by Neville Potter. This time, Sheppard soars on soprano sax, flute and alto flute, and Donatelli goes on a wordless vocal excursion in perfect harmony. On the samba "I Love it When You Dance That Way," she chimes in unison with Saunders' flugelhorn as though truly dancing. Sprague on nylon-string guitar and Smith on brushes create the ideal rhythm.

Donatelli proves just as capable with the phrasing and breathing demands of a ballad on the standard "We'll Be Together Again," which also features a wonderful bass solo by Price. Again her phrasing stands out in the long, snaking lines of the modal "Like an Old Song," where her voice deftly weaves with the difficult piano and tenor sax improvisations. Clifford Brown's "Daahoud" gets a new lease on life with "Beloved," an imaginative reworking that has Donatelli exhibiting some very sophisticated lyrical gymnastics.

Keezer's own "Four Walls" is the setting for another sensitive Donatelli performance, which is enhanced by the cello work of Giovanni Clayton, Sprague's nylon-string guitar and the organ voicings of Carlos Del Rosario. Saunders contributes some very cool muted trumpet on a bluesy rendition of Joni Mitchell's "Be Cool." The whole band delivers on the magical song "Make This City Ours Tonight." J.J. Johnson's classic "La-

ment,” here entitled “This Lament,” closes the recording with a mournful, yet hopeful piano-voice duet.

In a market flooded by aspiring—and largely mediocre—vocalists, Donatelli easily rises to the top. With two excellent releases (her debut, “In the Company of Friends,” was released in 2005), she is well on her way to the recognition she so richly deserves.



DANILO PEREZ
Across the Crystal Sea
EmArcy Records

Some critics reject any attempt to marry the jazz esthetic with the classical tradition, ignoring the fact that many jazz artists have created some of their most memorable work with orchestral accompaniment, including Charlie Parker, Stan Getz, George Shearing, Bill Evans and Oscar Peterson. Properly arranged and conducted, the lush backdrop can actually enhance the artist's contributions.

So it is with Danilo Perez's “Across the Crystal Sea,” a collection of tunes bearing the trademark romantic treatment of arranger and conductor Claus Ogerman, best known for similar projects with Antonio Carlos Jobim, Wes Montgomery, Diana Krall and the above-mentioned Getz, Evans and Peterson. Granted, Ogerman's arrangements are neither ground-breaking nor complex, but they are legendary in creating an evocative mood over which the soloist can soar.

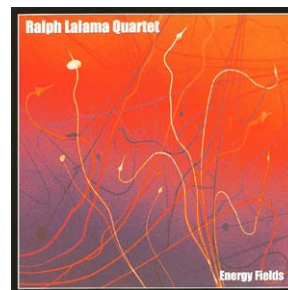
Ogerman himself wrote six of the eight pieces, some of which are based on themes by the likes of Sibelius, De Falla, Rachmaninoff and Massenet. Not to be totally compromised by the classics, Perez is joined by bassist Christian McBride, drummer Lewis Nash and percussionist Luis Quintero.

Quintero's bongos introduce the beautiful title track, based on a melody by Hugo Distler. Perez soon puts his unmistakable stamp on the performance with alternating block chords and single-note runs. McBride sets up “Rays and Shadows” with a repeated bass line, later shifting to a walking rhythm for Perez to play against. “The Purple Condor” allows the jazz group to flourish with Nash and Quintero mixing up the Latin rhythms, McBride ruminating with agile, funky bass excursions and Perez racing up and down the keys with breath-taking skill.

Perez carefully spells out the melody of the romantic ballad “If I Forget You,” based on a Rachmaninoff theme and taken at a very slow tempo. The strings and woodwinds slowly enter, but Perez remains the center of attention in this gorgeously realized piece. It is the strings that soar on “The Saga of Rita Joe,” as they build the mood for nearly three minutes before Perez takes over the theme and further expands on it in harmonic variations. Ogerman's gorgeous “Another Autumn” closes the set with Perez front and center in a masterful, emotive display, with McBride contributing some lovely counterpoint.

Cassandra Wilson lends her haunting, wispy voice to two tracks. “Lazy Afternoon” is a wonderful showcase for her soulful, throaty vocal, even though Perez and company don't have much to offer here. She also performs “(All of a Sud-

den) My Heart Sings,” by Harold Rome. Her voice seems to ride the chord changes as they slowly rise, like a hopeful love. Again, Perez enters late in the tune, but with magical effect.



RALPH LALAMA
Energy Fields
Might Quinn Productions

A long-laboring, under-appreciated great of the tenor saxophone, Ralph Lalama may finally get his due as a leader with “Energy Fields.”

At 57, Lalama has an extensive resume going back to the early 1980s—usually in the big band context of drummer Mel Lewis, the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band and the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra—but he has only a handful of recordings under his own name, and this is his first U.S. release.

It's a dandy. Lalama's tight quartet also features guitarist John Hart, bassist Rick Petrone and drummer Joe Corsello, allowing the tenor plenty of space and plenty of strong support in a program largely comprised of familiar standards done in unfamiliar ways.

For example, take “Old Folks,” a funky Hart arrangement that is miles from the predictably sentimental approach usually taken. Likewise, Lalama's arrangement of “Like Someone in Love,” which takes its cue from the searching, ad-

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venturous style and fat tone of Sonny Rollins, even as it retains its conventional ballad tempo.

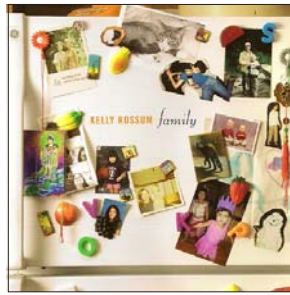
The highly accelerated “Just in Time” segues from a brief tenor intro to a bass interlude and back to tenor, then to an inspired Hart solo and a powerful flurry of percussion by Corsello.

Perhaps Victor Herbert’s “Indian Summer” and Alec Wilder’s “Blackberry Winter” get the most conventional readings simply because they are great melodies that require no embellishment. Nonetheless, Lalama delivers imaginative tenor statements on the mid-tempo “Indian Summer” and the ballad reading of “Blackberry Winter.” Hart also contributes sensitive, well-thought-out solos on both tunes.

Among the lesser-known tunes is the opener, a wonderful rendition of Woody Shaw’s “The Moontrane,” a dynamically charged composition that puts everyone through the paces in rapid succession. Charlie Parker’s sly “Buzzy” wends its way through bluesy bop changes at a blistering tempo that pushes soloists Hart and Lalama to the outer limits and provides some nice drum breaks for Corsello. “United” is one of Wayne Shorter’s most interesting tunes. Its dramatic, lilting lines and fast shuffle tempo encourage equally dramatic solo flights by Hart, Lalama and Petrone.

Lalama’s own “Nonchalant” is an irresistible samba that has the saxophonist front and center, as Corsello contributes some evocative mallet and cymbal work and Petrone keeps the pulse with a resonating bass tone.

Here’s hoping that Lalama continues to nurture his solo career here at home and that domestic labels continue to sit up and take notice.



KELLY ROSSUM *Family* **612 Sides**

Trumpeter Kelly Rossum has firmly established his reputation since leaving his Lincoln, Neb., home for the Twin Cities, where he has found compatible bandmates—pianist Bryan Nichols, bassist Chris Bates and drummer J.T. Bates—and a creative climate conducive to his sometimes quirky musical proclivities.

The **Berman Music Foundation** brought Rossum to Lincoln for a club gig in November 2005 and reviewed his 2004 release, “Renovation.”

Rossum draws from the modern trumpet traditions of Don Cherry and the great Lester Bowie, especially on the opening title track. Like Bowie, he uses the muted horn to evoke the very roots of jazz, while sounding thoroughly modern. He uses the technique again on the delightful “Mr. Blueberry.”

On “This is Where My Head Is At,” Rossum begins with a fairly conventional melody line on the open horn, before turning it over to Nichols for an extended foray. Rossum returns with a noticeable increase in intensity, aided and abetted by J.T. Bates, who comes on like Tony Williams backing Miles.

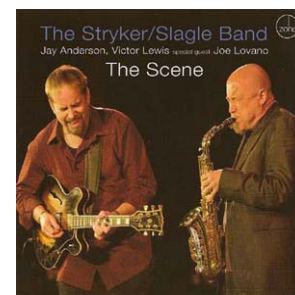
The standard “Pure Imagination” is turned every which way but loose, with Rossum first stating the theme then leading the band through a witty deconstruction that, indeed, displays an abundance of imagination. Nichols’ “A Word from Our Sponsors” gallops

along with abandon before concluding suddenly with a perfectly logical resolution.

There is an appropriate, childlike lilt to “Somebody Come and Play.” Rossum soars on the open horn, with Nichols providing lovely accompaniment and a breezy, relaxed solo. “Interlude” is a hauntingly beautiful, Nichols-penned ballad that provides a perfect vehicle for a more conventional, vibratoless playing style.

Frank Loesser’s “If I Were a Bell” gets the full Rossum treatment, eight minutes of fascinating twists and turns on a familiar theme. The trumpeter employs the whole range of his instrument, ringing the changes with confidence. Nichols cleverly implies the melody while reaching for unexpected variations. As always, the Bates brothers provide a solid rhythmic foundation.

Returning to the muted horn, Rossum evokes Miles Davis on the ballad “After the Snow.” A brief reprise of the titular “Family” theme rounds out this very satisfying recording by one of the most original trumpeters on the scene today.



THE STRYKER/SLAGLE BAND *The Scene* **Zoho Music**

Guitarist Dave Stryker and saxophonist Steve Slagle continue their run of inspired collaborations on the Zoho Music label with “The Scene,” which contains the usual demanding original compositions—four by each of the two leaders—and flawless execution.

On their fourth CD as co-lead-

ers, Stryker and Slagle are joined by old friends and bandmates Jay Anderson on bass and Victor Lewis on drums, and tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano returns as a special guest on four of the nine tracks.

Typically, Slagle's funky opener, "Skee," has everyone playing at the top of their game. Lovano seems especially intrigued by the changes, as he merrily improvises on them. Stryker's skittering guitar solo is punctuated with breathtaking runs and imaginative chords. Anderson and Lewis are the epitome of cool rhythmic intensity.

The title track is a Stryker original with a swinging theme on which the guitarist weaves his magic. Slagle delivers a spiraling alto solo, followed by an elegant Anderson bass solo. "Six Four Teo" teams Lovano and Slagle in unison as Stryker builds the momentum with interesting rhythm chords. The tune's 6/4 time signature is an excellent vehicle for Lewis' crackling trap work.

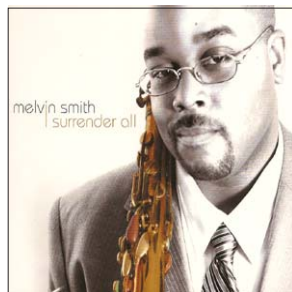
Lewis again excels on the whimsical, but difficult "Two Sense." Its stop-and-start nature keeps everyone on his toes. "Kindred Spirits" is another lovely Stryker composition somewhat in the breezy style of Pat Metheny, with Slagle on alto against the composer's ringing rhythm guitar. Stryker's solo soars in joyous abandon.

Slagle's sad ballad "Hopewell's Last" is an intricate composition brilliantly pairing Lovano's tenor with the composer's mournful soprano sax. It is dedicated to Slagle's late brother, Stuart. After this heart-wrenching tribute, Stryker's uplifting "Brighter Days" is made to order, and it delivers with swinging gusto as Lovano makes his final appearance on the session.

Rahsaan Roland Kirk's hauntingly beautiful "Fingers in the Wind" is a most interesting choice, and it works beautifully as a duet with

Slagle on flute and Stryker on acoustic guitar. Slagle's breathy, percussive performance is in keeping with Kirk's innovative technique and seeking spirit. The genesis of "Strikology" is evident in its closer's title. It's an uptempo affair that puts the guitarist firmly in the driver's seat.

We heartily recommend that you make "The Scene." To make it is to dig it.



MELVIN SMITH
I Surrender All
MGS Music

At 34, saxophonist Melvin Smith is deserving of more recognition. The Jacksonville, Fla., native is an excellent composer and interpreter with a broad range of stylistic influences and enough technique on alto, soprano and tenor horns to make "I Surrender All," his second release as a leader, a very enjoyable listening experience.

Smith brings a warmth and a sense of spirituality to everything he does, from the gospel roots of the title track to the playful funkiness of "Burgoyne Dr.," named for the street on which he grew up, to the heartfelt tribute "Mom and Pop," a lithe and lilting waltz performed to perfection by Smith on tenor sax.

The uptempo, uplifting "We Shall Not Be Moved / Firm Roots (For Dr. King)" has its obvious inspiration in the ongoing struggle to realize Dr. Martin Luther King's dream of racial equality. The civil rights anthem meshes well with "Firm Roots," a modern standard by pianist Cedar Walton. "Speak to My Heart" is a

lovely melody, with trumpeter Reggie Pittman and trombonist Andre Murcheson adding harmonic depth.

Smith returns to the subject of family with his composition "Baby Sister," a surging Latin tune with some very nice piano work by Steve Lee and a trumpet solo by Pittman. The bluesy piano of Gregory Royals is a marvelous foil for Smith's saxophone on a unique duo arrangement of "Amazing Grace."

Bobby Watson's great tune "In Case You Missed It" is wisely chosen as a vehicle for Smith's rapid-fire also sax improvisations, with accompaniment by Lee, bassist Lino C. Gomez and drummer Sam Knight. On "The Joy of the Lord," Smith and company express the joy inherent in the title, with a

But it is the closer, Horace Silver's classic "Peace," that stands out in Smith's thorough exploration of the beautiful changes and all the emotional and spiritual ramifications of the piece. On alto sax, he again pairs off with a pianist—this time Hubert Eaves III—to create a profound musical dialogue.

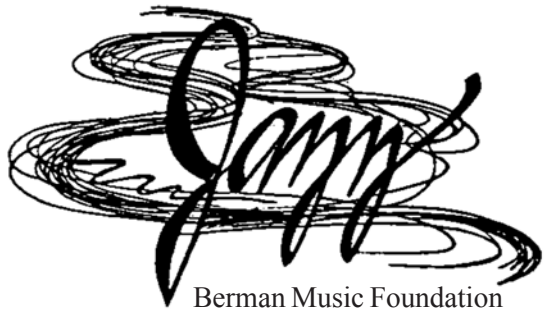
After a slight pause, it is followed by an extended tenor sax workout with references to "Softly, as in A Morning Sunrise" and backed only by bass and drums. Herein, Smith pays homage to Coltrane, Rollins, Joe Henderson and other masters of the tenor sax who are among his apparent influences.

Smith explains his very personal musical intentions in the liner notes:

"As one grows, a certain level of self-introspection must take place. It is my pleasure to present to you, the listener, the fruit of my journey."

With "I Surrender All," he has fulfilled those intentions admirably, and the artistic fruits are sweet, indeed.

For more details on "I Surrender All" and his first CD, 2007's "Portrait," visit www.melvinsmithsax.com.

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From the Archives

Berman Music Foundation wishes you joy and peace



File Photo

Being an extremely generous man, Butch Berman loved Christmas, both the giving and the receiving. This photo of Butch in a Santa hat was taken sometime in 2007. He is missed by all his friends and family during this holiday season. In his absence, we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy and peaceful New Year.

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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