



File Photo

Butch Berman 1949-2008

BMF to continue "into the future"

By Tony Rager

Faithful readers and fans of the Berman Music Foundation: With the passing of Butch Berman, the usual "Prez Sez" columns that we have come to know and love are, regrettably, a thing of the past. As the BMF begins its journey into the future, we offer the following column by Tony Rager, the foundation's longtime friend and "legal eagle."

Allow me to introduce myself and to discuss the future of the Berman Music Foundation.

I am Tony Rager and on Jan. 31, like many of you, I lost a very dear friend. As a result, I became the trustee of the Berman Music Foundation, and I am now charged with fulfilling the mission of the Berman Music Foundation.

My preference would have been to remain behind the scenes and allow Butch to continue to bebop his way through each and every day. Like most of you, I assumed that Butch would be around forever. I did not know him as long as many of you did, but we had contact on an almost-daily basis over the last 14 years. We met, usually at his house, every other Thursday.



File Photo

Tony Rager and Butch Berman in New York City in 1999.

Butch is gone, but his vision, his spirit and his foundation will continue. His ultimate legacy is yet to be written... and it will have many chapters.

Many of you who have visited the BMF website or who have had anything to do with Butch know that he established the Berman Music Foundation in the spring of 1995 "in order to protect and promote unique forms of jazz music during Butch's lifetime and *into the future*." Into the future... right now. Butch's wife, Grace, and I have met many times to discuss BMF and

Tony Rager continued on page 3

March 2008
Vol. 13, Number 2

In this issue of *Jazz*...

Friends pay tribute to Butch.....	2
Memorial: Butch's Obituary.....	6
Tomfoolery: Workplace/Playground.....	7
Preview of NJO/Russ Long Tribute.....	8
BMF sponsors Norman Hedman benefit...	9
Vanguard Jazz Orchestra review.....	10
NJO/Matt Niess review.....	11
NJO/Susie Thorne review.....	12
Memorial: Bassist Earl May.....	13
Jazz on Disc reviews.....	14
Letters to the Editor.....	18
Alaadeen Anecdote.....	19
From the Photo Archives.....	20

BMF vows to keep Butch's memory alive

By Tom Ineck

The Berman Music Foundation lost its guiding light and most passionate supporter when Butch Berman died Jan. 31.

More than simply the founder of the BMF, Butch was a veteran rocker and a friend to musicians and non-musicians alike. A master of networking, Butch touched so many lives in so many ways during his brief 58 years that it is impossible to document his impact in one story.

In an attempt to do him justice, we at the Berman Music Foundation will keep Butch's memory alive by continuing to do interviews with the rock musicians with whom he played, the jazz artists who experienced his generosity and friendship and others whom he met and developed friendships with in every aspect of his life.

Bill Dye, a guitarist now living in Kansas City, Mo., is a former bandmate of Butch's in The Megatones, a raucous rockabilly and rhythm 'n' blues band that ruled Lincoln from 1973 to 1976, once opening for bluesman Freddie King and frequently holding court in the early days of the Zoo Bar.

Dye fondly remembers Butch's unique outlook on life.

"When you entered Butchworld, he had this weird little, rarified environment. On one hand, he was able to do everything on his own terms. I'm a spoiled, only child, too, so we had that in common," Dye said. "The thing about Butch was that even though he saw the world through his own rose-colored glasses, he was always very generous and outgoing and friendly towards other people. He wasn't a selfish man, at all. He was self-involved, but he was not selfish."

The two met in the early '70s, when Berman was a member of a band called The Kaleidoscope. Because Butch had



The Megatones (from left) were Walter Warnsholz, Gary "Otto" Spalti, Charlie Burton, Bill Dye, Butch Berman and Dave Robel.

inherited his family's wealth, "he lived in this little world, like, 'I am the emperor of my domain and nothing challenges me.' He hardly ever had to do a job in his life," yet he kept busy collecting records and playing music, even when bandmates proved difficult to work with, Dye said. "One of the things that impressed me about Butch is that he didn't like being angry or mad at people. He wanted to find a way to get away from it."

Butch had a 1975 cassette tape recording of The Megatones performing at Little Bo's, a notorious Cornhusker Highway club in Lincoln. In recent years, he dubbed it to CD and gave Dye a copy.

"I've put it on a couple times and thought, 'Wow, this isn't just nostalgia. We were ass-kickin'.' The sound quality is just OK, but we sound like the MC5." The two also shared the bandstand in The Excessives from 1980 to 1981, a rock 'n' roll experience Dye remembers fondly.

"That was pretty much his band, he was leading the group, and he was always an utterly reasonable, pleasure to work with," he said. "He was always very organized, knew what was going

on. And, he was always a very fair-minded guy. He wanted to be a fair-minded person, as a bandleader and just as a person."

Another thing they had in common was collecting records.

"Over the years, we were always trying to turn each other on to things," Dye said. A visit to Butch's house would eventually turn to a listening session that involved an exchange of obscure 45s. "Sometimes I would bring stuff over for him, and he would be interested in that. He was open to other people bringing stuff to him, as well. He was more of a hardcore collector than I was. I used to be more of a collector than I am now, but Butch never let up."

Most memorable for Dye was Butch's thoughtfulness.

"Over the years, I can't tell you how many times he would remember my birthday or give me some little gift and say, 'I found this 45 and thought of you. Here.' It was not just with me. He was one of the most thoughtful people I've ever known."

Dye also remembers Butch as a friendly conversationalist, even with people he hardly knew. After moving to Kansas City many, he would occasionally return to visit family and friends.

"One of those times I was in town, my mom said, 'Oh, I ran into Butch Berman the other day at the grocery store. I could barely get away from him. He wanted to talk and talk and talk about all kinds of things. What a nice fella, but boy he can talk!' She got a kick out of Butch."

Karrin Allyson's association with Berman Music Foundation is the longest one on record, beginning with a March 1995 booking at the Zoo Bar in Lincoln.

BMF continued on page 4

Tony Rager continued from page 1

plans for the future. Grace will continue to be an integral part of BMF, and her special insight will provide a unique perspective.

Butch realized that no one person could have his extensive knowledge of and passion for all forms of music and Americana, so he selected an amazing group of BMF advisors and he cultivated numerous friends of BMF. My job is to utilize these resources to continue the mission of BMF. We are scheduled to have a BMF advisors meeting March 23, just before the celebration of Butch's life at the Cornhusker Hotel, where we will discuss short-term and long-term plans.

The Sunday before Butch died, he and I met and talked for about three hours. Thank you, Grace, for this opportunity. Sunday was the last day that Butch was able to talk, and we talked about everything—jazz, “Leave it to Beaver” versus “The Beverly Hillbillies” (“Leave it to Beaver” won, hands down, according to Butch), whether he would have a cute nurse (yes, he still had his ribald sense of humor), the San Francisco Giants, all of his friends (he was so thankful for all of you), the Cronin Brothers and the band's gig scheduled for February, and Grace, his forever special angel.

We spent quite a bit of time talking about BMF's short-term projects, including the Russ Long/NJO tribute concert in May, BMF's involvement in Jazz in June and Paul's continued amazing work on cataloguing the extensive museum collection. But, mostly, we talked about a benefit concert for Butch's dear friend and BMF advisor, Norman Hedman. Norman was just getting ready to begin his own treatment for cancer and this benefit concert is what Butch wanted to discuss. He was giving me a list of musicians that he thought would be perfect, possible dates, and the names of the best

New York venues to stage this event, and he was talking as fast as... well, as fast as Butch.

My intent in going over to Butch's house that day was not for a “formal meeting,” so I did not bring pen or paper. When Butch noticed that I was not writing anything down, he gently reprimanded me and told me to get a piece of paper and a pen because there was no way I would remember everything he was telling me. He was right. He gave me addresses and phone numbers, as if I were typing in a request to Google.

His total recall was incredible, but what amazed me most was how he was more concerned about Norman's situation than his own situation. I jokingly told him that it was too bad that some people did not see how his compassion was bigger than his ego, and he whispered to me that we needed to keep that secret between us. Sorry, Butch, I decided to let that one out of the bag. I could write a novel about my experiences with Butch (“Thursdays with Butch”?), but that is for another time and another place.

This newsletter will continue, and Tom Ineck will continue to serve as the editor and primary columnist for the newsletter. Tom has plans to infuse the spirit of Butch into each newsletter, but I'll let those little tidbits be a surprise for you. We may have guest columnists, and we would like to have each of the advisors at times write a column of introduction to give you a better idea of team BMF. Periodically, you will even hear from me. Thanks, Tom, for your continued great work.

So, we begin... into the future—right now. Turn the page with me and let us begin the next chapter in the Berman Music Foundation... may the music never end.

Tony Rager
BMF Trustee



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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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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The Butch Berman Charitable Music Foundation is a non-profit, tax exempt, 501(c)(3) private foundation recognized by the Internal Revenue Service and the Nebraska Department of Revenue. It was established in the spring of 1995 to protect and promote unique forms of jazz music.

Trustee: Tony Rager

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

BMF continued from page 2

The foundation brought her back to the Capital City numerous times to play the Zoo Bar, a now-defunct club called Huey's and eventually a concert performance in November 2001 at the Lied Center for Performing Arts, where Allyson was accompanied by a Kansas City rhythm section and string players from the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra.

Berman had first heard Allyson in Kansas City, where she often performed at The Phoenix Bar & Grill and at Jardine's. He soon found new venues for her to practice her craft.

"He was so avid about giving artists venues and avenues to play," Allyson said. "I was in the club scene, the bar scene, every day of my life, and he offered me one of the first opportunities to actually play for a real listening audience, like a concert setting. It gives you a different way to explore your art. He was always interested in doing different things. He was a very creative person, and he was excited about stuff. He always wanted to do more of something. It was never less of something."

Allyson also met up with Berman when the foundation covered the Topeka Jazz Festival from the late 1990s until 2005. After-hours parties in the hotel were not uncommon, and Butch was always ready to enjoy them.

"He always wanted to hang out," Allyson said. "I'm always on the road, so I'm always trying to conserve energy a little bit. I like to hang out too, but I always felt bad that I didn't do it as often as I would have liked to with Butch. But we had our share."

Russ Dantzler and Berman were still in their teens when they met in 1968. A resident of New York City for many years, Dantzler operates Hot Jazz Management and Production and has worked with jazz artists Claude "Fiddler" Williams, Benny Waters, Earl May and many others.

When he graduated from high school, Dantzler moved into a house in



Karrin Allyson and Butch Berman in November 2001 in Lincoln

Lincoln with three roommates, all women. One of them was dating Berman, who would pick her up there. The two got to know each other better.

"He had a passion for turning people onto things, whatever they were," Dantzler said. "He also had a passion for discovering new things. I don't know which was greater, sharing it or finding it himself. That was one of the neatest things about him, and that rang true practically every time I saw him. He had some new band or some *thing* new that he had to share."

Like many others who frequented the Zoo Bar and other rock venues in the mid-'70s, Dantzler loved The Megatones and Berman's rockabilly piano playing.

"That was the only band in Lincoln that made me want to dance just about every time I heard them. And, I'm not a good dancer. I loved Butch's keyboards. I loved his guitar playing, but I really loved his keyboard work."

Because of Dantzler's long resi-



Russ Dantzler and Norman Hedman in New York in 2004

dence in New York City and his contacts with jazz musicians, Butch often called on him for long-distance help in making arrangements or helping with publicity. At times, Dantzler found himself at the mercy of Butch's jazz obsessions and incapable of delivering exactly what Butch wanted. In the weeks before Berman's death, they talked about organizing a benefit concert for Norman Hedman, leader of the Latin jazz group Tropique and a longtime friend and consultant of the Berman Music Foundation. Hedman also is having health problems related to cancer.

Dantzler said his final phone conversation with Berman illustrated Butch's generosity and thoughtfulness.

"I'm still kind of knocked out by the last conversation, where it was all about helping someone else. He actually called me twice one week before he died, and it was about helping Norman, of course."

It was Dantzler who introduced Butch to singer **Kendra Shank** in New York City in 1995.

"I was building a following in New York at that time," Shank recalled. "Russ was finding every way possible for me to sit in with musicians and meet musicians and expand my presence on the New York jazz scene. Butch heard me sing, and I guess he really liked what he heard."

A few months later, Berman booked Shank as part of a New York All-Stars performance in August 1995 at the Zoo Bar in Lincoln, with a side trip to Kansas City for another gig. The all-star band included Jaki Byard on piano, Jimmy Knepper on trombone, Claude "Fiddler" Williams on violin, Earl May on bass and Jackie Williams on drums.

"A whole lot of things came together out of that one trip. It was sort of a blossoming of a whole bunch of events that really propelled my career forward," Shank said. "I just remember being so honored to be included because that was pretty early in my jazz career. To be included in something that was being called

File Photo

File Photo



*Kendra Shank at 2007
Jazz in June*

an ‘all-star’ event was very flattering and humbling.”

When Butch traveled to NYC, the two would get together for dinner, to check out a jazz club or just have “long, long talks about everything under the sun—life, relationships, music. I always appreciated his passion. It just seemed he lived his life every second. He never passed up a moment to enjoy his life.”

Shank was especially impressed with his burning desire to use his philanthropy to make good things happen.

“I feel really blessed to have been one of the people that he chose to support. It’s meant so much to me. You know how hard it is for artists. You know what this life is like. You have no financial security, no job security. You’re doing this thing that means the world to you, that’s a spiritual path as much as anything. You put yourself out there, not knowing whether anyone is going to give a damn. When someone like that supports you by producing me in concert a few times, that’s supporting my art.”

Shank also witnessed and understood Berman’s zeal to introduce audiences to unfamiliar artists.

“One of the things I really admired about Butch is the way he seemed to have a vision and a sense of a mission and how he would bring artists to Lincoln who might not otherwise have been presented there, who might not have been in tune or in keeping with the general tastes of the audiences there,” she said. “He didn’t waver, when he had a

belief in something. I felt he was a person of great integrity. Maybe he was just stubborn. He was a jazz evangelist.”

Gerald Spaits, a Kansas City bassist and BMF consultant, met Berman at the Topeka Jazz Festival in the late 1990s. After the Russ Long Trio CD “Never Let Me Go” had been recorded in 2001, Spaits turned to Berman as one of several possible backers who would help to bankroll the release. Instead, he put up all the money necessary to issue the release.

The trio visited Lincoln and got better acquainted with Butch, always a requirement for his love of networking and camaraderie. The BMF later booked the trio—and other bands that utilized Spaits’ bass prowess—at P.O. Pears in Lincoln. Other gigs followed at Jazz in June and in planning the 2005 Topeka Jazz Festival, for which Berman served as music director. Eventually, Spaits and his wife, Leslie, became BMF consultants.

“He was a unique individual,” Spaits said. “He put it all out there. He didn’t mince any words. If he didn’t like something, he’d let you know. ‘It’s like he would have to clear the air once in a while. That was just Butch.’”

Dave Fowler first heard of Berman many years ago, when he read a music magazine article that singled out a Lincoln guitar player for his “letter-perfect vocabulary of Scotty Moore,” the legendary guitarist best known for backing Elvis Presley in the early part of his career.

“That was my introduction to



Gerald Spaits in 2001



*Dave Fowler with the Dorothy
Lynch Mob in 2003*

Butch. He was an expert in that straight-ahead, rockabilly guitar style.”

Fowler, a violinist, and Butch struck up a friendship over the years and eventually were occasional bandmates in an early version of Charlie Burton’s band, the Dorothy Lynch Mob. But Fowler also took an interest in the Berman Music Foundation’s collection of rare music videos by such artists as Claude “Fiddler” Williams and a group of jazz all-stars who the foundation brought to Lincoln’s Zoo Bar in the mid 1990s.

“The resources that he put together in that museum are just incredible,” Fowler said. “It ranges from obscure Homer and Jethro 45s to the very first time that (jazz pianist) Eldar Djangirov played in Lincoln. He covered so many different areas of jazz.”

One of the things that Fowler and Butch had in common was a love of “gypsy jazz,” that hybrid swing style made popular by guitarist Django Reinhardt and violinist Stephane Grappelli, founding members of the Hot Club of Paris quintet in the 1930s.

“Right up until the last weeks that I saw him, we were still planning some musical ideas that he wanted to carry out. He had brought the Hot Club of San Francisco back. He was thinking of doing that again and having some local people play as part of a gypsy jazz festival.

“I find it very hard to think that he’s not around.”

Memorial

BMF founder Butch Berman, 58, died Jan. 31

By Tom Ineck

Dear readers: In case you missed the news stories on the passing of Butch Berman, or wish to know more details of his life, we offer the piece below, which appeared in a slightly different form in the Feb. 1 Lincoln Journal Star.

LINCOLN, Neb.—Byron L. “Butch” Berman, 58, founder of the Berman Music Foundation and veteran of many Lincoln rock bands, died at home the evening of Jan. 31, after a four-month struggle with brain cancer.

Since its inception in spring 1995, the BMF has sponsored dozens of jazz concerts throughout the Midwest, including appearances in Lincoln by pianists George Cables, Eldar Djangirov, Kenny Barron, Monty Alexander, and Joe Cartwright; Norman Hedman’s Tropique; the Hot Club of San Francisco; singers Karrin Allyson, Kendra Shank, Giacomo Gates, Sheila Jordan, and Kevin Mahogany; saxophonists: Bobby Watson, Joe Lovano, and Greg Abate; trumpeter Claudio Roditi; guitarist Jerry Hahn; bassist Christian McBride; the Mingus Big Band and many others.

The foundation and the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra are collaborating on a May 23 tribute to the music of the late Kansas City pianist and composer Russ Long. Over the years, the foundation has sponsored many groups for the Jazz in June concerts in Lincoln, and right up to Butch’s death he was working on a lineup for this year’s series. We will share details as they become available.

Berman’s varied interests in music, however, go back a lot farther than the jazz foundation. At age seven, he was taking lessons in classical piano. An only child raised in 1950s Lincoln,



File Photo

Butch and Grace Sankey Berman on their wedding day, May 30, 2003

the precocious audiophile had collected 300 rock ‘n’ roll 45s by age 10. He also had begun playing guitar and improvising on the keyboard.

Berman played in a succession of local rock bands in the early 1960s, including the Modds, who were inducted into the Nebraska Rock ‘n’ Roll Hall of Fame. He grew his hair long and considered dropping out of school. At age 15, he was sent to Wentworth Military Academy, where, instead of discipline, the young cadet was introduced to all the thrills and excitement of Kansas City, just 40 miles down the road.

By the early 1970s, Berman was back on the rock scene in Lincoln, playing guitar and keyboards in a number of bands, including such regional favorites as The Megatones and Charlie Burton & Rock Therapy. He even toured Europe with rockabilly legend Sleepy LaBeef. The 1980s found him in San Francisco, hanging out at Jack’s Record Cellar, playing with Roy Loney & the Phantom Movers and beginning

to acquire an interest in jazz.

Returning to Lincoln in the early 1990s, he continued to build a large and diverse record collection and began an eight-year stint as a jazz deejay, hosting “Bop Street Theater,” “Reboppin’,” “Reboppin’ Revisited” and “Soul Stew” on KZUM Community Radio. He also maintained his rock music career, most recently with the Cronin Brothers, with whom he performed his last gig Dec. 30 at the Zoo Bar.

In May 2003, Berman married his soul mate, Grace, whom he often referred to as his “saving Grace” and “loving angel.” Together, they traveled to New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, Kansas City, Mo., and elsewhere and especially enjoyed going to concerts and dining with friends. Butch enjoyed interacting with Grace’s sons, Jenom and Bahji. He also had a lifelong love and respect for animals, wild and domestic, and adopted many dogs and cats over the years, most recently cat Muggles and dog Peanut.

Tomfoolery

Berman workplace was also a jazz playground

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—Work and play were all the same to Butch Berman, who in the spring of 1995 formed the Berman Music Foundation to “protect and promote unique forms of jazz music” during his lifetime and beyond. With that mission statement as its legal underpinning, the foundation became not only Butch’s workplace, but his playground—a jazz sandbox where he could build majestic castles or just romp with his friends.

Since my association with the foundation began as a writer in early 1996, Butch allowed me to do what I enjoy most, listening to and writing about jazz. Since the mid-1980s, I had been doing that for the Lincoln Journal Star newspaper—at least, as often as I could justify it to my editors. Butch let me indulge my passion for jazz to the extreme, a passion he shared.

Since then, I have assumed the additional roles of editor and webmaster for the BMF. In the last five years, since the periodical newsletter went to a completely digital publication, I worked especially closely with Butch, and I will miss our collaborations. To cover the latest in regional jazz, much of which was being presented by the Berman Music Foundation, we traveled to festivals in Kansas City, Mo., and Topeka, Kan., and met at local venues like the Lied Center for Performing Arts, the Cornhusker Hotel, the Embassy Suites, Westbrook Recital Hall, the Zoo Bar, the outdoor Jazz in June concert series, the Royal Grove, the Downtown Senior Center and the now-defunct P.O. Pears, Café de Mai, Huey’s, Ebenezer’s and Prime Time.

One of the most enjoyable musical adventures was a road trip last sum-



Butch Berman at home in his workplace and playground

mer to the Brownville Concert Hall for singer Klea Blackhurst, pianist Billy Stritch, bassist Gerald Spait and drummer Ray DeMarchi. My wife, Mary Jane, and I joined Butch and his wife, Grace, for a pleasant Sunday afternoon of good conversation and good music.

Working with Butch could be thrilling, educational, intoxicating, unpredictable, exasperating, even maddening. When I began editing all stories and he had gotten his first home (laptop) computer, he would invite me over to his basement office to take dictation. He would scribble his stories on paper beforehand, then attempt to read them back to me as I typed furiously on his unfamiliar keyboard, while his latest musical find was blaring on the stereo, the dogs were trying to lick my face, and the complementary wine and other party favors were beginning to go to



Butch celebrates his 55th birthday in March 2004.

my head. With Butch, work and play were always interchangeable.

Eventually, he learned how to write his stories on the computer and e-mail them to me for editing. It cut down on the work time, but it wasn’t nearly as memorable—or as much fun.

Like many who grew up in Lincoln, I became aware of Butch Berman as a musician, first seeing him perform at the Zoo Bar in 1974 with The Megatonnes, one of the great Midwest rock ‘n’ roll bands of that era. He was a manic piano player, perfectly suited to The Megatonnes’ raucous rockabilly antics, which were inspired and led by singer-songwriter Charlie Burton.

Butch continued his rock ‘n’ roll career, and I would again hear him with Charlie Burton & Rock Therapy, Pinky Black & the Excessives, The Tablerockers, Charlie Burton and the Dorothy Lynch Mob and The Cronin Brothers, his final band.

When Butch launched the foundation in 1995, he called me at the Journal Star to ask me to write a story about it. We met for an interview and I wrote the story, the first local coverage for the BMF. In retrospect, it seems inevitable that we would work together—and play together.

Butch and I shared the astrological water sign of Pisces, and it formed a bond that was significant for both of us. He may not have considered himself a guru, but I do. To everyone he met and everyone he worked with, he taught the simple lesson: Enjoy life!

I hope to have many more memorable experiences with the Berman Music Foundation, and Butch’s spirit will be present in everything we do. May the music never end.

Concert Preview

Berman inspired May 23 Russ Long tribute

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—It was Butch Berman who conceptualized the May 23 concert that will pair the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra and a coterie of Kansas City musicians for a tribute to the music of late KC pianist and composer Russ Long.

Through the auspices of the **Berman Music Foundation**, he funded the 2006 project to document Long's compositions with new arrangements for septet and a recording entitled "Time to Go: The Music of Russ Long." Long died Dec. 31, 2006, just weeks after the CD's release.

The recording had been selling well in the Kansas City area, but Berman wanted to introduce the music to a Lincoln audience. He approached the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra, with whom the BMF had collaborated in bringing many guest artists, including saxophonists Bobby Watson and Greg Abate, trumpeter Claudio Roditi and singer Giacomo Gates.

"Butch had just finished this CD project with Russ, and he was all excited about that," said Ed Love, NJO music director. "He said he would be very excited to fund a concert Russ Long's music and all new arrangements and even bring up a rhythm section from Kansas City."

Love chose three tunes with interesting chord changes that NJO musicians would enjoy playing and listeners would enjoy hearing. Bandmates Mark Benson, Dave Sharp and Peter Bouffard will arrange "Time to Go," "Meatloaf" (based on the changes of "I Got Rhythm") and "I Don't Care Who."

Berman also broached the subject with Gerald Spaits, Kansas City bassist and a BMF consultant. It was Spaits



Butch meets with Russ Long Trio in 2001 to release "Never Let Me Go."

who had spearheaded the "Time to Go" arrangements and recording.

"It was really Butch's idea," Spaits said of the plan to involve the NJO.

"He asked me if we could do some of those arrangements for a big band and do it with NJO. I thought that would be a great idea. It kind of came out of the blue, because it's not something that I would have thought of, although I think it's appropriate, and it's something that Russ would have really liked."

Spaits also will arrange three tunes for the NJO concert, "Parallel," "Woodland Park" and "Can City."

"We'll see what happens," he said with some trepidation. "It's going to be really interesting to see because I have no idea what they're going to do with the three tunes. I picked three that I thought would make good arrangements. I didn't want to do all six of them, just because that's a lot of work. It's a long process for me. I've done big-band arrangements, but I haven't done one for 10 or 15 years."

Kansas City will be well repre-

sented at the May 23 performance. Accompanying Spaits for the trip are pianist Roger Wilder, drummer Ray DeMarchi and reed virtuoso Charles Perkins.

"I'm excited to work with those rhythm-section guys from Kansas City," Love said. "They're just amazing musicians. It will be quite fun." In addition to their work with the NJO, the KC musicians will perform a short set of Long's tunes as a quartet.

Butch was a big fan of Long's, funding the release of 2001's "Never Let Me Go," a trio recording with bassist Spaits and drummer DeMarchi. He was attracted by Long's sense of ironic wit, his bluesy vocalizing, his modesty and, of course, his diverse talents as composer, song interpreter, pianist and singer. An important link in KC jazz history, Long had known or worked with some of the region's greats, including Eddy "Cleanhead" Vinson, Claude "Fiddler" Williams, Jay McShann and Frank Smith.

A longtime friend and bandmate of Long's, Spaits sees the Lincoln concert as a way to educate more people about the composer's music.

"I think it's significant because it is someone who didn't get his due," Spaits said. "We're celebrating Russ's talent. He made three recordings, and this last one we got in just before he passed. It documents the fact that he was a major talent, in my opinion. I also think he was a major contributor to Kansas City jazz."

Both Russ Long CDs are nearly sold out and may be reissued with help from the BMF, a subject of conversation just weeks before Butch's death.



The CD "Time to Go: The Music of Russ Long"

File Photo

Benefit Concert

BMF to sponsor Norman Hedman benefit

"Norman is one of the greatest musicians of all time. Not only is he supremely talented and educated, but he is one of the kindest people I know by far! His passion and love for music, art and teaching inspire me endlessly. We're all lucky to know such a great man!"

-- Alicia Keys,
11-time Grammy Award winner

Jazz Standard will present "Rhythm Relief," a very special star-studded benefit hosted by WBGO's Rob Crocker on Monday, April. The event honors adored master conguero and percussionist Norman Hedman.

The event is produced and sponsored by 8 Bar Management and the **Berman Music Foundation**.

In January, Hedman began to rehearse with Alicia Keys for her upcoming world tour. It was during this time that he was diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia (AML). Hedman is undergoing treatment at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. The event is a support effort to defray the considerable medical expenses in his battle against cancer. A silent auction will be held featuring items donated from Alicia Keys, Ty Law, NFL cornerback #24, and more. Join countless other jazz, soul, and R&B fans in support of Norman Hedman.

Featured musicians include Ron Carter, Joe Locke, Horacee Arnold, Ray Mantilla, Vic Juris, Kendra Shank, Frank Kimbrough, Buster Williams, T.K. Blue, Queen Esther Marrow, Will Calhoun, Andrienne Wilson, Cuba Gooding, Sr. and the Main Ingredient (George Staley, Sr., Larry D. Moore), Rene McLean, Dick Griffin, Steve Kroon, Chembo Corniel, B.D. Lenz,



File Photo

BMF friends and associates (from left) Norman Hedman, Tony Rager, Butch Berman, Kay Davis and Ruthann Nahorny gather in 2001.

Ron Buttacavole, Elliott & Brad Mason, and Norman Hedman's Tropique (Willie Martinez, Misha & Alexei Tsiganov, Roger Byam, Craig Rivers, Mario Rodriguez, Cristian Rivera).

Master conguero, percussionist, producer and composer Norman Hedman has recorded with artists ranging from the Main Ingredient, Alicia Keys and Daryl Hall to Arthur Blythe, Pat Martino and Bobby Watson. He has been an MVP

touring sideman with the O'Jays, Von Freeman, and Arturo Sandoval while in Chico Freeman's band. He has also opened for Kenny Garrett, Santana and Earth, Wind & Fire.

Hedman has led his own group, Norman Hedman's Tropique, in engagements at Jazz Standard and other top venues.

For more information visit: www.normanhedman.com/press/. For video visit: YouTube.

"Rhythm Relief" benefit details

What: "Rhythm Relief: A Benefit Concert for Norman Hedman," produced by 8 Bar Artist Management and the Berman Music Foundation

When: Monday, April 14, 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. (two shows)

Where: Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. in New York City

Cost: Tickets available at

TicketWeb.com for \$40 plus tax

How: If you are unable to attend the concert, but wish to make a contribution, please make gift checks payable to Norman Hedman and send to 8 Bar Artist Management, P.O. Box 536, St. Peters, MO 63376

INFO: Call (212) 576-2232 or visit JazzStandard.net

Concert Review

Vanguard Orchestra brings small-club feel

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—After 42 years as the virtual Monday night house band at the venerable Village Vanguard jazz club, the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra brought its show to the Lied Center for Performing Arts on Feb. 15, just days after completing a live recording at its home base in lower Manhattan.

The 16-piece big band evolved from the legendary Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra and still pays homage to that heritage with tunes written by the late Jones and with a bluesy sound that relies on a strong saxophone section and a hard-swinging rhythm section. Jones left in 1979 and Lewis continued to front the band until his death in 1990.

As though playing to the Lied audience of 1,000 in the intimate confines of its 175-seat Greenwich Village quarters, the ensemble kicked off with Jones' "Welcome to the Village Vanguard." They took it up-tempo with the Jones composition "Once Around," a rousing vehicle for the outstanding solos of trumpeter Scott Wendholt, baritone saxophonist Frank Basile of Omaha and alto saxophonist Jaleel Shaw.

"Up From the Skies," a 1967 tune by rock guitar god Jimi Hendrix and the title track of the Vanguard orchestra's latest studio recording, seemed an unusual choice, but the Jim McNeely arrangement handled it brilliantly as a brassy blues shuffle, subtly driven by drummer John Riley using brushes and featuring Jason Jackson on trombone and Ralph LaLama on tenor sax.

Pianist McNeely, the band's composer-in-residence, penned several Vanguard selections, including



The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra outside its home, the Village Vanguard jazz club in New York City

the brooding "Off the Cuff." Harmon-muted trumpets duelled with the reed section before setting loose the soloists as the intensity peaked. Rich Perry on tenor sax set the stage for a smoldering alto sax solo by Dick Oatts. McNeely's repetitive pedal point segued into a wonderful piano solo, setting him apart as a keyboard wizard who is also an exceptional composer and arranger.

Bringing the tempo down, the band played the Thad Jones waltz "Quiet Lady," with McNeely stating the melody and the reed section introducing some new tonal colors



Vanguard Jazz Orchestra in full roar

with two flutes and a clarinet. Basile on baritone sax and Joe Magnarelli on trumpet added some tasteful solos.

McNeely's composition "Don't Even Ask" was a wild and convoluted ride, punctuated by Shaw's alto sax solo and a Martin Wind bass solo constructed of dissonant, cascading chords. The full band approached a hard-charging climax before erupting into a clever cacophony.

The trademark Vanguard sax section was in the spotlight on "Three and One," another Jones tune. Trombonist John Mosca and Basile stated the melody, which the saxes expanded in a soli. Mosca's honeyed tone was apparent in his gorgeous solo.

A standing ovation kept the orchestra on stage for one more tune, Thad Jones' "Walkin' About," aptly titled for its "walking" bass line around which trumpets and trombones stated the theme. Oatts on alto sax, LaLama on tenor sax and McNeely on piano brought the affair to a close with the classic, three-note Basie tag line.

Earlier in the evening, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Jazz Ensemble got to show its considerable talent under the direction of Paul Haar, playing "Elimination," a tune by the band's pianist, and "Hey, It's Me You're Talkin' To," a composition by former Nebraskan and internationally renowned jazz drummer Victor Lewis.

While in Lincoln, the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra also conducted workshops with UNL music students.

Courtesy Photo

Courtesy Photo

Concert Review

Trombonist Niess confirms his master status

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—The Nebraska Jazz Orchestra calls its annual Young Lions concert “Learning from the Master” for good reason.

Virtuosic trombonist Matt Niess of Washington, D.C., was the NJO’s guest soloist Jan. 16 at Embassy Suites, displaying his astounding technique to an audience of about 300 who braved the winter storm conditions.

That included a group of 18 young musicians hand-picked from area schools to comprise the 2008 Young Lions All-Star Band.

Niess worked with the talented youth during the day and joined them on stage for one number, but he really sparkled during a set with the NJO.

Before Niess took the stage, the big band warmed up with the uptempo “Do it Up,” by saxophonist Mark Benson. A Bob Krueger trumpet solo was followed by a deft saxophone soli by the entire section, then a counterpoint statement by bass trombonist Matt Erickson and trumpeter Jeff Patton, who turned in a fine performance despite a broken arm. Ed Love capped it off with an accelerating alto sax solo.

Niess first showed his technical proficiency on the mid-tempo “Getting’ Sentimental Over You,” an Eric Richards arrangement of the standard that is best known as Tommy Dorsey’s theme. Niess easily negotiated the changes while triple-tonguing the trombone. Turning to a ballad, he masterfully interpreted the Sinatra favorite “All the Way” with alternating staccato bursts and long, flowing lines.

As arranged by Niess, Stanley



Courtesy Photo

Trombonist Matt Niess

Turrentine’s “Sugar” got an appropriately soulful reading, with melody stated by Erickson on bass trombone, Benson on alto sax, Scott Vicroy on a boiling baritone sax and Peter Bouffard on guitar.

For a Jim Roberts arrangement of the classic “Paper Moon,” the rest of the band left the stage to the trombone section, the rhythm section and Niess, who led the ensemble through a superb mid-tempo rendering of the tune. The five trombones in harmony were especially tantalizing.

For another chestnut, “Makin’ Whoopee,” Niess combined the pixie and plunger mutes for a very vocal-like effect, in homage to the great trombonist Al Grey of the Count Basie band. Finally, Niess and the NJO took it home with a rambunctious version of “Pennies from Heaven,” yet another tune from the Depression era. The entire sax section excelled in a harmonized statement before tenor saxophonist Paul

Haar stepped out front for a brilliant solo. Upping the ante, Niess closed the affair with another dazzling solo.

Earlier in the evening, the Young Lions performed a set of three numbers conducted by Love. They drew variously from the blues, soul and the Latin realm, beginning with Nat Adderley’s “Work Song,” in a new arrangement by Dave Sharp. Dizzy Gillespie’s “Soul Sauce” offered plenty of solo space around a repetitive riff stated by the bass and drums.

While the ensemble sections were typically fine, some of the young players also exhibited maturity in their brief solos, especially trumpeter Tommy Krueger, saxophonists Gabriela Praetzel and Elektra Wrenholt, trombonist Samuel Schmidt, guitarist Brian Vranicar, pianist Matt Marvin and vibraphonist Mark Carney. Niess himself chimed in on trombone on the set-closing “Duke It Out.”

Concert Review

NJO turns up the heat on seasonal favorites

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—Unseasonably moderate temperatures enticed music lovers to leave the comfort of home on Dec. 20 for the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra's annual Christmas concert at Embassy Suites.

Some 450 people turned out in a festive mood for the big-band holiday event, featuring vocalist Susie Thorne of Omaha.

For the occasion, the NJO tapped a backlog of seasonal tunes, as well as several new arrangements.

It all began with a longtime favorite, Peter Bouffard's take on "The Little Drummer Boy." The joyous, freewheeling arrangement was extended to include solo passages by Tom Harvill on piano, Scott Vicroy on baritone sax, Paul Haar on tenor sax, Bouffard on guitar and, of course, Greg Ahl on drums. Making it even more fun was the insertion of familiar riffs from traditional holiday tunes.

Duke Ellington's whimsical impression of Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Suite" was presented with "Sugar Rum Cherry." Vicroy on baritone and Stan Harper on tenor sax substituted for the celeste in the original composition.

For "The Christmas Waltz," Bouffard programmed the guitar synthesizer to approximate the sound of a harmonica, and it somehow seemed perfectly appropriate.

Thorne first took the stage for a swinging rendition of "O Christmas Tree." Possessing a rather thin voice and used to working with a small combo con-

*The Nebraska Jazz Orchestra*

Courtesy Photo

*Susie Thorne*

Courtesy Photo

White. New to the repertoire was Dave Sharp's bluesy arrangement of the traditional "I Wonder as I Wander," with White playing the melody on flugelhorn and featuring excellent solos by Haar and Bouffard.

Another surprise was Bouffard's arrangement of "I'll Be Home For Christmas," on which the guitarist switched to alto sax, sitting in with the rest of the reed section as Love took the lead on flute.

Thorne returned for a funky take on "Summertime," displaying some vocal gymnastics by singing in unison with the brass. Perhaps aspiring to the success of another former Omaha resident, jazz singer Karrin Allyson, Thorne switched to French for a lovely version of "Under Paris Skies," an uptempo waltz with an intro that cleverly quoted "I Love Paris."

The appropriate closer was a swinging medley of "Here Comes Santa Claus" and "Santa Claus is Coming to Town."

sisting of several NJO members, the vocalist struggled occasionally against the full frontal assault of the big band.

She was more effective working alone with the rhythm section on "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," especially her collaboration with bassist Andy Hall. On "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm," Thorne exhibited a nasal, country twang and an endearing shyness in her stage presence.

Bouffard took the melody on his arrangement of "Silent Night," a rumba that featured a wonderful flugelhorn solo by Darryl

Memorial

We just lost one of the best - R.I.P, Earl May

By Butch Berman

Editor's Note: This was the last story that Butch Berman wrote. Like so many things about Butch, it illustrates his thoughtfulness and compassion, even in the final stages of his own terminal illness.

After losing the wonderful and talented likes of the late great Frank Morgan and then Oscar Peterson at the end of 2007, I had high hopes that 2008 would bring more joy than sorrow.

Alas, one of the dearest, oldest friends and greatest gentlemen I've dealt with since I've been involved with the fabulous world of jazz the past 20-plus years passed away Jan. 4 from a heart attack at the age of 80. I'm talking about the legendary, left-handed Earl May, one of the best bassists in jazz history.

I met Earl through my old Lincoln buddy Russ Dantzler, whose Hot Jazz Management moved Russ to NYC many years ago. He lined me up to do my first interview on my original KZUM "Reboppin'" radio show during the early '80s. I treasure those cassette phone interviews transferred to CDs and hope to make them available to the public sometime in the near future.

Earl told of his early start in music as a youngster listening to old jazz records at his aunt's in New York before moving to the Sugar Hill section of Harlem and finally making music his career. Starting on the violin, and later wanting to be a drummer, he somehow got turned on to the upright bass in high school. Being a natural, with one of the best ears in the biz, he soon became one of the first-call



Earl May (1927-2008)

players to accompany some of the all-time greats—everyone from Charlie Parker and John Coltrane to Carmen McRae, Gloria Lynne (all of the female vocalists raved of his ability to play behind them and bring out their finest recorded and live performances), Dr. Billy Taylor, Dizzy Gillespie, Junior Mance, Barry Harris and Doc Cheatham (those fantastic Sunday brunches with the sweet Doc at Sweet Basil's), just to name a few. He led and fronted his own groups towards the later portion of his long tenure in music, recording many fine CDs for Matt Dobner's Arbor Records that are all available and should be required for any true jazz record collector.

I was lucky enough to finally meet, dine and catch Earl live in New York playing with other artists whom I grew to know, love and call friends,

such as Claude "Fiddler" Williams, Benny Waters, and Al Casey, to name a few that have passed on since then. I even got to book Earl at our Lincoln, Neb., hometown Zoo Bar when I first started the Berman Music Foundation. We called the group the New York All-Stars, which featured my good buddy Jackie Williams on drums, from the Mingus days the now-departed pianist Jaki Byard, trombone master Jimmy Knepper, and one of the first appearances of one of New York's finest female vocalists today, Kendra Shank. I have videos of those shows that, like my interview, I would love to make public for all his vast array of friends and fans to behold. Hanging with Earl and his lovely wife Lee in my hometown will be remembered and carried in my heart forever.

I can close my eyes and still picture Earl schlepping his bass all over Manhattan, dealing with parking his car, getting to whatever gig he had and, as always, playing his ass off with more dignity, finesse, and pure raw talent through his 50s, into his 60s and right up until he expired at 80.

We should all be as fortunate to live out our dreams and goals with such passion and pleasure. I will always love you, Earl, and remember the good times for the rest of my life and enjoy the incredible legacy of recorded music you left behind for us all cherish forever. You truly were one of the best. God bless you, and rest in peace in jazz heaven for eternity.

Jazz on Disc

Hutcherson is back with collection of classic ballads

By Tom Ineck


BOBBY HUTCHERSON
For Sentimental Reasons
 Kind of Blue Records

With the death of Milt Jackson in 1999, there are few vibraphonists who can assume the title of current master of that instrument. Joe Locke, Stefon Harris and Gary Burton certainly rank very highly, but it is Bobby Hutcherson alone who rises to the stature of “Bags.” The fact that this is only his third recording in the last 14 years makes “For Sentimental Reasons” especially significant.

It also is a gorgeous collection of classic love songs, from the light romantic to the heart-breaking, from the hope of tomorrow to the wistful regret of yesterday. Hutcherson elegantly paces himself, faithful to the original melodies, yet embellishing them with his trademark harmonic exploration. The 11 tracks generally alternate between ballads and mid-tempo tunes. Hutcherson’s perfectly suited partners are pianist Renee Rosnes, bassist Dwayne Burno and drummer Al Foster.

The quartet sets the tone for the entire project with a lush, yet relaxed reading of the opener, “(I Love You) For Sentimental Reasons.” “Ode to Angela,” a lovely piece by the late saxophonist Harold Land, is a harmonic gem capped by a wonderful Rosnes solo. Gershwin’s “Embraceable You” is taken at a very slow tempo and again fea-

tures a breathlessly beautiful harmonic interaction between vibes and piano.

The vibes prance delightfully through the Benny Golson standard “Along Came Betty,” lightening the outlook before the CD’s stately masterpiece, Leonard Bernstein’s yearning “Somewhere,” played as a duet between Hutcherson and Rosnes. “Jitterbug Waltz” begins slowly but soon leaps into dance-time in its familiar, cascading melody.

Hutcherson and crew avoid the risk of sappy melodrama on Michel Legrand’s “What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life?” Burno deftly walks the bass on a light-hearted version of “Don’t Blame Me,” which contains some of Hutcherson’s most imaginative playing. Foster sits out on the tender, uplifting “Spring Is Here.” The drummer returns with a snappy Latin beat to drive “I Wish I Knew,” and Hutcherson takes it home with a solo rendition of the classic farewell song, “I’ll Be Seeing You.”

As with any recorded document of a great jazz artist at his peak, “For Sentimental Reasons” reaches listeners at a depth more profound than the mere musical notes involved.

“As much as any great creative artist who has ever touched our hearts in the inner space of a story or a song, Bobby Hutcherson helps us to more readily welcome and celebrate the seemingly endless contradictions, polarities, and paradoxes of life,” writes Todd Barkan. “From Bobby’s swinging music, our souls learn an important little bit more about loving the whole spectrum of happy and sad and hopeful and mad that makes our brief time in this realm of day and night and clay and light a lot more worth living.”


JAZZCODE with CARL STORMER
In the Moment

While drummer Carl Stormer is the nominal leader of JazzCode, the quintet actually is a classic jazz democracy ruled by five masterful musicians whose individual artistry serves the greater good.

The resulting music is, indeed, a great and good thing, a collaborative effort documented in one day back in June 2007 at Rainbow Studio in Oslo, Norway. The choice of material is brilliant, the arrangements revelatory and the improvisation seemingly effortless, the kind of combination that is achieved only in the company of like minds who are truly “in the moment.”

Stormer is the conceptual genius and rhythmic anchor behind reed player Rob Scheps, pianist Jamie Reynolds, guitarist Georg Wadenius, and bassist Cameron Brown. If anyone truly dominates this recording it is Scheps, whose versatility, technique and imagination make him a constant presence and a formidable soloist. Take his bright, swinging tenor saxophone on the opener, Frank Loesser’s “I’ve Never Been in Love Before.” He sets the tone and the others deliver on his promise, especially Brown’s lyrical bass solo.

One of many highlights here is the JazzCode version of “She’s Leaving Home,” that sad Lennon-McCartney ballad of ‘60s teenage angst. Scheps weaves gorgeous flute lines around the lovely guitar work of Wadenius. Returning to more traditional jazz repertoire, Scheps takes up the tenor for a lush, yearning reading of “You’ve Changed,” with Reynolds, Brown and Stormer (on brushes) simply creating a frame for his painterly expressionism.

Rock balladry again proves a goldmine with “Wild Horses,” the Jagger-Richards classic. Scheps wails on an extended, climactic tenor solo. The Cole Porter evergreen “My Heart Belongs to Daddy” gets a clever, swinging Latin treatment, aided and abetted by Stormer’s percussion, Wadenius’ guitar solo and Reynold’s inventive keyboard comping. Scheps again steps into the spotlight with a brawny, honking tenor solo.

If you think that Gershwin’s “Summertime” has been done to death, lend an ear to the JazzCode bluesy take, which revolves on a repetitive piano riff that suggests new harmonic possibilities. In his solo, Reynolds takes full advantage of those possibilities, and Scheps deftly states the theme. Marvin Gaye’s “What’s Going On” gets a faithful, funky arrangement, highlighted by Scheps’ “greasy” tenor sax excursions, a Reynolds solo loaded with block chords and Stormer’s aptly lively drumming.

The biggest surprise here is the absolutely gorgeous rendition of Madonna’s “Take a Bow,” which Scheps sits out. Reynolds and Brown are the stars, with the pianist and bassist sensitively playing off each other’s ideas. Scheps returns with a vengeance on Coltrane’s hard-bop blues tune, “Traneing It,” also featuring solos by Reynolds and Brown. Jobim’s languorous samba “Corcovado” is

handled with grace and delicacy as Scheps switches to flute, Wadenius contributes subtle rhythm guitar and Stormer punctuates on the wood block. Reynolds caps the tune with another wonderful, yet understated solo.

Jerome Kern’s standard “The Way You Look Tonight” is given a light, swinging performance, setting the stage for the final track, the Jimi Hendrix ballad “Little Wing.” Wadenius gets to show off his fret work with a rock-like on the heels of Scheps’ tenor sax melody, before both join in for the climax.

Only two of the 12 tracks extend beyond five and half minutes, the rock ballads “Wild Horses” and “Little Wing.” JazzCode wisely avoids the pitfalls of extended improvisation, preferring well-constructed arrangements that are true to the original compositions, yet allow for the magic of the moment.



JOE CARTWRIGHT
The Best of Kansas City Jazz,
Vol. 2
Lafayette Music

Joe Cartwright continues to mine the rich vein of Kansas City jazz with a second volume of live recordings featuring the best of KC’s contemporary music talent. While holding down his seat as house pianist at several venues over the years, Cartwright has documented a wealth of material, and with his latest release he again shares the wealth with us.

Recorded in the Oak Bar at the InterContinental Kansas City at the Plaza and at Jardine’s Restaurant and Jazz Club, “The Best of Kansas City Jazz Vol. 2” is a generous package of nine tracks totaling 70 minutes and ranging from instrumental and vocal tunes to jazz standards and the blues. The versatile and virtuosic Cartwright confidently drives the proceedings, with bassist Gerald Spaitis and drummer Ray DeMarchi usually providing the rock-solid rhythm. Drummer Tommy Ruskin is on two tracks, and bassist Tyrone Clark is present on one.

Even for those of us who are familiar with many of the city’s jazz artists, there are a few pleasant surprises here, including the opening track, “Bluesville,” with the exciting and imaginative guitarist Wayne Goins playing in a style reminiscent of Wes Montgomery, but totally his own. Also adept at the blues, Cartwright adds to the excitement.

Duck Warner handles the vocals on “You’d Be So Nice to Come Home To” with swinging panache, especially when his mellow baritone swoops into the lower register. With a dramatic approach that conjures images of the great Earl Bostic, alto saxophonist Kim Park incites Cartwright to some of his best playing ever on the bluesy “September Song.”

Among the other highlights here are Mike Metheny’s passionate reading of “Angel Eyes” on flugelhorn, Ahmad Alaadeen’s snaking soprano saxophone on the Victor Young tune “Delilah,” and guitarist Danny Embrey tastefully stepping out on an uptempo version of “Without a Song.” As always, Cartwright is a strong accompanist throughout these recordings, but he’s also capable of absolutely brilliant solo passages, as on “Without a Song” and the 11-

Jazz on Disc continued on page 16

Jazz on CD continued from page 15

minute rendition of Johnny Mandel's "Emily," with Park switching to flute. Spaits contributes inspired solos on both tunes.

Given the depth and breadth of Kansas City's vibrant jazz scene, it is safe to say that we can expect more volumes of "The Best of Kansas City Jazz." And, as long as Cartwright is at the helm, they will continue to delight listeners.



PETER BOUFFARD & RUSTY WHITE
Contrafactum

Lincoln jazz veterans Rusty White on bass and Peter Bouffard on guitar make an ideal musical partnership on "Contrafactum." While the resulting music requires close attention, the listener is amply rewarded.

Interweaving harmonic lines are the standard operating procedure here. There also is the expected wit and wordplay, especially from the bassist. For example, it was White's idea to name his opening composition "Nervous Sheep," based on the harmony of George Gershwin's "Embraceable You" (or *ewe*).

The playing turns deadly serious on the stately rendition of Chopin's Prelude in E minor, with White playing the theme on bowed bass and Bouffard taking the accompanying role. Jobim's "Insensatez (How Insensitive)" gets a fairly conventional treatment. In his liner notes,

Bouffard astutely notes the obvious similarity of this classic jazz tune to the previous piece by Chopin.

With his clever "Trois Petit Pas," Bouffard takes his inspirational cue from Coltrane's "Giant Steps," slowing the tempo to waltz time. White turns in a brilliant solo. "Channeling" is saxophonist Jerry Bergonzi's fascinating restructuring of the standard "Alone Together." White walks the bass as Bouffard tackles the difficult changes. As the title implies, Mike Stern's "Mood Swings" features a swinging blues pattern front and center.

"Gisella" is Bouffard's nod to a former Boston landlady of the same name. It employs the harmonic progression of Henry Mancini's "Days of Wine and Roses," but it may not be immediately obvious. "Contrapunctus" is another difficult Bouffard piece, this one based on "Autumn Leaves." The two musicians again display their innate compatibility while asserting their individuality.

Hoagy Carmichael's gorgeous "Skylark" is the perfect vehicle for a solo bass performance, and White gives it everything he's got, offering stunning variations on the changes. Likewise, Bouffard's choice for solo guitar, "It Could Happen to You," is apt, and he handles it flawlessly with interweaving melody, bass and rhythm lines.

From start to finish, "Contrafactum" is a local product. It was recorded, mixed and mastered by longtime Lincoln recording engineer Tom Larson. The liner photographs were taken by David Dale and the graphic design was done by Reynold Peterson, both well-known Lincoln favorites. Bouffard himself gets credit for production and for the liner notes, which are relentlessly instructive but occasionally veer into technical territory designed for scholars only.



ENRICO RAVA QUINTET
The Words and the Days
ECM Records

The myth surrounding ECM Records says that the Munich-based company has been churning out cold, emotionless music since its inception in 1969, that the European approach to jazz that is exemplified by ECM is diametrically opposed to the original, blues-drenched roots of the music.

Hair-splitting arguments over structure and style, political intent or racial purity of jazz recordings have always bored me. On the other hand, much of the music produced by ECM records over the last 40 years deeply moves me, including "The Words and the Days," a 2007 release by Italian trumpeter Enrico Rava.

Rava, now 68, began his recording career more than 35 years ago. He began his tenure with ECM in 1972, with the similarly titled "The Pilgrim and the Stars." He has been creating haunting, singular music ever since. Blessed with a beautiful trumpet tone and phrasing that owes much to mid-'60s Miles Davis and Chet Baker, Rava continues to blaze a unique trail on "Words and Days."

The rest of this compatible quintet is comprised of Gianluca Petrella on trombone, Andrea Pozza on piano, Rosario Bonaccorso on bass and Roberto Gatto on drums. Their telepathic interaction makes for a very lively and sure-footed sound, even when the tempos increase as on the swinging "Echoes of Duke" or the cover of trumpeter Don Cherry's enchanting "Art Deco."

Indeed, it is at the slower tempos that the quintet's musical conversations are best appreciated, including the opening title track, Russell Freeman's "The Wind," and original Rava compositions like "Tutu," "Todamor," the snaking "Serpent" and the closer, "Dr. Ra and Mr. Va."

Contrasting with most of the horn-dominated session, Bonaccorso contributes the lovely bass solo, "Sogni proibiti," and Gatto wrote the whimsical "Traps." Petrella and Pozza also contribute much to the overall sound, with pithy and provocative solos and accompaniment, especially on the final track.

Rava, whose resume runs the gamut from early Dixieland-style playing to the avant-garde sounds of his work with Steve Lacy, Roswell Rudd, Marion Brown and Cecil Taylor, remains the predominant voice throughout this recording. As he nears age 70, he continues to amaze with his power, control and technique.

"The Words and the Days" is a generous 73 minutes long, a lush musical paradise in which to lie back and relax, where the imagined words are sheer poetry and the days seem a little more forgiving.



ANAT FORT
A Long Story
ECM Records

"A Long Story" by young Israeli pianist and composer Anat Fort is another recent ECM release that seems to reinforce the critical stereotype of cerebral piano music that has long ex-

emplified the label's muse. Some may want to blame Keith Jarrett for starting the whole thing nearly 35 years ago, but I prefer to thank Jarrett for his influence on Fort's wonderful ECM debut.

Like Jarrett, Fort brings together elements of classical composition and free jazz improvisation, along with her insight into the ethnic music of her native Mideast. Her choice of sidemen reinforces that mix of the avant-garde and the ethnic, with Perry Robinson on clarinet and ocarina, Ed Schuller and bass and the legendary Paul Motian (a former Jarrett sideman) on drums.

The recording has the inevitable flow of a suite, though employing different tempos and instrumentation. It is neatly tied together with three thematically continuous compositions—the opener, "Just Now, Var. I," the fifth track, "Just Now, Var. II" and the closer, "Just Now, Var. III." The repetitive structure is no coincidence. It brilliantly enhances the hour-long listening experience by subtle association.

Those repeated themes, however, are not the only memorable moments. "Morning: Good" is a stunningly beautiful composition with an inspired Schuller bass solo. Robinson delivers a lovely, lilting clarinet solo on "Lullaby."

In contrast, there are elements of sonic dissonance, as in "Chapter Two," which for some reason precedes "Chapter One." Fort and Robinson searchingly play against each other's harmonies on "Not a Dream?" On "Unhaired," Fort and Schuller meet in unison lines, while Motian blazes a typically bold, but solitary trail on the drum kit.

"As Two/Something 'Bout Camels" is the most overtly political piece, written in response to the escalating tensions between Israeli and Palestinian factions. Like most conflicts, the tune moves through chaos to a sort

of resolution, however tentative. "Not the Perfect Storm" is, likewise, chockfull of musical sturm und drang that eventually finds release in Fort's cascading summation.

Recorded in March 2004 and not released until 2007, it's a pity that "A Long Story" took so long to see the light of day. Even so, it is a story worth hearing again and again. Fort expresses her satisfaction with the recording thusly: "This record to me is a journey of heaven and earth coming together with joy."



BILL BRUFORD / MICHEL BORSTLAP
In Two Minds
Summerfold Records

Kudos go to veteran rock and jazz drummer Bill Bruford for his continuing expression of artistic freedom and for his business savvy in developing Summerfold Records as a place for musicians of like mind to practice their improvisatory craft.

"In Two Minds" pairs Bruford with Dutch keyboardist Michiel Borstlap on 12 tracks recorded at four concerts, two in Norway and two in the U.K. The live nature of these sessions gives the collective improvisation its essential edge.

The opener, "Kinship," declares the shared impulses of these two musical adventurers. Borstlap begins with a beautiful piano passage, and Bruford responds with shimmering percussive shards of sound. The title track swings

Jazz on Disc continued on page 18

Jazz on Disc continued from page 17

with a jazzy exuberance, setting Borstlap's moody chords against the drummer's shifting, accelerating time.

"From the Source, We Tumble Headlong" is the apt title for a frantic ramble with Borstlap doubling on acoustic piano and electronic keyboards, sounding at times like Joe Zawinul at his spiciest and most harmonically advanced. Bruford deftly keeps stride and drives the tune with his usual combination of technical skill and imagination.

On "Flirt," Bruford and Borstlap do, indeed, seem to tease each other

playfully with a funky call-and-response rapport. "Low Tide, Camber Sands" has Bruford in subtle accompaniment as Borstlap explores a lovely melodic invention ala Keith Jarrett. As its title implies, "The Art of Conversation" is an effusive and artful musical dialogue.

Playing the log drum in addition to the conventional trap set, Bruford brings new tonalities to "Conference of the Bees." Bruford plays havoc around a simple piano chord progression on "Sheer Reckless Abandon." The two are at their most rapturous and expansive on "The Odd One Out."

The only piece not composed by

the two is their playful interpretation of Miles Davis' "All Blues." In less than five minutes, they manage to deconstruct and reinvent the classic tune in ways never before imagined or realized.

With pieces ranging from three minutes to nearly eight minutes, the mutual music-making is never forced or overplayed. Most important, the interaction between Bruford and Borstlap never lapses into bored repetition or predictability. These are two musical conversationalists who truly enjoy each other's company. And they have plenty to say.

Letters to the Editor

Friends, fans and musicians send condolences

Editor's Note: What follows is a small sampling of the many e-mail messages from friends, fans and musicians nationwide who sent their condolences on hearing of the death of Butch Berman.

=====

Berman friend and fellow musician sends fond farewell

Butch,

Word of your passing reached me later the same day, through the amazing musician's grapevine that spreads across this country.

You and I started our performing careers at the same time, together, over 45 years ago. It's been a great long party, and I'm a little sad that it's starting to break up, but no great parties can go on forever in this world. It is the very transitory nature of our lives and work here that makes our time together so precious.

Thanks for your friendship, your love of life and, most of all, your un-

flagging, energetic love of MUSIC. You lived an exemplary life in and for music, Butch, and the world is a better place for your presence here.

Thanks, man. Your spirit and example live on.

Mark Dalton
Seattle, Wash

Family friend says thanks

What a beautiful story about Butch's life. Thanks to whoever wrote it. I wish someone would mention his parents' owning of The Famous, an excellent women's dress store just a few doors west of Hovland-Swanson on O Street. It was known especially for its stunning costume jewelry. Butch took the bus downtown after school-pre-Wentworth-and literally grew up downtown, joining his parents for supper at the Cornhusker, the Lindell Hotel, and Kuhl's. Again, thanks.

Ruth Thone
Lincoln, Neb.

Berman friend, BMF consultant notes Butch's thoughtfulness

Jazz has just lost another great friend. Butch had a peaceful transition in his home, while listening to Shirley Horn's "Everything Must Change."

He had been working very hard to do great things with his Berman Music Foundation, and last phoned me to explore ways to help out another musician who'd just found he had serious health problems.

"Everything must change,
Nothing stays the same.
Everyone will change,
No one stays the same.
Everything must change."

With sadness,

Russ Dantzler
New York City

Musicians express sadness

Oh, my God. I'm VERY sorry to hear it.

Butch's pal,

Rob Scheps

Hello Tom,

How deeply saddened I was to hear the news of Butch's passing. He did some great things for jazz. Please keep me informed about funeral arrangements. I would like to attend.

*Joe Cartwright
Kansas City, Mo.*

Editor's note: *Kansas City pianist Joe Cartwright will perform at the celebration of life for Butch Berman on March 23 in Lincoln.*

**Condolences to Butch's wife,
Grace Sankey-Berman**

Dear Grace,

On behalf of Norman Hedman and myself, please accept our deep sympathy at this sad time. Jazz has truly lost a great supporter and friend. May beautiful memories give you strength at this difficult time.

With sympathy,

*Dawn K. DeBlaze
Business Manager*

*Norman Hedman
Master Conguero*

Very sad to hear this news, Grace. Please accept my condolences of Butch's passing.

*Jim Eigo
Jazz Promo Services*

Alaadeen relates Miles anecdote

Editor's note: *The following excerpt is from an interview of Ahmad Alaadeen, conducted by John Kelman for the January 2008 edition of All About Jazz. Butch Berman read the story and loved it so much that he sent it to BMF Jazz editor Tom Ineck, with the following e-mail note. It was his last correspondence from Butch.*

Hi, Tom,

You might want to reprint some of this for the next **Jazz** newsletter. The Miles story is a hoot.

Enjoy,

Butch

Anecdote from the road:

I associated with Miles Davis quite a bit in the '50s. Miles was a student at Julliard, but he said he learned more from Charlie Parker than he did at Julliard. I first met Miles, in 1950, when my high school friend and I skipped school and went to Miles' hotel room. They were advertising that Miles Davis was coming to play at the Boulevard Room. Back at that time these guys would travel around and barnstorm, travel to different cities and play as singles with whoever the local rhythm section was in that particular town.

So Miles comes in; I think he was there for a week or two. We found out where he was staying so we went up to visit him; I had my horn, my friend had his trumpet. We went to the desk and asked what room Miles was in. We went up and knocked on the door, knocked and knocked, and finally Miles came to the door, naked. He says, "What do you little (famous Miles expletive, plural version) want?"



File Photo

Butch, Ahmad Alaadeen and manager, Fanny, about 2001

We said, "We come to see you, man." He looks at us and says, "Come on in." We went in and sat down, and he went back to bed. This was about 8 or 9 o'clock in the morning. He slept until around noon. We're still sitting there.

He comes out and says, "Are you m-fers still here? Are you hungry?" He gave us some money and told us to go across the street and get some salami and crackers and a pickle. We did that. But we made the mistake of getting a hot pickle. He bit down into this pickle and started cussing, "What are you trying to do? Yang, yang, yang," you know. He cussed us out bad.

Later, I performed with Miles a lot. I asked Miles to show me some changes and he replied, "Don't worry about it; you're from Bird's home town." One time when I was performing with Miles, they were playing a tune that I didn't know. I was trying to learn the tune while Miles was taking his solo, I was fingering the keys. Evidently, I was making too much noise, so Miles turned around and told me to stop it. But I knew that my solo was coming next so I kept on trying to learn the tune. This time Miles turned around, he didn't say anything, just punched me in the jaw."

**Butch Berman Charitable Music Foundation**

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From the Archives

BMF brings Karrin Allyson to Lincoln November 2001



File Photo

Singer Karrin Allyson was in Lincoln for a Nov. 9, 2001, performance at the Lied Center for Performing Arts, sponsored by the BMF. To Butch Berman's left is guitarist Rod Fleeman and arranger Bill McGlaughlin. To his right is Lied director Charles Bethea and Nebraska Public Radio host Bill Stibor. At the left front is Karrin Allyson.

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 is needed to help offset the costs of this newsletter and its programs.

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