



Photo by Amy Sundby

Kelly Rossum

Trumpeter Kelly Rossum shares his thoughts

By Tom Ineck

Editor: Rather than submit to the conventional phone interview, trumpeter Kelly Rossum suggested an e-mail exchange that could be printed in its entirety as a Q&A piece. Rossum enthusiastically responded to a variety of written inquiries regarding his music education, the scene in his adopted Twin Cities, his musical influences, his current projects and his teaching career. Like any good interview subject, Rossum went well beyond the basic Q&A format to express himself eloquently on a range of subjects.

Q: How did you get started in music, specifically jazz music?

A: I think Dizzy is probably to blame for me playing the trumpet. He was on a "Sesame Street" episode in the early '70s and I remember wanting to play the horn immediately after that show. When the band director went around and asked each kid what instrument they wanted to play, my immediate answer was "trumpet!" No hesitation. It wasn't until much later in high school that I was turned on to

Miles and jazz music. My first Miles record was "'Round about Midnight." Wow, did I wear the grooves out of that record!

Throughout my musical training, the general pattern was: practice classical music, listen to jazz, and perform both. I still focus most of my practice on the fundamental aspects of trumpet performance—"classical trumpet playing." Within the past few years, jazz music has become more to me than just an idiom, it has become a way of approaching music as a whole. The essence of jazz is communication and expression through improvisation. I try to bring that essence to all music that I compose and perform; whether it is jazz, classical, rock or "other."

Q: How important was your education and musical experience in Lincoln, Nebraska? Who did you learn from and play with here?

A: I would never trade the time that I spent in Lincoln with time that could have been spent elsewhere. Lincoln was the perfect incubator for my musical career. Between the master-

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Prez Sez

General musings and travel adventures

By Butch Berman

Dear Readers,

Ah fall...the beauty before the frost, that last second wind to energize and entice, before we hunker down for winter. Jazz, like life, has to adapt and change with the seasons in order to survive.

It still has a fighting chance as the kids are starting to dig it more, and the educational scene—always struggling—is still, fortunately, blanketing the universe with the gifted who choose to teach as well as perform...instilling, inspiring and spreading the magic that is music.

Being a true addicted fan of “Americana,” I can appreciate the talents of the new Guinness record-holder of the most TV hours, the one and only Regis Philbin. Now age 56, I was raised on TV in the ‘50s, so Regis takes me back. So...I get a kick out of starting my day each morning by tuning in to



Photo by Grace Sankey Berman

Butch Berman in San Francisco

the “Regis and Kelly” variety/talk show to get my a.m. yuks. Kelly Ripa is the best female to grace the screen since Lucille Ball for all the same and right reasons.

Anyway, I started today by catching the tail-end of a story about Regis and Tony Danza and someone else going to a club and realizing that there’s a live jazz group playing. “No wonder a lot of folks think they really have to understand jazz to like it. Might as well be hearing aliens playing some strange-sounding stuff responding to a language only the hip, well-informed can communicate with.”

It was funny, and maybe a little bit true. The best part of the whole deal was that Philbin named the group who caught their attention, my dear and revered friend...the wonderful George Cables and his George Cables Project. It was a well-deserved plug for a prime-time, mostly non-jazz listening audience. George has been gigging with sax man



Photo by Butch Berman

The Transamerica pyramid dominates the downtown San Francisco skyline.



Photo by Butch Berman

Grace Sankey Berman and Wade Wright at Muir Woods

Gary Bartz of late, so I’m sure they blew away these TV stars that stopped in for dinner and got swept up in the music. Great!

The jazz scene here has been a little light of late, except for the constant, almost-daily arrival of CDs from jazzy to attempted jazzy artists from just about everywhere.

Taking advantage of the slight break in the action, Grace and I headed west on the old Amtrak Zephyr. Grace had never seen the western portion of

the U.S., and had never been to San Francisco at all. I hung and lived in the Bay area from about '85 to '89, when the earthquake shook me out of my beloved San Francisco Giants World Series seats in the old Candlestick Park to the wintry plains once again.

Two visits since then still left an eight-year gap since my last excursion, as well as the interesting, mostly dreadful train ride. Marrying Grace got me back into the air again, but we toughed it out on the train this time. Once we got to SF, Grace—for the first time—and me after all these years, fell in love with the lady that is San Francisco one more time. The city never looked more beautiful and inviting—with nippy, yet invigorating ocean air to cleanse your pores. Even the more menacing neighborhoods I haunted in my hippie and band eras seemed refreshed and less full of the former sad assembly of lost souls that would end up in this free-wheeling environment, unlike anywhere else in the U.S. Almost another planet unto itself, it always seemed to me.

I did most of my jazz ambassadorship on the train, telling everyone about the Berman Music Foundation, handing out brochures and a few selected CDs, including the Russ Long Trio and Norman Hedman and Tropique, and mostly talking music and baseball, and everyone's ca-

reer with the wide majority of non-flyers who would have to possess the patience of saints to put up with all the delays, plumbing problems, and a few

crabby train employees that can make or break your trip. Thank God for the ones that did make a difference and tried to keep it all together for everyone concerned. Turns

out our trip reg-

istered more than 25 complaints to Amtrak for this round-trip adventure.

Anyway, back in SF we were treated royally by one of my closest pals, and BMF consultant, Wade Wright. Besides still running Jack's Record Cellar, he now helps manage his brother David's new eatery on Union and Stockton in North Beach...the Café Divine. Fabulous food, service and vibe that are totally San Francisco at its finest. Wade also took Grace and me on an incredible tour of the Muir Woods and the wondrous wineries of Napa and Sonoma counties.

We also took time to revisit some of my old hang-outs and meet some other buddies like rock legend Roy Loney and record expert and impresario Jeff Richardson. We saw the Giants with Barry Bonds (the new SBC Park is fanatically fantastic) with my fond friend and wine and food maven Carol Seibert and her mate, and one of my old pals from Nebraska, Terry Braye, now teaching music to teenagers.

We visited one of the world's greatest healers and chiropractors, Dr. Barbara Berkeley, at her new office on Valencia. We also spent a lovely day in the Castro district with another of my "record-people" buddies of many years,



Terry Braye, Carol Seibert and Grace Berman at SBC Park

Photo by Butch Berman



Michael Mascioli

Photo by Butch Berman

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Michael Mascioli of All Music Services, who along with Wade, Jeff and Roy have turned me on to the cutting edge of great music of all kinds for years.

Speaking of music...for maybe the first time ever, I didn't drag Grace to a million record stores, nor did we catch any live music. We just walked, ate and drank the best, and enjoyed these great friends of mine in their glorious city. At least at the moment, NYC may have slipped to #2, as I'm still soaking in the Pacific charm while writing to you all. Of course, when it comes to jazz...New York rules!

Getting back to jazz, a new potential hot spot for our music, the Café de Mai at the corner of 25th and O streets in Lincoln, had its debut a few weeks ago to celebrate three years serving the Asian community with fine dining, a huge market, video store, real estate, and rentable party space in a splendid mall once housed by a former grocery chain. Grace and I have gotten friendly with the owners, Tim and Kim, after going back to their delicious Vietnamese cuisine time and time again.

Thinking about how well sushi goes with jazz at the famed Yoshi's in Oakland, Calif., we decided to give it a shot for their anniversary shindig. With the talented saxophonist Rod Scheps doing



Photo by Wade Wright

Grace and Butch Berman at Muir Woods



Jeff Richardson and Butch in S.F.

Photo by Grace Sankley Berman

gigs in K.C. and Des Moines the same week, this seemed like the time. So, with the Rod Scheps Core-tet intact, the gig was set.

As of late, my rock band The Cronin Brothers has been on an upswing in playing more clubs and parties. We got a great corporate birthday bash on the same night of the Scheps happening, so you'll have to read Tom's review to get the rest of the facts. Tim and Kim said they just about broke even for their first experience, and might like to do seasonal gigs of the same vain. We may put on a New Year's Eve event there, so watch the Update section of the website for any late-breaking news concerning this.

We also are doing another jazz show at P.O. Pears Nov. 10 with Minneapolis trumpet sensation Kelly Rossum and his swell band. Read all about it and Tom's interview with Kelly in this issue.

That's about all the news that fits from me for the moment. Groove on the fall, and have a real decent Christmas holiday from me, Grace and all the staff of the BMF. We'll be bringing in the New Year with another jam-packed *Jazz* newsletter for your reading enjoyment. God bless you all, everyone.

Butch Berman



Photo by Butch Berman

Owner David Wright stands outside Cafe Divine at corner of Union and Stockton.

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ful teaching of (University of Nebraska-Lincoln) Professor Dennis Schneider and the supportive body of Lincoln's professional musicians, I consider myself lucky to have spent five years in such company (1988-1993). I often refer to Denny as the reason that I'm a professional trumpet player. He is a magical teacher, constantly and patiently supportive of his students yet at the same time not afraid to let the hammer fall. "Straight Ahead." Thanks, Denny.

Another musician to whom I owe a great debt is pianist John Carlini. He hosted a series of Tuesday night free-jazz sessions in his loft that left a deep impact on me. At the time, these sessions were just a great outlet to blow off steam. We would get our gear setup and someone would start playing whatever came into their head, with no formal outline of structure or key. Three hours later, we'd look up and realize "time flies when you're having fun!" I still have some tapes of these sessions... great stuff.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention another musical icon of the Capital City, First-Plymouth Congregational Church's music director Jack Levick. He and the Plymouth Brass gave me a home away from home in a first-rate musical environment. Jack even lent me a space heater when the furnace broke at my apartment! Their 1992 recording, "A Festival of Carols and Music for Royal Occasions," with Sir David Willcocks and the Plymouth Brass, has the unique place in my history as being the first CD released with my name on it. (I've recorded about 30 CDs since then.)

Other Lincoln musicians who had great impact on me were those surrounding the Mother's Big Band/ Nebraska Diamond Band (now the Monday Night Big Band) and the Bobby Layne/ Reflections Orchestra. The scene at that time was made up of a



Photo by Howard Giffelson

Kelly Rossum uses plunger mute for effect.

fairly small group of people and they always respected me as a musician and fellow professional. Only now, years later, do I realize that they could have just as easily treated me like some naïve, long-haired college kid, not worth their kindness or camaraderie. Lincoln is a great town!

Q: When did you leave Lincoln, where to, and why? Did you go from here to North Texas or directly to the Twin Cities?

A: I left Lincoln after receiving my bachelor of music degree from UNL and went directly to the University of North Texas to pursue my master's degree in classical trumpet performance. Then I worked out east at Busch Gardens for a couple of years, running their big band. After that, I finally set up shop in Minneapolis.

Q: What kind of scene did you find in Minneapolis-St. Paul? How inspirational or productive has it been for you and your music?

A: When I moved to Minneapolis, I was aware of the fantastic commercial and rock scene that produced musicians like Prince and the Revolution, Morris Day and the Time, and producers Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis.

The world-class St. Paul Chamber Orchestra was just a stone's throw away and the stellar Minnesota Orchestra's home was about two blocks away from the school that I now teach at, MacPhail Center for Music. The big surprise upon moving to Minneapolis has been the supportive and experimental jazz scene. The Twin Cities has a long history of jazz culture stemming from the overflow of ex-New Yorkers and Chicago transplants intermixing with the deep Minnesota scene. After the swing craze of the late '90s passed, the club void has slowly been filled with an underground cutting-edge jazz scene. Bands like Happy Apple and The Bad Plus both emerged from this environment. The proverbial cross-pollination between electronica, rock, free jazz, and traditional post-bop "modern" jazz, has produced a unique flower here in Minneapolis. This hothouse of styles has allowed my music to grow in an artistic, uncompromising manner. Incredible inspiration is around every corner.

Q: Your CD "Renovation" had strong echoes of Miles Davis, especially his later "fusion" years. How

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much of an influence is Miles? Who else would you name as influential and why?

A: Thanks! Any time someone mentions Miles Davis in relation to my own work, I feel honored and humbled. Miles reflects the essence of jazz. Not just his music, but his drive to find new sounds and concepts, while maintaining a working band of the best musicians on the scene. I could talk about Miles for hours, so I'll leave it with, YES, Miles was a huge impact on my music. However, none of it was intentional. My intense Miles Davis phase lasted about six years, from 1989 to 1995. Since then, I've expanded my listening to include as much jazz and other styles as possible. I would list Clark Terry, Jimi Hendrix, J.S. Bach, Charles Mingus and Iron Maiden as additional significant influences on my work. Recently, I've been exploring Ornette Coleman's music and the circle of musicians surrounding his recordings, as well as a great band called Boards of Canada.

Q: You have created recording and performing opportunities for yourself by playing in many different bands, even writing for film. What different groups and projects are you part of now? Why? How does each of these settings and styles help you grow musically?

A: Life as a musician is neither as glamorous nor as simple as most people think. The comparison that I most often use is that of a circus performer spinning plates on the stage. Once a plate is spinning on top of a five-foot pole, the performer runs to spin another plate on top of another pole, and then runs to spin another plate, etc. There is a limit to how many plates any one individual can have spinning at the same time. The trick is two-

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Profile

Kelly Rossum Quintet played Nov. 10 in Lincoln

Trumpeter Kelly Rossum, a former Lincoln resident now living in the Twin Cities, fronted a quartet for a Nov. 10 performance at P.O. Pears in downtown Lincoln.

The performance, reviewed elsewhere in this newsletter, was sponsored by the **Berman Music Foundation**.

Rossum spent five formative years in the Capital City, earning his bachelor's degree in music at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln under the guidance of Professor Dennis Schneider. He also credits others in the Lincoln music scene, especially pianist John Carlini and Jack Levick, the former music director at First-Plymouth Congregational Church.

From Lincoln, Rossum moved on to the University of North Texas for a master's degree in classical trumpet performance before making his home in Minneapolis. His second CD as a leader, "Renovation," was released in 2004. As I wrote about it then: "The tricky, contrapuntal rhythm lines and interweaving solo statements immediately signal a bold and unconventional approach that, nevertheless, sounds somehow comfortably familiar... Rossum knows his way around the horn, but like (Miles) Davis, he respects the poetic weight of silence, the judicious use of pause and stutter and even the occasional fluffed note. It's what sets them apart from the merely proficient."

The rest of the Kelly Rossum Quartet consists of Chris Thomson

on saxophones, Chris Bates on bass and J.T. Bates at the drums.

Chris Thomson toured the United States, Canada, Caribbean, and Japan with the Glenn Miller Orchestra for just over a year. Since returning to Minneapolis, he has been dedicated to developing original music projects such as the Afrobeat band Yawo and Les Fils Attivon; as well as an experimental music series of his own leadership. Of late, Thomson's main projects include combining music and modern dance.

Chris Bates studied with James Clute of the Minnesota Orchestra and Chris Brown of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, later studying with famed jazz bassist Anthony Cox. He was a founding member of the Motion Poets, a Minneapolis-based jazz sextet that recorded three albums and toured extensively for six years, including a Berman Music Foundation-sponsored concert at Westbrook Recital Hall in Lincoln in October 1997. Currently, he leads two of his own projects: Framework and Low Blows.

J. T. Bates, a Minneapolis native, co-founded Fat Kid Wednesdays, a jazz trio exploring original music. He was a primary force behind the Clown Lounge, a recent haven for modern jazz musicians in the Twin Cities. He continues to perform with Anthony Cox, Poor Line Condition and Fat Kid Wednesdays.

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fold—know your limit of how many plates (musical projects) that you can spin at one time, and make each spinning plate feel like it's the only one on stage (plates have feelings, too!). All creative professionals need to express themselves in a variety of settings. Miles Davis was an excellent painter/visual artist. My interests vary widely in scope, and the Minneapolis scene is strong enough to offer plenty of different opportunities. Currently (outside of my own jazz work), I am writing another score for a short film, producing a CD for a funk horn band, composing music for jazz nonet, finishing a series of commissions for beginning jazz combo, and graduating this fall with a doctorate in classical trumpet performance from the University of Minnesota. Each of these projects requires different skills, yet they all help to contribute to my overall musical approach. There are only two types of music, good and bad. When, as a musician, you surround yourself with good music and great musicians, the results are hopefully those that audiences find enjoyable, and will come back again to hear more.

Q: Which Kelly Rossum will we hear in Lincoln Nov. 10? Who will accompany you? How has your style and repertoire evolved since “Renovation”?

A: Since the partially electric album “Renovation,” I’ve gone back to an acoustic format for this tour and my upcoming 2006 recording. The music still has a groove-oriented base, but the harmonic construction of the tunes is much freer than the through-composed work of “Renovation.” I always want everybody to have fun at the show, both the musicians and the audience. Some of the cover tunes come from unexpected places, such as “Sesame Street” or pop ‘80s hits. I’ve borrowed the instrumentation of Ornette’s

pianoless quartet for my current quartet. The musicians are: Myself, trumpet; Chris Thomson, tenor and soprano saxophones; Chris Bates, double bass; and J.T. Bates, drums and percussion. They bring life to the music, and the dialogue between the members on the stand flows as freely as the audience’s conversation did before the set began. These excellent musicians are also innovators with their own projects and collaborations. Chris Thomson has been around the world with the Glenn Miller orchestra, J.T. has toured Europe with his band Fat Kid Wednesdays, and Chris Bates was a 1999 McKnight Composer Fellow.

Q: Are you writing? What is your current composing routine? What inspires your compositions? Name some recent creations.

A: My writing is based on project-driven deadlines. Unfortunately, this fall is too busy to compose as much as I would like. My recent creative works stem from my travels over the past year or so. I’ve been to Rome, Bangkok, Honolulu, New York and even Omaha! Each of these cities has a different culture and vibe to the streets; I’ve tried to reflect that feeling in a few of my new compositions.

Q: You’re also teaching at the MacPhail Center for Music. How do you balance this educational aspect of your career with the composing, performing and recording aspects?

A: I enjoy teaching and will always maintain a private studio no matter where my performance career leads me. The trumpet is not an easy instrument to play, yet with every great challenge there can be great rewards. I enjoy coaching students through their own great challenges. I’ve had some memorable moments during the course of my teaching that I will cherish forever. My favorite story involves two students from my current jazz combo at MacPhail Center for Music. I try to

get the groups out into the clubs to give them as much ‘real jazz’ experience as possible.

Wynton Marsalis was in town a couple of years ago playing at a small club. It was a special night; he very rarely hits those intimate settings anymore while on the road. So in between tunes he looks out to the crowd and chats with a couple of young kids in the front row:

Wynton: “Do you guys play instruments?”

Students: “Yes, the trumpet” and “Yeah, the drums”

Wynton: “Keep practicing and someday you will play here.”

Students: “We already have!”
Laughter and applause all around...

Q: What’s next in your busy life?

A: I will be in Houston for a week doing concerts and master classes with a long-time friend and Nebraska native, tenor saxophonist Woody Witt. Woody has just released a new CD on Apria Records featuring trumpeter Randy Brecker. Check it out!

Q: Anything else you want to talk about?

A: Yes, I’d like to give a special thanks to Butch Berman and the **Berman Music Foundation** for their incredible support of creative music here in the heartland of the United States. Since it is highly unlikely that the current administration will increase the national funding available to artists, more private and corporate foundations need to step up to the plate and support our nation’s music—jazz. I applaud Mr. Berman and his staff for the excellent contribution they have made and continue to make to our national treasure.

Concert Review

Kelly Rossum Quartet exudes free-jazz spirit

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—The spirit of free jazz was alive and well the evening of Nov. 10 at P.O. Pears. In the hands of the Kelly Rossum Quartet, it contains that essential mix of imagination, adventure and humor.

Trumpeter Rossum, who spent his formative years in Lincoln in the late 1980s and early 1990s and now lives in Minneapolis, was accompanied by some of the Twin Cities' avant-garde masters—saxophonist Chris Thomson, bassist Chris Bates and drummer J. T. Bates. All relatively young and uniformly daring in their approach to music, their compatibility was immediately apparent.

Always risky business, free jazz attempts to walk the thin line between the usual pandering to the public's popular taste and the total alienation of listeners with music that is too foreign and self-absorbed. The Kelly Rossum Quartet walked that line with the deftness of aerial gymnasts. Call them the Fabulous Flying Free-Jazz

Brothers.

"Lead Soldiers," from Rossum's 2004 release, "Renovation," quickly established the essential elements of the best free-style music—silence, broken by carefully chosen notes, a subtle sense of blues and funk, an alert ear and a mutual interplay among musicians. The pianoless quartet, unrestrained by the keyboard's formal harmonic structure, is especially well suited to this sense of freedom and adventure.

Rossum varied his horn sound with assorted mutes, hand-cupping techniques, alternate fingerings, slurs and pops. Likewise, Thomson ranged from tenor sax to soprano and used varied dynamics. On "Seduction," Rossum employed the Mel-O-Wah mute to create an unconventional—and fascinating—tonal palette. He returned to the open horn for the riffing "In Rome," introducing the repeated motif with Thomson's tenor. The brief, set-closing march theme from "The

A Team" was the band's hilarious nod to 1980s pop culture.

Thomson's mid-tempo "Welcome" opened the second half, followed by the frantic "Rush Hour," which Rossum described by asking the listener to imagine riding a bike in traffic. The tune confirmed that the band doesn't take itself too seriously. Charles Mingus' ballad "Portrait" featured a bluesy, plunger-muted horn and absolutely gorgeous solos by Rossum and Thomson.

The Bates brothers worked hard on the funky "Toxic Fruit," with Rossum switching to a Harmon mute for effect. The final piece was totally improvised. Based on a bass line, it inspired trumpet wails and tenor sax riffs, urged on by a metronomic rhythm courageously maintained by J. T. Bates.

With the trumpet and sax often going head-to-head, occasionally in unison, and the bass and drums vying for their own time and place, the sound of the Rossum foursome inevitably harkens back to the classic Ornette Coleman Quartet with Coleman on sax, Don Cherry on trumpet, Charlie Haden on bass and Billy Higgins on drums.

Since its inception nearly 50 years ago, free jazz has had a limited appeal for the general public, and the audience on this night was no exception. Helping to fill out the crowd were jazz history students from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, with pads and pens poised for note-taking, but looking somewhat baffled at this difficult-to-describe music.

Those who made the effort to listen and learn were well rewarded.

Memorial

Jim Monroe, R.I.P

Jim Monroe was vacationing in southern Africa with his wife when he suffered a fatal heart attack and died Nov. 7. He was 76.

Since 1977, Monroe served as president of the Topeka Jazz Workshop in Topeka, Kan. He also organized seven Memorial Day weekend jazz festivals in Topeka, 1998-2004. Butch Berman was artistic director of the 2005 Topeka Jazz Festival.

A retired insurance agent, Monroe became hooked on the music growing up in Kansas City, Kan. He



Monroe at 2004 Topeka Jazz Fest

File Photo

attended jazz festivals around the nation, befriending musicians and fellow jazz fans.

The Berman Music Foun-

dation extends its condolences to the family and friends of Jim Monroe.

Concert Review

Scheps Core-tet does its missionary work

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—Rob Scheps is a man on a mission to spread the good word about jazz and introduce his audiences to bold and beautiful new music.

Fronting his Core-tet Oct. 8 at Café de Mai in Lincoln, Scheps seldom ventured into familiar territory and never resorted to predictable arrangements of standards. Listeners with adventurous ears are the chief beneficiaries of such missionary work. It must be equally exciting and challenging for his Core-tet comrades (Kansas City regulars Roger Wilder on keys, Bob Bowman on bass and young drummer Tim Cambron, an Omaha native).

The opener, “Olivia’s Arrival,” a lovely but little-known tune by baritone saxophonist Gary Smulyan, has been in Scheps’ repertoire for a while. Performed on tenor sax, he introduced it to a Lincoln audience in January 2004, fronting a quintet with violinist Zach Brock. Progressive saxophonist Chris Cheek composed “Water Mile,” for which Scheps switched to flute.

The Core-tet next turned to a fast bossa, “Commencio (To Begin),” which segued into bop time for a fleet-fingered solo by Wilder. Scheps’ own “Visiting Royalty” contained suite-like passages that led in succession from piano to sax to bass and back to sax. Scheps’ confident tenor attack and big tone never leaves any doubt who leads the band.



Tim Cambron and Rob Scheps



The Core-tet (clockwise, from left) is Bob Bowman, Tim Cambron, Rob Scheps and Roger Wilder.

Herbie Nichols’ “Cro-Magnon Nights” approaches the status of a classic, although most people have never heard of this great Monk-like eccentric. Nichols died in 1963 in his mid-40s, and his marvelous compositions have been largely overlooked by the general public and musicians alike. Scheps paid tribute to the composer with a wild rendition of this tune.

“Ecotopia” is the title track of an obscure 1987 release by the eclectic world-music practitioners Oregon. Composed by Ralph Towner, it contains some beautiful changes and an irresistibly pulsating rhythm.

Scheps and company opened the second half of the show with “You’re My Everything,” the closest thing to a standard played all night. It featured a nice tenor solo by Scheps, plus piano and bass solos, but eventually it segued into Bob Belden’s “Blues in My Neighborhood,” highlighted by another Scheps tenor statement and a great Bowman bass foray.



Rob Scheps and Roger Wilder

Scheps returned to the flute for the cleverly titled “Crimean Rivers” (think “Cry Me a River”). Miles Davis entered the program, but not with a particularly familiar tune. It was “Mademoiselle Mabry,” a bluesy, gospel-tinged ballad from Davis’ 1968 release “Filles de Kilimanjaro.”

One of the highlights of the evening was a swinging version of Horace Silver’s “Cape Verdean Blues,” a funky, earthy tune done with appropriate high spirits by the Core-tet. Walt Weiskopf’s “Insubordination” completed the performance with a fast and difficult, stop-time exercise in group interplay.

Photo by Rich Hoover

Photo by Rich Hoover

Concert Review

NJO celebrates with a little help from its friends

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—A local jazz organization needs a wealth of talented and generous friends and collaborators to survive 30 years. The Nebraska Jazz Orchestra celebrated the first concert of its 30th season Oct. 21 at the Embassy Suites with a lot of help from those friends.

Chief among them was pianist Rex Cadwallader, a founding member of the NJO and a prolific composer whose quirky, often complex pieces have found their way into the band's repertoire throughout its three decades. Traveling all the way from his home in Connecticut, he held down keyboard duties all night and contributed five of the program's 12 tunes.

Gershwin's flag-waver, "Strike Up the Band," opened the proceedings, in a raucous arrangement by Sammy Nestico of Count Basie fame. The NJO exhibited its reliably tight ensemble work.

"Stompin' at the Savoy," another traditional big band favorite, also received a more modern reading by arranger Bill Holman, followed by an arrangement of "All the Things You Are" from the Stan Kenton songbook. The trombones eloquently stated the theme, which was passed to the saxophones before Cadwallader's brief by plaintive piano solo.

"M," Cadwallader's lovely tribute to pianist Marian McPartland, illustrated the composer's penchant for unusual instrumentation and shifting tempos. Moving from a ballad to a fast waltz, it contrasted the woody tones of the clarinets and bass clarinet with brassier colors, highlighted by Bob Krueger's flugelhorn solo.

"Lil' Darlin'," a staple in the NJO repertoire, was taken at a slow,

dreamy tempo and featured a flugelhorn solo by legendary Lincoln trumpet teacher and player Dennis Schneider. Cadwallader's rockin' samba, "Hollywood," had echoes of the 1970s, when it was written.

The Woody Herman evergreen, "Four Brothers," opened the second half of the show with Dave Sharp playing the role of Herman on clarinet, while Ed Love and Ken Janak ably filled the tenor sax roles. The audience of nearly 250 showed its enthusiastic approval for this swing classic.

"Tilting at Windmills," perhaps the highlight of the evening, exhibited the composer's knack for constantly shifting tones and colors in the brass, using tenor sax, flute, clarinet and bass clarinet. Krueger contributed another fine solo on flugelhorn.

A six-piece combo tackled "Quicker Than the Eye," an upbeat samba reminiscent of Chick Corea's "Spain." Drummer Greg Ahl kept the insistent cross rhythms churning behind Krueger on flugelhorn, Love on

tenor sax, Pete Bouffard on guitar, Randy Snyder on electric bass and the composer at the piano.

Matt Wallace, another old friend and former member of the NJO, joined in the fray on Dizzy Gillespie's "A Night in Tunisia." Wallace dug in with an extended solo, even slyly quoting the "Get Smart" theme. Bouffard also delivered a smart solo. Given Wallace's brief appearance in the spotlight, one wonders why he wasn't given more time in the program. For a seasoned veteran who spent a decade working alongside trumpeter and taskmaster Maynard Ferguson, it must have seemed barely worth breaking out the horn and wetting the reed.

Cadwallader's tune, "The Fabulous Flying Gambini Brothers," finished the regular program with an all-out, three-way tenor battle among Wallace, Love and Rich Burrows. "Take the A Train" provided a fitting encore for the NJO's swinging, 30th anniversary celebration.



Norman Hedman, Butch Berman and Rich Hoover at 2005 Topeka Jazz Festival

Photo by Dawn K. DeBlaze

Tomfoolery

Hurricane benefit inspires hope and giving

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—Hurricane Katrina and its destruction along the Gulf Coast, especially in New Orleans, seemed to inspire equal amounts of anger, despair, hope and generosity. Perhaps it is while working through anger and despair that we begin to fully appreciate the power of giving.

Such was the basis for the collaborative “Help the Healing: Statewide Hurricane Relief Benefit,” Sept. 18 at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. Conceived by Steve Alvis, general manager of KZUM Community Radio, it was enthusiastically supported by NET Radio (Nebraska’s public radio network) and Charles Bethea, the Lied Center’s executive director. The two-hour concert was broadcast live from the Lied Center’s main stage on all NET Radio frequencies and on KZUM in the Lincoln area.

Because so much of KZUM’s programming draws on the many musical styles emanating from the Crescent City, Alvis wanted the free concert to reflect the rich musical history of New Orleans, from gospel to blues and jazz. Featured performers included Lincoln’s First Plymouth Choir, the Abendmusik Chorus, the Plymouth Brass and local jazz artists Mac McCune and the Mac 5 with special guest vocalist Annette Murrell.

The chorus opened with renditions of “America the Beautiful,” “Set Me as a Seal” and “When the Saints Go Marching In.” The brass ensemble performed “Just a Closer Walk with Thee” and “Amazing Grace,” and the choir delivered an exuberant reading of the gospel classics “It That Great Getting’ Up Mornin’,” “This Little Light O’ Mine,” and “That’s Enough.” The chorus closed the first half of the concert

with the triumphant “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing.”

Trumpeter Mac McCune, with saxophonist Ed Love and drummer John Scofield, kicked off the second half with “Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans?” and followed with “Take the A Train” and “When It’s Sleepy Time Down South.”

It was the powerful blues vocals of Annette Murrell, however, that brought home the message of initial despair and ultimate hope. She began with the hopeful “Let the Good Times Roll” before dipping into despair with Bessie Smith’s devastating “Backwater Blues.” The ballad “Crazy He Calls Me” ended the set, with Murrell putting her distinctive stamp on the proceedings with her a cappella rendition

of “Peace Like a River.”

Donations collected at the door totaled more than \$5,000 to benefit relief agencies. For NET Radio and KZUM listeners, contact phone numbers for relief agencies were given throughout the course of the evening’s event.

In the interest of full disclosure, I want to add that I am chairman of the KZUM board of directors, an association of which I am proud. My relationship with the community radio station began as a member in the late ‘70s, and I have hosted a jazz program since August 1993.

It is events like the Hurricane Katrina Relief Concert that are at the heart of community radio and its mission to bring out the best in the community.

Topeka: A programmer’s perspective

By Dawn K. DeBlaze

Editor: Dawn DeBlaze is director of DeBlaze & Associates, a public relations firm in St. Peters, Mo. Her website is at www.deblaze.com.

TOPEKA, Kan.—Surrounded by the flat plains, the fresh air and the art deco hall of the Topeka Performing Arts Center (TPAC), this year’s Topeka Jazz Festival played host to the best in jazz diversity; something for everyone, so it would seem. From May 27-30, musicians performed in TPAC’s main performance hall and lower-level festival hall.

Along with such artists as Bobby Watson & Horizon, Norman Hedman & Tropique, The Hot Club of San Francisco, Giacomo Gates, Kathleen Holeman, Alaadeen & 21, Joe



Butch Berman in Topeka

Photo by Dawn K. DeBlaze

Cartwright Trio, Interstring and more, the festival also marked the 10-year anniversary of the **Berman Music Foundation**, led by festival coordinator and artistic director, Butch

Topeka continued on page 12

Memorial

Shirley Horn will always be #1 in my heart

By Butch Berman

I haven't listened to Shirley Horn on my sound system for quite some time, for no apparent reason except perhaps that being in the music biz engulfs you with so much "product" that you get overwhelmed with the very subject you wrap your life around.

I've bragged that I probably own every recorded work that Shirley Horn ever made. Upon reading of her passing at age 71 in her Washington, D.C., area home, I had to return to her music. I'm now immersed again in the magic of her lovely God-given musical gift, as I just happened to pull out the 1996 Verve release "Loving You."

The immediate reaction to her unique voice and luscious piano styling is a sigh and tears of joy and sadness in reverence of her great-



Shirley Horn

ness. Any one of her vast catalog of material will garner the same responses.

In my never-humble opinion, since I first discovered Ms. Horn's sublime talents I've always professed her to be my favorite female jazz performer of all time, and truly an icon in the jazz profession.

Maybe only the late, also-great Ray Charles comes close to her level of captivating her audiences

with tempos sooooo slow, yet always swinging and truly saying something with every note played or word uttered. Shirley could perform three extremely soul-searching, personal, ever-so-slow ballads of classic perfection in a row on her set list, and every warm-blooded, breathing fan in attendance would be focused on each and every nuance of emotion and genius her stories held, as if they had been hypnotized. The hush that fell on the vast seas of humanity at the festivals she sang at was astonishing.

Thanks to Steve Irwin and Jo Boehr, whose Kansas City International Jazz Festival featured her one year, I finally got to meet my idol backstage at the Starlight Theater. As lovely and gracious off stage as she was singing, she greeted my party warmly. I owned the first LP she ever made on a small label before her success truly sprang. She autographed it for me, saying she hadn't seen that one for awhile. It was truly an unforgettable evening, concert and experience that I'll forever cherish.

Shirley continued to record and to perform even after her diabetes worsened, occasionally only singing while other musicians of considerable merit took over her piano playing. A true trooper to the end, she was an amazing lady of dignity whose star will shine brightly forever.

Always number one in our hearts and memories, and most thankfully... Shirley Horn's timeless music will be forever readily available to enthrall us, her fans, for generations to come.

Topeka continued from page 11

Berman. The Kansas City-area uber menschen Eldar Djangirov, Joe Cartwright, Rod Fleeman, Todd Strait and Gerald Spaits were once again programmed for peak performance. These all-stars have performed at the festival since day one.

In an interview, Berman answered questions about the festival, the music, and the artists.

"I brought my favorite musicians—bebop, Latin, world music and avant-garde," he said.

Although a selfishness was implied, that could only be true if he did not share these talents with the rest of us.

Certainly you cannot please everyone, right?

"If jazz is to survive it has to re-

tain diversity, traditions, and a big part of education. Some are born with the gift to give it, some are born with the gift to pass the baton on," Berman said. After he programmed the Hot Club of San Francisco, there was concern. "Who wants gypsy jazz in Topeka?" people were overheard saying. Ironically, the Hot Club of San Francisco brought the house down during one of the brightest moments of the festival.

"Music makes you feel happy, excited, horny," Berman said. "It's powerful."

No doubt its rewards can be therapeutic. And when it's jazz, it never happens the same way twice. Now that is exciting!

Memorial

“Bluesman” Wilson lived on his own terms

By Mark Dalton

SEATTLE—A great American bluesman has gone. August Wilson died here in his adopted hometown, of liver cancer, on Oct. 2 at age 60. He wasn't known as a singer, or as an instrumentalist—Wilson's ax was the stage.

He wrote an amazing cycle of 10 plays about being black in our country that spanned the 20th century. Wilson was a great storyteller, and his plays were all informed by and infused with the blues. All of them.

He is quoted in the Seattle Times as saying, “The blues is the best literature black Americans have. It's our cultural response to the world, an emotional reference point. Five million years from now, if people have these records they'll be able to piece together a lot about us.” In The New York Times, an interview quoted Wilson on his influences, which he labeled the “four B's”—the first and primary influence being “The Blues.” (The other “B's” were the “magical realist”

writer Jorge Luis Borges, the playwright Amiri Baraka, and the painter Romare Bearden.) Times reviewer Frank Rich wrote that Wilson's work “floats on the same authentic artistry as the blues music it celebrates.”

Two of Wilson's plays, “Ma Rainey's Black Bottom” and “Seven Guitars” celebrated the blues directly, recreating the world and the artistic struggles which created the music that so many people take for granted in today's profit-driven, disposable culture. Yesterday's news to some, the blues formed the foundation of Wilson's magnificent body of work.

I saw Wilson once, standing on the steps of 600 First Avenue in Pioneer Square, the lovely old stone building behind the Pergola where his office was located. His name was on the building directory, and his name and office address were (and still are) in the phone book. Wilson liked being in Seattle, from all accounts, because he could avoid

the trappings of celebrity here—he didn't need an unlisted number or a secret office here. He reportedly did some of his writing in a coffee shop on Capitol Hill.

I was walking through Pioneer Square on a sunny spring day, and there was Wilson, standing on the steps, rapidly smoking a short, unfiltered cigarette, smoke wreathing around his head, lost in thought. He was clearly taking a break, and in the space of about a minute, that cigarette was down to the nub, and he flicked it away, turning quickly back to the door, looking for all the world like a man chasing ideas with intense concentration.

The only comparable experience I've had was seeing Otis Rush, with his guitar, hop onto the El in Chicago at 2:30 a.m. one morning when my pal Paul and I were on our way home from loading trucks at United Parcel Service. In both cases, it wasn't just that these guys had recognizable faces—it was the aura around them, that indefinable aura that somehow surrounds great bluesmen, something about style, something about self-assurance, something about a stubborn insistence on living life on one's own terms.

Whatever it was, August Wilson had it in spades. I walked away from that sighting feeling kind of proud of Seattle—our town and August Wilson's town, too. For all its shortcomings, its politically correct and trendy facade, there's still something here, some real heartbeat deep in Seattle somewhere, that understands and is capable of nurturing the blues.

Butch's Boys

Photos by Butch Berman

Sherman (left) and Kaliber (above) relax in the yard.

Jazz on Disc

Pianist Rodriguez follows in Evans footsteps

By Tom Ineck



BOB RODRIGUEZ
Corridor
 CreOp Muse

Add another name to those distinguished jazz pianists who follow—with respect and admiration—in the stylistic footsteps of Bill Evans. With “Corridor,” Bob Rodriguez takes his place among such great lyrical keyboard artists as Keith Jarrett, Richie Beirach, Fred Hersch and Brad Mehldau.

Like those who came before, Rodriguez seems most comfortable in the trio setting, here receiving outstanding support and collaboration from the duo of bassist Mike Richmond and drummer Eliot Zigmund.

The pianist’s prodigious interpretative powers are most evident on the trio’s covers—including Ellington’s “Prelude to a Kiss,” Coltrane’s “Naima” and Rodgers and Hart’s “Spring Is Here.” He artfully re-imagines “Prelude,” melodically, harmonically and rhythmically. The listener recognizes the departure from convention, but is drawn irresistibly along by the pianist’s sense of adventure. In its elegiac introspection, Fritz Kreisler’s “Liebesleid (Love’s Sorrow)” is a perfect fit with the others.

Rodriguez also proves himself an accomplished composer. The luxurious title track evolves for more than nine minutes. After threatening to deconstruct early on, it eventually arises

like a triumphant Phoenix from the ashes. Like the creative process that it describes, “Inside” provides a vehicle for trio members to dig deep “inside” the lovely chord changes for all the harmonic and melodic potential. “It’s Not That Dark” begins with a classical interlude that—indeed—seems dark and foreboding, but the mood brightens somewhat as the tension is resolved. “Within the Line” comes as close to going uptempo as anything here.

Richmond employs a resonant, singing tone much like Jarrett’s longtime bassist, Gary Peacock, and harking back to Evans sidemen Eddie Gomez and Scott LaFaro. Zigmund is the epitome of taste, with skillful brushwork, a measured gait, and only occasional, well-placed flourishes on cymbals.

The entire disc is subdued, as though by thematic design. Some may object to its total absence of straight-ahead, up-tempo swingers, but given a chance, this late-night listening experience is extremely rewarding.



ROBERT WALTER
Super Heavy Organ
 Magnatude Records

“Super Heavy Organ” has seen super-heavy rotation in my CD players over the last couple of months, both at home and cruising around town. Hammond B-3 powerhouse Robert

Walter creates some serious groove music, suitable for any occasion.

The result also reemphasizes the elemental soul inherent in the historic New Orleans music scene. Although Walter is a recent transplant from the West Coast, the solid rhythmic foundation is laid by Crescent City veterans James Singleton on bass and Johnny Vidacovich, both of whom are members of the great band Astral Project. Also adding to the general funk atmosphere are drummer Stanton Moore of the funk-groove band Galactic and tenor saxophonist Tim Green. Vocalist Anthony Farrell adds his unique flavor on three tracks.

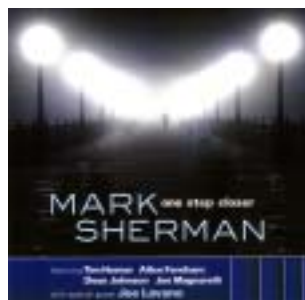
Of course, it is Walter’s inspired playing on assorted keyboards—organ, piano, clavinet and melodica—that binds these elements together on imaginative, original tunes like “Adelita,” “Kickin’ Up Dust,” “El Cuervo,” and “Cabrillo.” The irresistible drive of “Criminals Have a Name for It” is aided and abetted by syncopated hand-clapping from start to finish. The quirky “34 Small” pairs the organ and sax on the melody line, accompanied by Vidacovich’s rattlesnake brushwork and Singleton’s loping, sinister bass.

“Don’t Hate, Congratulate” is music with a message, but it hasn’t lost its funky essence in the process. Moore’s crackling drums are the key to “Big Dummy,” setting the stage for Walter’s B-3 explorations and Green’s stratospheric wails.

At times, Walter pushes the B-3 to its sonic limit, producing a monster sound that enters the rock realm, especially on the cover of Jimmy Page and Robert Plant’s composition “Poor Tom,” the only tune not written by the organist. “Hardware” also comes on like a distant cousin of Led Zep’s

"Kashmir," punctuated by Vidacovich's signature street beat and Singleton's booming slurs.

Chased out of the Big Easy by Hurricane Katrina a few months ago, Walter and company will undoubtedly get back on their feet and continue to turn out great music. It is hard to imagine them creating this feel anywhere but New Orleans.



MARK SHERMAN
One Step Closer
 Consolidated Artists Productions

Much of the music of vibraphonist Mark Sherman is hard-edged East Coast bop—with a difference. Sherman's playing on vibes and marimba softens and warms the effect, creating a delightful contrast in dynamics, perhaps an essential sense of balance that he learned during his six-year stint with singer Peggy Lee.

Among Sherman's outstanding fellow travelers on "One Step Closer" are Joe Lovano, whose powerful blowing on tenor sax enlivens three of the 10 tracks, trumpeter Joe Magnarelli, pianist Allen Farnham, bassist Dean Johnson and drummer Tim Horner. This cream of NYC jazz stalwarts rises to the top time after time.

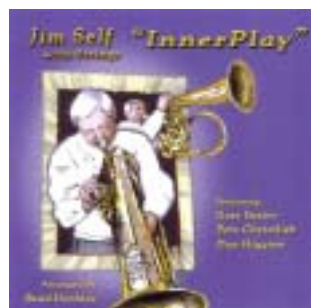
The opener is "Modal Blues," a brawny, brawling bopper that features Lovano at his best. "Little Lullaby," on the other hand, is as gentle and engaging as its title, with excellent interplay between Sherman and Magnarelli on flugelhorn. Henry Mancini's classic "Moon River" is a showcase for Sherman's sensitive ballad technique on

vibes and for Lovano's bluesy take on an ageless tune.

"Spiritual Exercise" flexes its upbeat muscle in a unison melody line pairing Sherman and Magnarelli to great effect. The trumpeter soars in an extended solo with echoes of Woody Shaw's flamboyant assurance. Farnham also delivers an inspired solo statement. The pianist contributed two compositions, including the wonderful ballad "Hope" and the lively, Caribbean-flavored "Genkatively," a play on "genki," Japanese for "feelin' good."

Magnarelli's flugelhorn plays a prominent role on Sherman's ballad "My Princess," a memorable tribute to the composer's wife. Just when you thought nothing new could be done with "My One and Only Love," Sherman rethinks the tune with emphasis on shifting harmonies on vibes, flugelhorn and piano. The gently swinging Latin tune "Ella Bella" is Sherman's love song to daughter Ella. "Long Trip Home" segues from a provocative introductory statement to another lively romp with a Latin tinge, closing the CD with the same gusto that opened it.

At age 48, Sherman is long overdue for the level of recognition he so richly deserves. Perhaps "One Step Closer" will truly be a big leap in that direction.



JIM SELF
InnerPlay with Strings
 Basset Hound Music

Tuba player Jim Self got a little recognition back in 1990, when Concord Records released his "Tricky Lix," a

brassy barrage that was as much fun as the title implies. Since then, his recordings have been relegated to small labels with poor distribution.

He returns in earnest with "InnerPlay," a wonderful collaboration pitting the tuba and reeds with jazz rhythm players and a 25-piece string section. Self is a bop player with the highest credentials, including several years with the great jazz innovator Don Ellis. Among his jazz cohorts here are the superb saxophonists Pete Christlieb, Gary Foster and Dan Higgins.

Rather than get in the way of such strong improvisers, the strings—arranged by Brad Dechter—tastefully enhance the overall harmonic palette and provide a comforting contrast to Self's bombastic instrument. (He also plays something called a fluba, a hybrid of tuba and flugelhorn.)

The results are magic, transforming such familiar tunes as Herbie Hancock's "Speak Like a Child," Isham Jones' "There Is No Greater Love," Clare Fischer's "Pensativa," and even Gershwin's "I Loves You Porgy," which remains a ballad of exquisite beauty.

One of the most luxuriantly arranged and performed pieces here is trumpeter Steve Huffsteter's "Cipriana," a jazz waltz that allowed Dechter to take full advantage of the many color variations inherent in this mighty brass-and-string ensemble, including a soaring flute solo by Foster. Self's ballad "That Morning in May" deftly pairs fluba with Higgins' alto sax.

"The Underdog Has Arisen" is Dechter's tribute to Charles Mingus, and it has the appropriate bluesy subtext, plus a typically terrific tenor solo by Christlieb. Self's chosen instruments—tuba and fluba alike—contain a large dose of bombast by nature, but Self also is capable of great lyricism and gentle warmth in his playing. Witness his light touch, and virtuosic fingering, on Jobim's upbeat "No More Blues" and his

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Continued from page 15

punchy punctuation on Horace Silver's "Strollin'," which also benefits from strong solo statements by Foster on alto sax, Higgins on tenor, Dechter on alto and Christlieb on tenor.

The grand finale is Self playing with himself. That is, he overdubs the tuba four times for a clever choral treatment of "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans?" First, the strings lay down a lush carpet of sound for Self's initial solo, and then they set the scene for the final "quartet" coda.



JEFF BAKER
Monologue
OA2 Records

For some fans of last year's "Baker Sings Chet," this rapid follow-up will come as a pleasant surprise. For others, it may be a bit of a letdown. There is no denying *this* Baker's affinity for that other Baker's idiosyncratic vocal sound, but his upper-register croon seems less suited for some of the repertoire on "Monologue," making for mixed results.

Jeff Baker certainly has the bandmates to make the most of any situation—saxophonist Brent Jensen, pianist Bill Anschell, bassist Doug Miller, drummer John Bishop and the wonderful addition of cellist David Sabee on two tracks.

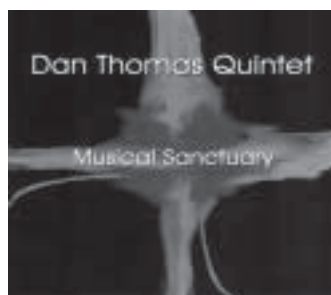
"That Old Feeling" gets an updated treatment, courtesy of arranger Anschell, but Baker's reading seems inappropriate. Likewise, "You Don't Know What Love Is" lacks a certain bluesy, ballsy inflection. Baker is more

successful on his take of Nat Cole's "Answer Me, My Love," and the wistful wartime ballad "A Nightingale Sang in Berkley Square."

Anschell and the band shine on "I Didn't Know What Time It Was," imparting the muscular swing of which Baker seems incapable. The singer returns to form on the wrenching ballad "You Are Too Beautiful," sensitively accompanied by Farnham, Miller and Bishop. Jensen is the stand-out player on the bouncy Latin arrangement of "The More I See You," while Baker is left in the dust by the band's exuberant performance.

Baker is definitely in his element on "Come Ready," a classical art song by contemporary composer Richard Huntley and the highlight of this recording. A gorgeous love song with exquisite chord changes and touching lyrics, it provides Baker with a vehicle custom-made for his delicate approach. Jensen, on soprano sax, heightens the effect with a note-perfect solo. Tracy Chapman's ballad "The Promise" also is an excellent choice for Baker.

Baker's vocal gift, while limited, is undeniable. One hopes that eventually he will develop a repertoire that takes full advantage of that gift.



DAN THOMAS QUINTET
Musical Sanctuary
Dan Thomas Productions

After experiencing a life-threatening health crisis in 2004 (*see the August 2004 issue of the BMF newsletter*), Kansas City saxophonist Dan Thomas was newly inspired to write music. The result, aptly named, is "Musi-

cal Sanctuary," a generous 68 minutes of new music.

Retaining much of the same group of KC musicians who have comprised his quintet over the last few years, Thomas has assured that not only is this aggregation musically compatible, but also capable to carry out his often-complex musical assignments. Stalwarts Joe Parisi on trumpet and flugelhorn, Roger Wilder on Fender Rhodes and piano and bassist Bram Wijnands are joined by new drummer Mike Shanks. Craig Akin occasionally subs for Wijnands on the electric and acoustic basses.

"Toubanrut," a nearly unpronounceable reversal of "Turnabout," opens the recording in typically challenging—but swinging—fashion. Thomas and Parisi (on muted horn) dart in and out of the blazing melody line in perfect unison before allowing each of the principals to state his solo case. "Professor RMW, Jr." is, of course, a tribute to friend, mentor and fellow University of Missouri-KC professor Bobby Watson, who also wrote the liner notes, confirming their mutual admiration.

The searching "Expressions" takes on a fusion sound with Wilder's electric keys and Akin's electric bass. By contrast, "Love Everlasting" is a tender acoustic ballad that brings out the best in everyone, especially Thomas on sax and Wilder on piano. "RSVP" revs up the band again in hard-bop style, with Thomas firmly asserting his leadership on tenor. Using mallets on tom-toms, Shanks establishes the mystical quality of the title track, which segues into "Selflessly Assured" and back to a reprise of the title theme for a fascinating, 10-minute excursion.

Thomas shares the glory of "Blues for BLT," a driving bop tune with brief, but effective solos by Thomas, Parisi and Wilder. "Walt's Bop Inn" further reinforces the band's hard-bop credentials, as do the tricky "With Two Endings" and the eight-minute "From Within," a sleight-of-hand masterpiece

that showcases Parisi's muted-trumpet pyrotechnics.

A series of brief "Folktales from Far East" are interspersed throughout the recording, as though contrasting two of the world's most important musical traditions and inviting listeners to further explore this "musical sanctuary."



WILLIE MARTINEZ & LA FAMILIA SEXTET
Family
Cuch be Witcha Productions

For many years the music director and timbales master with

Norman Hedman & Tropique, Willie Martinez in recent years has been striking out on his own. His latest project is a typically rhythmic affair called "Family," which also features pianist Misha Tsiganov of Tropique.

Martinez himself wrote eight of the 10 tracks, but arranging credits go to the whole sextet. "And Make It Snappy" seethes with Cuban fire, stoked by assorted percussion instruments. "Sweet Pecan Pie," by saxophonist Max Schweiger, is a bluesy number in the funk tradition of Stanley Turrentine or Lou Donaldson. Bassist Jennifer Vincent, trombonist J. Walter Hawkes and Tsiganov take excellent solo turns on "Mr. Mills."

In the aptly named "A Stroll in the Park," Martinez creates a more pastoral—and fraternal—mood as the horns state the melody in uni-

son. Schweiger delivers a tasteful, evenly paced baritone sax solo. Martinez showcases his strong vocal talents on Luis Marquetti's ballad "Plazos Traicioneros," also featuring a plangent, plunger-muted solo by Hawkes.

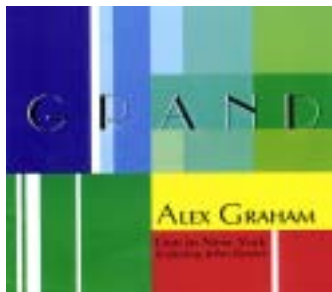
"Say Hey Ray!" has that irresistible forward motion of Tito Puente's best work. Martinez is especially effective, creating intricate polyrhythms on drums. Shades of the blues also are apparent on "Shades of Magenta," which opens broodingly before accelerating for a wave of percussion. "Makin' Walt Run" is a complex bop workout that has everyone rising to the challenge.

With "Family," Martinez is one step closer to establishing himself as a leader in the long tradition of New York City's great Latin bands.

Discorama

New Alex Graham release is grand indeed

By Butch Berman



ALEX GRAHAM
Grand: Live in New York
Featuring John Boutte
GH-002

I decided to catch up on my CD reviewing while journeying west with my wife, Grace, on the Amtrak California Zephyr. Amtrak, now the nadir of the abyss of coast-to-coast traveling, may have started our trip out on the wrong track, but our first choice of listening improved our

trip (no pun intended) in grand style.

"Grand," the rockin', swinging and jazzy new release recorded live by alto saxophonist Alex Graham at New York's Smoke nightclub, really cooks and puts you right there in the front row, grooving on the sounds.

This hybrid of styles, emanating from a seven-piece band (including Alex), filtered through a love of New Orleans-tinged tunes and showcasing the wonderful vocalizing of John Boutte, captures a hot night in the "other" city of jazz...New York City.

Smoke has a "rep" for featuring top-notch players, and Alex and his gang were no exception. An eclectic set list mixing standards like "I Cover the Waterfront" with the likes of "Basin Street Blues" and Fats Domino's rock 'n' roll hit, "I'm Walkin'," all leave room for amazing blow-

ing from the cats in the band, and Mr. Boutte is a gem. Shades of Jimmy Scott come to mind, but he's got his own thing goin'. His writing ability also shines with "At the Foot of Canal Street," as does Graham's "Blues for K."

Alex is the musical director at Mackinac Island's famed Grand Hotel, where he first met up with John Boutte. Likewise, the other musicians all have ties to the Musser family-owned Michigan hotel and Graham's tutelage. He took over the position in 2001 after developing his chops in New York in the '90s.

Soulful, sultry, singing with a snappy rhythm section that keep your toes tappin' and horn-playing that puts a smile on your face long after you've heard it and put the CD back on the shelf, it is, indeed... "Grand."

Letters to the Editor

Friends and musicians offer salutations

Giacomo Gates has kind words for BMF coverage of final TJF

I was forwarded your site by a fan. Although I had been there before, I had not looked at it since the Topeka Jazz Festival. In short, I thought you reviewed the festival very well, said nice things about all the performers and the audience who showed, along with the great “feel” that there is at these events. I liked that you gave the feel of a slightly sad, reminiscing farewell. Good stuff.

Giacomo Gates

Editor: You can read about the 2005 Topeka Jazz Festival in the July newsletter.

Martinez regrets missing Topeka Jazz Fest

Willie Martinez here. Writing this note is so long overdue that I’m honestly ashamed of myself. I’m not a man who’s into excuses, so I’ll just simply say PLEASE FORGIVE ME!

First off, I never communicated how very much I appreciated your wonderful review of my vocal CD, “I Remember You.” It was awesome and I can’t thank you enough for your kind words and insightful observation. (*Editor: The review was in the October 2003 newsletter.*)

Secondly, it really was my intention to touch base with you to say how sorry I was that my involvement with the Broadway production of “The Mambo Kings” prevented me from being with Norman at Topeka.

It was a bittersweet period in that it was great to be a part of such a grand production, but, as you know, my heart has always been with Tropique. To miss any opportunity to play with them, and to see you, was really a huge drag for

me. (*Editor: See the concert review in the July newsletter.*)

Anyway, I’m hoping and praying that you’ll accept my humblest apologies for my human frailties. You have always been so kind to Norman, me and all of the fellas. Yours is a friendship that I hope will last forever, even though we don’t see each other as often as we’d like.

Be well, Butch. I hope all is going great with you and that we’ll have an opportunity to see each other soon. Till then, take care, hope to chat with you soon.

Warmest regards,

*Willie Martinez
New York City*

P.S. Please give my VERY best to Rich (Hoover). I miss the hell out of both of you very much!

Martinez has new release

Hi Butch,

Hope you and Grace had a wonderful time in San Francisco. I’m checking in as I’d really like to send you a copy of my new CD. I finally buckled down and wrote and arranged a CD’s worth of original music for a sextet featuring a trombone and bari sax front line. I’d love for you to hear it. (*Editor: See the CD review on page 17.*)

Very best,

*Willie Martinez
New York City*

Dedicated collector scores big

Several years ago, in the winter, Patti and I were in a small antique mall in Crete (Nebraska) on a cold Sunday. I was rummaging around and found a 78 rpm album of Red Norvo and Mildred Bailey on the old original Crown label (Crown Album #2) from the ‘30s. It was a four-record set, but was missing one of the records. I think it was eight bucks or something like that. The inside cover has some great photos, the artists are Dick Vance, Emmet Carls, Henderson Chambers, Ellis Larkins (looks like he is 16), J.C. Heard, Chuck Wayne, Art Ryerson, Billy Taylor (bass) and Hank D’Amico. Anyhow, about a month ago on an internet auction site. I spotted a Bailey/Norvo 78, and would you believe it was the one missing from the set. I bid \$6, got it, and it’s now in the album where it belongs. Now who’s the hardest-working man in the record collection business?

*Dan Demuth
Colorado Springs, Colo.*

“Hardest-working man in record collecting” scores again

Here is your old “hardest working man in the record collecting business” reporting in. From a guy I deal with in Albuquerque, I just picked up Mose Allison’s “Back Country Suite” on Prestige, Hoagy Carmichael’s “The Stardust Road” (10" LP) on Decca, Carl Perkins’ (the rocker) “Live At Austin City Limits” on the Suede label, and Sugar Chile Robinson’s “Boogie Woogie” on Capitol. All VG+ to NM- (both LPs & jackets). Cost was \$20 including shipping. Heh! Heh!

*Dan Demuth
Colorado Springs, Colo.*


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Photo by Butch Berman

Friends gather at the 2005 Topeka Jazz Festival. Clockwise from left they are Melanie Kitchner of the Topeka Performing Arts Center, singer Kathleen Holeman, Grace Sankey Berman and Michelle Leivan, the Topeka artist who painted the official poster for the festival.

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