

BERMAN MUSIC FOUNDATION



Photos by Tom Ineck

The new BMF offices are on the second floor of The Burkholder Project at 719 P St., in downtown Lincoln.

New BMF offices open to raves

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—More than 1,000 people visited The Burkholder Project in just two hours during the April 3 Friday Gallery Walk, a record attendance for the monthly event and a landmark occasion for the Berman Music Foundation. For the first time in its 14 years, the BMF museum and offices were combined under one roof, and everyone came out to see it and celebrate the legacy of Butch Berman.

Building owner and artist Anne Burkholder said the attendance exceeded all expectations. The previous record for a gallery walk was about 600 people. She attributed the huge increase, in large part, to the BMF's grand opening. Indeed, it seemed at times that all 1,000 visitors had simultaneously converged in the Skylight Gal-



BMF neon sign illuminates an office window for all to see.

lery studio apartment, making conversation—and even movement—a challenge.

Despite the claustrophobic conditions, a celebrative mood prevailed both inside the museum-office space and outside the room, where saxophonist Bill Wimmer and keyboardist John Carlini provided live jazz in the narrow hallway of the Skylight Gallery. As music reverberated throughout the building, art patrons became aware that something exciting was happening. Many who were previously unfamiliar with the Berman foundation made their way to the upper level for a look.

If brave enough or inquisitive



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enough to wade into the assembled snarl, they were greeted by BMF representatives happy to explain the history of the foundation and its long and supportive presence on the Lincoln music scene and beyond.

Earlier in the day, trustee Tony Rager gathered the BMF consultants for a pre-opening lunch and meeting at Lazlo's restaurant and brewpub, directly across the street from The Burkholder. They had come from as far away as San Francisco (Wade Wright) and New York City (Russ Dantzler), as well as Fayetteville, Ark. (Kay Davis), Pueblo, Colo. (Dan DeMuth), Kansas City, Mo. (Gerald and Leslie Spaits), and Lincoln (Grace Sankey-Berman and Tom Ineck). All had been close, trusted friends of founder Butch Berman, so it was with mixed feelings of joy and sorrow that we shared a meal and conversation that often involved fond reminiscences of Butch.

After lunch, we toured the new BMF facilities, most of the consultants seeing the space for the first time. Everyone agreed that the museum's relocation from Butch's house to the lively downtown area was a move sure to heighten visibility and further the foundation's mission to educate, entertain and celebrate through music.

That sentiment was confirmed when doors opened to the public at 7 p.m. and visitors began to arrive in



BMF consultants (back row, from left) Dan Demuth, Kay Davis, Wade Wright, Tony Rager, Grace Sankey-Berman, Gerald Spaits and Tom Ineck and (front row) Russ Dantzler and Leslie Spaits gather at new offices.



Artwork by Leora Platte was unveiled at the grand opening

waves, swelling to a critical mass about 8:30 p.m. and dwindling to a few friends and jazz enthusiasts after the doors had officially closed at 9 p.m.

"Butch would have loved this!" was a frequent refrain among those who knew him best. Not only would he have



Susan and John Horn

appreciated the genuine show of support and friendship that the spectacular grand-opening attendance represented, but he would have beamed at the prospect that the foundation he created might reach a new audience who would learn to love music almost as much as he did.



Friends of the BMF (left) gather in the main room. Hors d'oeuvres (above) were in ample supply.



Don and Jill Holmquist



Joyce Latrom and Wade Wright



Gerald and Leslie Spaits



Peter and Jane Reinkordt (right)

Photos were
taken by
various friends
of the
Berman Music
Foundation



Chris Lohry, Russ Dantzler and his dad



Kim Jassung, Rose Spencer, Grace Sankey-Berman and Joseph Akpan



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Trustee: Tony Rager

Consultants: Grace Sankey-Berman, Russ Dantzler, Kay Davis, Dan Demuth, Tom Ineck, Gerald Spaits, Leslie Spaits and Wade Wright

*Friends of the BMF***Artist receptions continue a grand tradition**

By Grace Sankey-Berman

Because of his appreciation for music, and the love and respect he had for musicians, Butch always entertained artists at his house after concerts sponsored by the **Berman Music Foundation**. He wanted to give them a place to relax after playing and talk about the music with people of like minds.

So we continued that tradition with post-concert receptions for some of the 2009 Jazz in June artists at the new BMF offices at The Burkholder Project in the Haymarket District. Local artists, friends of jazz and fans also were invited. Among those who attended were Ed Love, music director of the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra, and his lovely wife, Loretta, coordinator of Jazz in June Martha Florence, Lincoln jazz keyboardist John Carlini, Sheldon Museum of Art collections curator Sharon Kennedy, Sheldon events coordinator Laurie Sipple, Star City Blog publisher Dennis Kornbluh and his father, David, and friends and fans like Ruthann Nahorny and Mary Berry.

It was nice to watch the musicians go through the music collection looking for their favorite artists or just some obscure artists they had not heard in a long time. Bassist Roger Barnhart of ZARO was fascinated with album covers. He talked about how artistic some of the albums were—or were not. Lincoln native Andrew Vogt was pleasantly surprised to hear his CD “Action Plan” playing in the music room. Drummer and percussionist Oscar Dezoto said he remembered every song on the album, even though he did not play on it. I en-



Photo by Devrah Lehner



Photo by Tom Ineck

Grace Sankey-Berman and Victor Lewis (left) and the Kendra Shank Quartet (above)

joyed listening to Dezoto talk about the various people he has played with over the years, including an African musician from Senegal.

When Kendra Shank and her band arrived at the reception, they were tired

the years and how much she continues to evolve as an artist. Drummer Tony Moreno was fun. He could not get over how vast the music collection is and kept saying, “This is nuts!” as he looked through the records.

We were also delighted to host Bill Wimmer and Project Omaha after their arguably best concert of the season. Guitarist Dave Stryker and his extended family and friends were in attendance. So also were the great drummer Victor Lewis and his manager Joanne Klein. I was thrilled for the chance to talk to Victor Lewis. We reminisced about the times we spent with Butch in his base-

ment. He was particularly glad that the foundation continues to keep the music alive.

Victor’s friend from Omaha the great musician Luigi Waites also attended. Watching the interaction between the two artists was priceless. They seemed to enjoy each other’s company. Percussionist Joey Gulizia said



Project Omaha and friends (from left) Grace Sankey-Berman, Tony Gulizia, Luigi Waites, Mark Luebke, Bill Wimmer, Victor Lewis, Dave Stryker and Joey Gulizia.

and hungry. She said singing was “an athletic event” and was so happy to have some vegetables. Kendra had previously played twice for Jazz in June and was thrilled to be back for the third time. She said the experience felt like making love to 7,000 people. Her record “Afterglow” was playing on the stereo. She smiled when she heard it and said she had not heard it in a long time. She talked about how her music had changed over

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*Friends of the BMF***“New Harmonies” tour celebrates roots music***By Tom Ineck*

The **Berman Music Foundation** recently awarded a \$2,000 grant to the Nebraska Humanities Council for “New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music,” a touring exhibition sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution.

Through its Museum on Main Street program, the Smithsonian makes specially designed traveling exhibitions available only through state humanities councils. By year’s end, “New Harmonies” will have visited six communities in Nebraska, completing the state tour with a stay Oct. 18 through Dec. 31 at Loves Jazz & Arts Center in Omaha. It will be at the Trails and Rails Museum in Kearney July 30-Aug. 29 and at the Cherry County Historical Society Museum in Valentine Sept. 3-Oct. 11. Earlier this year, it had extended runs in Alliance, Cambridge and Columbus.

“New Harmonies” examines the growth of American music, which is as rich and eclectic as the country itself. American music reveals distinct cultural identities and records the histories of peoples from Africa, Europe, Asia and the Americas. “New Harmonies” explores how our country’s ongoing cultural process has made America the birthplace of great music—from jazz and blues to country western, folk and



gospel.

With its financial support, the BMF recognizes the connection between the roots music theme of “New Harmonies” and its own mission “to protect and promote unique forms of American music.”

“With the support of the Berman Music Foundation and other sponsors, the Nebraska Humanities Council is able to bring these exhibitions to small, often under-served, museums across the state,” said NHC Program Officer Mary Yager. “Sponsorship allows the NHC to pay the rental fee of the exhi-

bition and provide it at no cost to the small museums. If a museum were to bring in a small traveling exhibit on its own it would cost the museum thousands of dollars.”

Yager said such sponsorships also allow the NHC to provide a stipend to each museum to help them to promote the exhibition, arrange special programming related to the topic of the exhibition, and create a complimentary exhibit of local interest. Among the goals of Museum on Main Street are to help small museums build their visitor base and membership, and help them increase their capacity to develop exhibits, marketing and programming.

In conjunction with the exhibition’s stop in Kearney, an Aug. 15 lecture and recital program will explore the evolution of country music—one of the musical forms explored in the “New Harmonies” exhibit—from its beginnings in 1920s American folk music through early Jimmie Rodgers, Bob Wills’ western swing, and Sons of the Pioneers through classics by Hank Williams and Ernest Tubbs to the classic country era of the 1950s and 1960s.

The exhibition of “New Harmonies” in Valentine will coincide with Old West Days, Oct. 1-4, where cowboy poets, musicians, and storytellers will entertain and attendees can explore the exhibit which includes a panel celebrating the singing cowboys Gene Autry, Roy Rogers and Tex Ritter.

Loves Jazz & Arts Center will screen their recently produced documentary “All That Omaha Jazz,” host a jazz and blues band, a gospel singer or group, a Native American dance troop, and a contemporary music-spoken word-hip-hop group.

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there was so much music he would like to come back to have a better look. We like to hear that because the collection is a great resource and we encourage musicians and educators to take advantage of it.

Jazz in June is an 18-year tradition that brings thousands of Lincoln residents together every Tuesday in June.

The Berman Music foundation is proud to be a long-time supporter of this family-friendly event, and we are happy to show our appreciation to the musicians who entertain us every year. Thanks to all the local artists, friends and fans of jazz who attended the receptions. We appreciate your support.

Artist Interview

Kendra Shank “comes home” to Jazz in June

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—In a 2009 Jazz in June concert series that features several artists with direct ties to Nebraska, even New Yorker Kendra Shank refers to her appearance as “coming home.”

Shank’s June 16 concert was her quartet’s third at the outdoor venue, having previously performed in 2004 and 2007. The singer first appeared on a Lincoln stage way back in 1995, when the Berman Music Foundation brought her to the Zoo Bar as part of an all-star lineup that included Claude “Fiddler” Williams, pianist Jaki Byard, bassist Earl May and drummer Jackie Williams.

This time, the Kendra Shank Quartet arrived in the midst of a busy touring schedule behind her new CD “Mosaic,” released April 14. That alone raised the excitement level in eager anticipation, not least of all because Shank, over the last decade, has developed a fruitful relationship with the same core group of musicians, pianist Frank Kimbrough, bassist Dean Johnson and drummer Tony Moreno.

“Over time, we’ve gotten to know each other so well that it’s like it’s telepathic,” Shank said in a phone conversation from her home. “I don’t have to say anything. I don’t give much direction. We’re collaboratively creating these arrangements. Usually it starts with a seed idea of mine.” That creative germ, she said, is just “a stepping-off point” to group communication and personal expression. Her bandmates appreciate that.

“Part of their joy in being a part of this band is that they’re really free. I bring these musicians into the group because I love their playing and I like their creative ideas, so I just let them express themselves. That’s the whole



Kendra Shank

point. Jazz is an improvisational art form, so let that happen. That’s what makes this music exciting. You’ve got four people, each of which has their own life experience and their own personality and their own technical ability and their own harmonic sense and rhythmic sense. So each person has something really valuable to contribute.”

After so many years together, “a huge level of trust” is implicit in every performance. “I know these are musicians who listen, who play sensitively, and who are going to make esthetic choices in the moment that serve the music well and that make sense.”

The mutual trust transferred well to the recording studio, where Shanks also added longtime collaborators Billy Drewes on saxophones and clarinet and Ben Monder on guitar. Unlike their previous outing, “A Spirit Free: Abbey Lincoln Songbook,” the new release had no obvious theme. Instead, it was a return to Shank’s earlier records, a varied, well-paced collection of tunes that appealed to her. Only later did she rec-

ognize that the 11-track “Mosaic” does have an overarching theme—the many aspects of love.

“So Far Away,” Carole King’s story of lovers separated by space and time, opens the CD. “Life’s Mosaic” updates the Cedar Walton instrumental with lyrics by John and Paula Hackett that turn it into a plea for global community, another form of love. Irving Berlin’s “Blues Skies” is re-imagined with Shank’s original improvisation “Reflections in Blue,” and Charlie Chaplin’s forlorn “Smile” is ingeniously combined with “Laughing at Life.” Kimbrough’s own “For Duke” is endowed with a beautiful lyric of love by his wife, composer, vocalist and poet Maryanne De Prophetis.

Long a devotee of the 13th century mystic poet Rumi, Shank included two tunes inspired by him. On one, she combined the verse of “Water from Your Spring” with the Victor Young standard “Beautiful Love” and indicated to the band that the mood should be that of a Zen garden. Several years ago, she suggested that composer Kirk Nurock read some Rumi, after which he presented Shank with “I’ll Meet You There,” using texts adapted from the poet that espouse both spiritual and romantic love. In appreciation, Nurock dedicated the song to Shank, and it closes the CD.

Shank credits the band’s longstanding monthly booking at the 55 Bar in New York for the workshop esthetic that allows and encourages musicians to work up new material over a long period of time. The creative evolution of “Reflections in Blue/Blue Skies” is a case in point.

“I had just done ‘How Deep is the Ocean’ and usually another song will

File Photo

pop right into my head, and then I'll call the tune," she explained. "Well, nothing came to mind. I'm just sitting there with a black head. I'm completely blank." Rather than panic, she leaped into the void with a spontaneous, a cappella vocal improvisation that finally resolved in an oblique reference to the Irving Berlin classic, which was not even in her repertoire. The improvised lyric of

"Reflections" deals with love lost and regained, setting the emotional stage for "Blues Skies."

Other songs included on "Mosaic" are Johnny Mandel's "The Shining Sea," a song of loving and longing with lyrics by Peggy Lee, Cole Porter's immortal "All of You" and Bill Evans' "Time Remembered," with lyrics by Paul Lewis.

Shank was thoroughly primed for its Lincoln appearance, having already performed the new repertoire in more than a dozen cities since early April, including Seattle, Portland, Ore., San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Cincinnati, Richmond, Ken., Cleveland, Cambridge, Mass., and at the Jazz Standard in New York City.

Concert Review

The Bad Plus plus singer alternately thrill and bewilder

By Tom Ineck

OMAHA, Neb.—After more than six years of recording and touring to worldwide critical acclaim and occasional bewilderment, The Bad Plus remain endlessly imaginative and frequently thrilling in a dare-to-be-different approach that freely crosses the usual stylistic boundaries. The result is a listening experience that forces a reevaluation of all musical pigeon holes.

So it was when the Twin Cities-based trio brought its road show to the 1200 Club in the Holland Center for Performing Arts on April 24. The current tour is in support of the band's recent release, "For All I Care," the first to feature a singer. Wendy Lewis joined The Bad Plus for the second half of the concert, a typically untypical set of cover tunes.

Pianist Ethan Iverson, bassist Reid Anderson and drummer David King warmed to the audience of some 400 fans with a mix of old and new, including some especially provocative original compositions. Stavinsky's "Variation d'Apollon," one of the few instrumentals on the new release, set convention on its ear by combining the classical with King's thundering drum interludes. Iverson's "Who's He?"

was a full-bore rocker with a dramatic drum solo, and Iverson's "Bill Hickman at Home" continues The Bad Plus penchant for themes based on sports figures, in this case a stunt driver. Anderson contributed a soulful bass solo.



The Bad Plus with Wendy Lewis

Metric playfulness is always apparent in The Bad Plus approach. "Metal" was delivered in 6/8 time. Ornette Coleman's "Song X" paid homage to the composer's so-called "harmolodic" concept. "Semi-Simple Variations," another classical piece from the new CD, was a rhythmically challenging take on Milton Babbitt.

From the 2003 breakthrough debut "These are the Vistas" came King's "1972 Bronze Medalist," about Jacques, somewhat of a celebrity in the south of France, and Anderson's "Big

Eater." The bassist also penned "Prehensile," an unusual tune with a stately, Bach-like counterpoint.

After a break, Lewis entered as she does on the recording, with Kurt Cobain's spooky anthem "Lithium." Her ragged voice conveys the perfect world-weariness for such a song, but she is equally effective on classics of progressive rock ("Long Distance Runaround" by Yes), lounge music (the dark ballad "Blue Velvet"), and Irish rock ("New Year's Day" by U2, on which her intense wail nearly matched Bono's).

"How Deep is Your Love?" from the Bee Gees songbook, is one of those long-forgotten songs that is redefined in the hands, minds and voice of The Bad Plus and Lewis. Anderson's solo bass intro warned of something different and a voice-bass discord later confirmed The Bad Plus refusal to conform.

Heart's "Barracuda" was one of the most aggressive interpretations of the evening, and Neil Young's "Heart of Gold" was an unexpected encore, with Lewis and Anderson singing harmony vocals.

Courtesy Photo

Artist Interview

Gehring returns home to share “Radio Trails

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—Guitarist Ray Gehring has proved that you CAN go home again. He travel with his band from his home in Brooklyn, N.Y., for gigs May 20 in Minneapolis, May 21 at the Saddle Creek Bar in Omaha and May 22 at the Zoo Bar in Lincoln, the city where he spent his formative years as a music fan and a fledgling musician.

Gehring’s return as a musician to his home town was a long time coming. A varied life as player, teacher and tour manager took him to Minneapolis, Paris and back to the Twin Cities before he finally wound up on the East Coast in 2000. But he fondly remembers the last time he performed in Lincoln, a jazz-rock fusion gig nearly 20 years ago at Duffy’s Tavern, just around the corner from the Zoo Bar, a nationally known blues club that he recognizes as a Lincoln institution.

“I had a little fusion band when I left Lincoln, playing with a couple guys, just a bassist and a drummer,” he said in a phone interview from his Brooklyn home. “We were just breaking into the scene of jazz, playing whatever we could. Since I kind of came out of the punk-rock scene, Duffy’s was more my crowd of people.”

In 1989, Gehring’s influences were guitarists John McLaughlin, Mike Stern and John Scofield. A second-year sociology major at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, he dreaded the research work, preferring to hang out with musicians, usually in challenging open-stage settings.

“At the time, I was taking guitar lessons from Steve Lawler at Dietze. Once you start playing jazz on the guitar—or any instrument, for that matter—it’s addictive. It’s been 20 years



Ray Gehring

now, and the love for it increases and increases.”

“This was a huge concept record, but the whole thing came together because I really need to purge the ‘70s out of my system. I’m a product of the ‘70s—I was born in ‘68—and I listened to the radio constantly in the ‘70s. You turned on the radio. That’s how you found your music.”

“Lincoln was a town where music was everywhere. It informed everything you did, everything you went to, everything you wore. Everything you talked about seemed to be center around music. No wonder I became a musician.”

Even in his songwriting, Gehring began to hear evidence of his immersion in 1970s pop-culture radio and TV.

“After a while, you say to yourself, ‘Why does everything end up sounding like a ‘70s TV theme? Why is everything sounding like “Cosby” or something that may have been on “Flip Wilson”? What’s going on here? I need to work through this.”’

With “Radio Trails,” Gehring’s addresses his obsession with the ‘70s

head-on. From conception to realization, the recording was almost 10 years in the making, says Gehring.

“What I wanted to do was take the songs of the ‘70s that had the biggest influence on me, and then I stretched beyond that to take some of the singer-songwriters that came out of those bands, and then let’s take the originals that we want—that are influenced by that sound—and put them on the record. And, let’s write lyrics to one, and make it a unique, sincere homage to that period.”

With that in mind, much thought went into choosing and sequencing each of the 10 tunes on the CD, from Supertramp’s “Take the Long Way Home” to The Carpenters’ “Yesterday Once More,” the concluding track.

“It IS yesterday once more. Nothing has changed. Nothing has changed politically. Economically, it seems we are repeating the same behavior. We’ve come a long way, but so much has been coming back.”

Among the other notable songs of the ‘70s are “Big Brother” by Stevie Wonder, “Motions Pictures” by Neil Young and “She,” a soulful country ballad by Gram Parsons and Chris Etheridge, which has also been covered by David Clayton-Thomas, Emmylou Harris and Norah Jones.

As a nod to the Brazilian Tropicalia movement of the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, Gehring also chose C. Coqueijo Costa’s “E Preciso Perdoar” and Vinicius Cantuaria’s “Amor Brasileiro.” But the concept album is anchored most obviously by the original tunes, especially Gehring’s haunting “Radial Tales” and the anecdotal “That was the Story.”

To do justice to these tunes, Gehring assembled Commonwealth, a

Courtesy Photo

group of compatible musicians and friends, including Bill Carrothers, the German-born Matthias Bublat and Aussie Sean Wayland on keyboards; Dan Gaarder on vocals; Ronen Itzik and Georg Mel on drums and percussion; and Michael O'Brien playing bass on three tracks. Wayland also co-wrote and contributes a fine vocal to "That was the Story."

"I really hand-selected these guys," Gehring said. "Carrothers I wanted there to make the artistic calls on the music. I didn't want to do that. I'm in there to play." Mixing unique, swinging interpretations of pop standards with a sincere love for the music and a healthy dose of humor, the end result is what Gehring describes as "big-fun jazz."

Bublat, Gaarder and Twin Cities drummer Joey Van Phillips accompanied the guitarist on their summer tour to the Heartland.

In the last in a series of momentous coincidences, Gehring learned of the death of Butch Berman in January 2008 from an online article that documented Butch's life as a radio deejay, musician, music collector and all-around music advocate. That was enough to convince Gehring to dedicate "Radio Trails" to Butch.

"My deepest appreciation goes out to the Berman Music Foundation for their contribution and support of this album," he writes in the liner notes. "May the joy and spirit of music for which Butch Berman worked so tirelessly to perform and promote continue in the

hearts of those he supported and beyond."

The only time Gehring had a chance to hang out with Butch was in April 1998, when the guitarist was tour manager for an innovative jazz trio called A Band in all Hope, consisting of pianist Bill Carrothers, drummer Bill Steward and saxophonist Anton Denner. The BMF sponsored a performance by the group at Westbrook Recital Hall in Lincoln, and friends of the BMF, Gehring and the band gathered for dinner and conversation.

Gehring's return to Nebraska to share "Radio Trails" with his live audiences not only brings the CD project full circle but re-establishes his early ties to Lincoln and to the BMF, a long way home but a serendipitous trail, indeed.

Concert Review

Guitarist Ray Gehring makes his Zoo Bar debut

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—Ray Gehring returned to his hometown May 22 to make his Zoo Bar debut, exactly 20 years after the guitarist last performed in the city, leading a jazz fusion trio at Duffy's.

Lots of friends, family and a few Zoo Bar regulars made him feel welcome as he roared through two sets drawing heavily from his new release, a tribute to the pop music of the 1970s called "Radio Trails." The CD is dedicated to Butch Berman and the Berman Music Foundation.

Gehring was ably accompanied by keyboardist Matthias Bublat and drummer Joey Van Phillips, with vocals featuring Dan Gaarder. The band also made appearances May 20 in Minneapolis and May 21 at the Saddle Creek Bar in Omaha.

"Take the Long Way Home," Supertramp's 1979 super-hit, received a rocking instrumental reading with Gehring delivering a biting guitar attack



Matthias Bublat, Dan Gaarder and Ray Gehring at the Zoo Bar

that fully utilized the fat, resonant tone of his hollow-bodied axe. Gaarder took the stage for a rocking version of Neil Young's "Motion Pictures," and Gram Parsons' "She," which had Bublat displaying his versatility and imagination on keys.

Originals included Gehring's bluesy "Stay Awhile" and the collaborative "That Was the Story." Bublat added percussive, staccato jabs on the latter, which Gaarder sang with his understated, reedy quality. Aptly for the ven-

erable blues club, the band finished the opening set with a blues shuffle.

On Neil Diamond's "Shiloh," Gehring's guitar reached near-feedback level as Gaarder read from a lyric sheet, somewhat dampening the song's effect. The second set's highlight was a guest appearance by guitarist Luke Polipnick, whose band Volcano Insurance also includes drummer Joey Van Phillips. Among the tunes that Gehring and Polipnick mutually explored was the Willie Nelson standard "Funny How Time Slips Away."



Luke Polipnick and Ray Gehring

Photos by Tom Ineck

Artist Interview

Bad Plus defies category and challenges listeners

By Tom Ineck

When a jazz group has the good fortune—and tenacity—to stay together for nearly a decade, it develops a personal and musical rapport that is well-nigh telepathic. So it is with The Bad Plus, an acoustic piano trio that defies both categorization and the critics.

On their latest venture, “For All I Care,” pianist Ethan Iverson, bassist Reid Anderson and drummer Dave King have taken another bold leap forward by adding vocalist Wendy Lewis on a recording that eschews original material for a mix of classic pop songs by artists ranging from Nirvana and the Bee Gees to Pink Floyd and Roger Miller. Tastefully sprinkled among these tracks, as though they are “palate cleansers,” are the band’s unique instrumental interpretations of modern classical melodies by Igor Stravinsky, Gyorgy Legeti and Milton Babbitt.

On its five previous CDs, the Twin Cities trio has occasionally dabbled in audacious covers—Black Sabbath, Blondie, David Bowie and Burt Bacharach, among others—but never to this extent. Since the CD’s release in November, the band and Lewis have spent a lot of time on the road, a tour that brings them to Omaha for an April 24 performance at the 1200 Club in the Holland Center for Performing Arts.

In a recent phone conversation during the band’s week-long hiatus at home, Anderson attempted to answer the persistently nagging question, “How would you describe what you guys do, and how the heck do you do it?”

“The best description that somebody came up with was avant-garde populism,” he said. “It’s just the result of the three of us coming together in a situation that we created so that we



The Bad Plus with Wendy Lewis

could all be ourselves.”

The three of them first came together as The Bad Plus almost 20 years ago, but subsequently went their separate ways before reforming in 2001. Their major-label debut, “These Are the Vistas,” was released in 2003, and they have never looked back.

Anderson cites their common Midwestern roots as a significant factor in their musical compatibility. He and King hail from Minneapolis, while Iverson is from Menominee, Wis.

“I think we share a certain tribal language with each other and a certain sense of the surreal, but also a love of song, a love of clarity in music and we try to just bring it all together and allow that personal voice to come through.”

From its inception, a large part of that personal voice has been composed of irreverence and a tongue-in-cheek approach to familiar melodies. But the

end result is never disrespectful.

“We have a basic respect for all that music,” Anderson said. “It starts and ends there. We do these things out of respect because we feel like there’s something to be said, with any of this music. That sets the whole process on that course. That’s why it works together. We don’t do things that we aren’t connected to in some way.”

Two brief liner notes on the band’s first CD illustrate the guiding principles. Their take on Kurt Cobain’s “Smells Like Teen Spirit” is described as “lovingly deconstructed,” whereas the cover of Deborah Harry’s “Heart of Glass” is called “ruthlessly deconstructed.” Anderson explains:

“You’ve got to have some ruthlessness. You can’t treat all these things like precious pearls. We’re all just here to try to bash out some form of personal expression. That can take a lot of different forms, but you can’t exclude ruthlessness.”

Whether inspired by love or ruthlessness, the music exudes good humor and a wildly adventurous spirit.

“We definitely believe in enjoying what we’re doing, and I hope that comes across in our performances and recordings,” Anderson said. “At the same time, we take music very seriously. The fun part is all the possibilities. Certainly, music should have the capacity to put a smile on your face.”

Anderson said their famous eclecticism was not a product of financial need, as in some cases where a young musician capable of playing in different styles is more likely to make a decent living from his craft.

“That’s never really been the issue. It’s more that we’re just genuinely

Courtesy Photo

interested in all these different things. Our gateway into music, in general, was just listening to rock radio and playing in rock bands. We've all played jazz in every imaginable stylistic situation. I have a degree in classical music performance. Ethan has played in tango bands. We've written music for dance. We've kind of done it all, and I think that's part of the sound of the band. You have all of this authentic experience in all these different things, so when there's a rock beat in *The Bad Plus* it's a real rock beat."

One of the best examples of that "real rock beat" is the band's incredible nine-minute recording of Anderson's intense, stop-time masterpiece "Physical Cities," from the 2007 release, "Prog." King's drum bombast rivals Led Zeppelin's magisterial tub-thumper John Bonham. Anderson describes the tune's evolution.

"It actually started at a sound check. Dave and I just started improvising this thing. We thought it was cool and thought it kind of sounded—like you said—like John Bonham. Also, in that tune I was thinking about some things that certain metal bands do, these intense, heavy rhythmic figures that are not immediately discernible. You don't know exactly what's going on and kind of get lost in the mantra of it."

King is responsible for recruiting Lewis for the latest project.

"Dave and Wendy played together about 10 years ago, with her bands, and they had a really good creative relationship," Anderson explained. "I had heard a little bit of that music, and I always thought about her voice since I heard a couple demo CDs. We were thinking a lot about who to get for this recording, what kind of qualities that person should have. Wendy came up and it just seemed like the right move to make. Ethan had to just trust us. We didn't even get together with her to try it out. We just gave her a call and said, 'Hey, do you want to make this record?' and took a chance, and it worked out great.

She's been incredible to work with."

Was there any apprehension among the three long-time bandmates about the prospect of working with a vocalist for the first time?

"Yeah, a little bit, at first, just because none of us had worked with Wendy in this kind of a context. She didn't know what to expect. None of us really knew what to expect or how it would work. We just started from zero, getting together in a room and working out these arrangements. It's not a process that completely falls into place, even when it's just the three of us, so we were definitely taking a chance with it."

From the start, Lewis was an integral part of the recording, from choosing the tunes to working up the arrangements.

"We definitely wanted her to feel like a part of the process and to sing songs that she felt good about singing, even though we did force her to do a couple that she wasn't at first that enamored with, but now she admits that she likes doing them." One of those, the 1950s doo-wop classic "Blue Velvet," didn't make the cut to CD.

As usual, the songs underwent a thorough process of deconstruction and reconstruction, but Anderson said the evolution of each track was unique, from Nirvana's depressing grunge rocker "Lithium" to the alt country drone of Wilco's "Radio Cure" to the romantic light pop of the Bee Gees' "How Deep Is Your Love?" to the slick rock bombast of Heart's "Barracuda" to Miller's traditional country weeper "Lock, Stock and Teardrops."

"Each one of these tunes is its own world. In doing this kind of music, there is no real road map for how you approach it. We kind of just take every one as it comes and try to agree on what's the essence of the song and try to make it our own. We were still tweaking arrangements when we were in the studio, so we spent a little time working out some details."

So how did Stravinsky, Babbitt and Ligeti find their way to the recording studio?

"It was just something that we happened upon as we were conceiving the record. Ethan was practicing these classical music excerpts for something that he was doing. One day Dave started playing along and we all kind of looked at each other and said, 'Hey, why don't we do this in *The Bad Plus*?' From there, it just made sense to us to put that music on the record."

For listeners who may not be comfortable with instrumental jazz, the lyrical content may bring new followers to *The Bad Plus*, but that was never by overt design.

"I think all of our music has crossover potential, but what do I know?" Anderson joked. "That's not the intention with which it was made. If it gets us a few more fans, that's great. It's a noble challenge to try to present your music and get as many people to enjoy it as possible. It's very open. We're not sitting there in our exclusive clubs saying, 'You're not going to get this.' You know what I mean? We're making music that we want to reach out to people."

While reaching out to new listeners, the new record also has drawn some criticism.

"It has been a very polarizing record," Anderson admitted. "We've gotten some really extreme reactions on both ends, but we're kind of used to that, at this point."

The best testimonial to the phenomenal appeal of *The Bad Plus* is in their wide-ranging audience.

"Our audience is quite eclectic," Anderson said. "We have as many hardcore traditional jazz fans as we do young indie rock fans. One of the great things that we see is parents and their kids coming to the show and everybody enjoying it. That's important and it makes us feel good. It's not music that's targeting a certain generation or a certain clique of people."

Festival Review

Healdsburg festival features Jobim tribute

By Tom Ineck

HEALDSBURG, Calif.—A community of just 15,000 souls in the heart of Northern California's wine country—65 miles north of San Francisco—may seem an unlikely place for a world-class jazz festival, but this quaint, 19th century Sonoma County city has established that well-deserved reputation over the last decade.

Thanks in large part to the vision and work of artistic director Jessica Felix, the 11th Annual Healdsburg Jazz Festival built on that reputation with a two-week event featuring an eclectic lineup of artists from near and far. From May 29 through June 7, those who attended heard some of the best live jazz anywhere by such heavyweights as James Moody, Randy Weston, John Handy, Esperanza Spaulding, Julian Lage, Denny Zeitlin, Marlena Shaw and Eddie Marshall. They congregated in cafes and art galleries, theaters and vineyards. On one very special day, hundreds gathered at a recreation park in downtown Healdsburg for a six-hour showcase of Brazilian jazz.

May 31 brought the perfect weather for "Stars of Brazil: A Tribute to Antonio Carlos Jobim," featuring guitarist-composer Toninho Horta, the great Trio da Paz and legendary singer Leny Andrade with the Stephanie Ozer Ensemble. A second stage offered more Brazilian jazz by Samba De Raiz, a popular Bay Area group.

Sonoma County jazz pianist Ozer led a group also comprised of saxophonist-flutist Mary Fettig, bassist Scott Thompson (Fettig's son) and drummer Celso Alberti. They performed a wonderful version of Luiz Eca's "Dolphin," a tune Ozer first recorded for her 2004 release devoted to Brazilian jazz.

Though raised in the Bronx,



Photos by Tom Ineck

It was a beautiful day for a tribute to Jobim at the Healdsburg Jazz Festival.

Ozer's musical inclinations headed south after hearing Andrade perform at a club in Rio de Janeiro. It was fitting that the two shared the stage for a set of tunes that included "One-Note Samba," on which Andrade teamed up with Thompson on electric bass, with Fettig on flute. Milton Nascimento's "Vera Cruz" also received a lovely reading by Andrade and Ozer, with Fettig on alto sax. Next, Ozer introduced "Bronx to Brazil," her loving tribute to Andrade and the South American sound.

Most stunning were Andrade's own interpretations of two familiar Brazilian jazz anthems, "Rio de Janeiro" and Jobim's classic "Dindi," which she introduced as "the most beautiful love song in the samba style." With such a passionate performance as hers, who could disagree?

Formed more than 23 years ago and now based in New York City, the virtuosic trio of guitarist Romero Lubambo, bassist Nilson Matta and drummer Duduka Da Fonseca may be the best practitioners of Brazilian jazz on the planet. Individually, they are in



Toninho Horta

great demand on recordings by artists looking for the authentic rhythms and technique of samba. Together, they are a force with which to be reckoned.

From their 2002 CD of the same name, they performed "Café," a relaxed, swinging tune by Egberto Gismonti. A master of the nylon-stringed acoustic guitar, Lubambo extracted every ounce of emotion from his instrument. Matta's "Baden" is a tribute to

the late, great Brazilian guitarist and composer Baden Powell. The composer's authoritative bass line and thunderous solo set the pace for Lubambo's stinging guitar work and Da Fonseca's brilliant brushwork. Jobim's "Look to the Sky" was followed by Da Fonseca's composition "Dona Maria," an uptempo tribute to his grandmother, who must have been a very hip woman.

Their good friend Andrade enthusiastically joined the trio for two familiar Jobim songs, "Felicidade" and "So Danco Samba," with the singer delivering some spirited scatting. As an encore, Trio da Paz finished their set with another nod to Jobim, the ballad "Corcovado (Quiet Nights)."

Toninho Horta's "Pica Pau" has long been a favorite of mine, since I heard it as the lead-off track of 1992's "Once I Loved," which also features Gary Peacock on bass and Billy Higgins on drums. The guitarist owes something of his style to fusion icon Pat Metheny, but Horta utilizes more chords and fewer single-note runs, developing a lush, emotional sound all his own.

That was even more evident in his Healdsburg set, which began with the title track of that 1992 CD. Santi Debriano and Billy Hart capably handled the bass and drum chores while adding their own distinctive flavor to the mix. Debriano contributed a nice Arco bass solo. Jobim's "Meditation" was humming along smoothly until a pickup malfunction sidelined the acoustic guitar. Horta continued on electric guitar on his composition "From Ton to Tom," a tribute to Jobim recorded by Horta in 1998 for a CD of the same name.

Pianist Marcos Silva joined the group for Horta's "Bons Amigos (Good Friends)," an appropriate tune considering that Silva was the composer's keyboardist for 20 years. The innovative percussionist Airtó Moreira then took the stage, accompanying the group before taking over for an inspired solo involving tambourine and free vocalise in an astounding tour de force of the



Billy Hart (left) and Airtó Moreira make formidable percussion duo.

improvisational art, even to the extent of demonstrating the throat-singing technique of Tuva. Airtó also joined Horta's band on the trap set, giving Hart a breather.

Hart was back for Jobim's "Zingaro" with Airtó on assorted percussion, Silva on piano and Debriano on bass. Horta reeled out some high-energy guitar chords for an original he introduced as "Check This Out," which proved a showcase for Hart's idiosyncratic drum style.

Two nights later, the scene was the Palette Art Café for a performance by the Billy Higgins Legacy Band, a stirring tribute to the late drummer, who was an essential ingredient in the ground-breaking Ornette Coleman quartet that rocked the jazz world in the late 1950s. Higgins died in 2001, at age 64, but his spirit was unmistakable in the daring, free-wheeling interplay, intensified by the razor-sharp saxophones of Azar Lawrence and special unannounced guest, Craig Handy.

The rest of the band consisted of pianist Kito Gamble, bassist Henry "The Skipper" Franklin and drummer Myron Cohen. All were friends of Higgins.

With Lawrence on soprano sax and Handy on tenor, the band turned "Softly, as in a Morning Sunrise," into a tour de force with Lawrence eventually switching to tenor for an extended

Coltrane-inspired solo, including a stunning interlude involving circular breathing. He capped the tune with an electrifying soprano cadenza.

Turning to a charging Coltrane composition, Lawrence and Handy went head-to-head on tenors and displayed their contrasting styles, Lawrence wailing with powerful, cascading lines and Handy employing more melodic finesse. On "Afro Blue," again it was Lawrence on soprano and Handy on tenor for a soulful rendition of the familiar melody.

Drummer Billy Hart was called from the audience to sit in on a 15-minute version of "Bye Bye Blackbird." Lawrence and Handy, both on tenor saxes, each took a solo before trading fours with Hart. The drummer stretched out in an inspired solo before turning it over to the saxes for a climax of dazzling, interweaving lines.

With Cohen back at the drum kit, the two tenors dug into Monk's "Well You Needn't," which also featured a fine piano solo by Gamble. After a short set by a group of young musicians, including drummer Lorca Hart (Billy's son), the groups finished with "My Favorite Things."

Surprisingly, drummer Myron Cohen met the daunting challenge of doing justice to the master Billy Higgins, despite a tendency to overplay.

Concert Review

John Riley Trio no ordinary jazz organ trio

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—Fans of the traditional rhythm & blues-oriented Hammond organ trio found little common ground with the style of the John Riley Trio during the final 2009 Jazz in June concert. What the crowd of some 8,000 did find is a new frontier of “organizing” and of jazz interplay.

Since Jimmy Smith revolutionized the instrument more than 50 years ago, few Hammond B-3 artists have ventured beyond the blues-laden jazz formula that he created. Only Larry Young in the 1960s and Sam Yahel, Larry Goldings and a few others in more recent years have attempted to break the mold. Add Gary Versace to that illustrious list.

More than leader John Riley on drums or veteran multi-instrumentalist Dick Oatts on saxophones and flute, it was Versace who seemed to lift the music to a higher realm at the June 30 performance. He persistently urged the others to venture beyond predictable phrasing, predictable harmonies and predictable rhythmic patterns. It comes as no surprise that Versace has become the favorite sideman of such iconoclasts as guitarist John Scofield and John Abercrombie, saxophonists Lee Konitz and Seamus Blake, and big-band leader Maria Schneider.

As though to alert listeners that they were in for something different, the trio began with a high-octane, modern version of “What Is This Thing Called Love?” with Oatts wailing on the alto sax and Versace taking off on his initial organ flight, full of percussive phrasing and a vocal-like tonal quality. The tune also introduced the trio’s sublimely conversational interplay, as the three sensitively listened to each other

and freely responded.

Billy Strayhorn’s “Isfahan” was given the proper exotic ballad treatment, but Versace again expanded on that theme with the use of dense chords and tonal experiments. At times, the lush keyboard and Leslie amplification seemed near to feedback mode, adding to the edginess. Oatts’ composition “On Dominant” was an uptempo burner with complex changes. Again, the



Dick Oatts, alto sax; John Riley, drums; and Gary Versace, organ

three-way interplay was synchronous and magical. During a brief drum break, Riley masterfully subdivided the beats.

Oatts switched to soprano sax for a moody, soulful tune by Versace called “Now as Then.” The mutual awareness among the players was apparent, and it helped to create a powerful emotional effect. Displaying a more celebrative mood, the trio finished the set with “Gumbo,” Oatts’ tribute to New Orleans. The alto sax mixed with Riley’s Crescent City street-marching beat for a genuine rave-up, but again it was Versace who defied convention with unusual phrasing and tone. The tune had the angularity of a Monk idea, and a saxophone-organ exchange heightened the sense of celebration.

“Mel’s Minor” is a classic blues shuffle by Oatts, dedicated to a former employer, the late drummer Mel Lewis. It was medium-tempo cool with Versace taking the only solo of the evening that somewhat resembled the soul-jazz organ of the past. Versace displayed his formidable technique while cruising easily through the changes on his tune “Soon Enough” as Oatts added brilliant statements on alto sax. The trio deconstructed Bob Haggart’s standard “What’s New?” and, indeed, created something new and beautiful with Oatts stating the melody, Versace riffing, and Riley insinuating a subtle, funky back beat. He began playing with his hands, shifted to sticks for a shuffle beat and back to hands.

Clare Fischer’s bossa nova “Pensativa,” most famous for its appearance on Art Blakey’s 1964 release, “Free for All,” was taken at a subdued tempo, with Oatts on flute. But, lest the audience get too comfortable, Versace turned up the heat with another breath-taking solo. Unmistakably intense was the finale, “King Henry,” penned by Oatts for his son. Riley kept the run-away tempo under control with ease as Oatts delivered a great alto sax lead melody and variations.

Because the John Riley Trio was somewhat of an unknown quality, even to those of us who were familiar with the players’ individual work, the final concert of the Jazz in June season was perhaps the most surprising as well.

Here’s something to look forward to. As in 2009, there are five Tuesdays in June 2010, promising another windfall of great jazz for Lincoln fans.

Photo by Tom Ineck

Concert Review

Project Omaha amply rewards jazz devotees

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—The highly anticipated reunion of Project Omaha, a year after the initial two-night stand that resulted in the sextet's live recording, more than met everyone's expectations.

With temperatures hovering around 100 degrees by early evening on June 23, the Jazz in June audience was reduced from the usual crowd of 7,000 or 8,000 to about half that number, but those who braved the elements were abundantly rewarded with the most exciting and virtuosic jazz display this city has witnessed in a long time. Despite the miles that separate them—guitarist Dave Stryker and drummer Victor Lewis traveled from New York City, keyboardist Tony Gulizia from Vail, Colo., percussionist Joey Gulizia and bassist Mark Luebbe from Omaha and saxophonist Bill Wimmer from Lincoln—the six musicians repeatedly locked into irresistible grooves that had listeners shouting their approval.

Like the CD, the opener was Dexter Gordon's Latin swinger "Soy Califa," a great vehicle for Wimmer's bold tenor sax excursions. The sax, guitar and keys announced the theme in unison, setting up a series of solos and allowing Lewis and Joey Gulizia plenty of space for breezy, polyrhythmic interplay. Stryker's inventive solo revealed his debt to Wes Montgomery as he deftly added texture with octave runs.

The bluesy "Cherry Red" was a showcase for Tony Gulizia's organ playing and versatile vocal style, digging deep into the Kansas City jazz tradition in homage to Big Joe Turner and Jay "Hootie" McShann. As he applied the proper "grease," Gulizia called out Stryker to take a solo, a blazing blues



Photos by Tom Ineck

Project Omaha performs at 2009 Jazz in June concert.*Dave Stryker, Mark Luebbe, Victor Lewis and Bill Wimmer*

statement. Wimmer followed with a soulful alto sax interlude. Tony Williams' rarely recorded or covered composition "Geo Rose" was a brooding, 10-minute masterpiece. The melody was stated in unison by Stryker and Wimmer on soprano sax. Stryker's solo explored all the possible variations, as Joey Gulizia added a haunting counterpoint on steel drum.

One of the highlight's of the evening was Stryker's new composition "One for Reedus," written in memory of drummer Tony Reedus, who spent several years in Stryker's band and died in November at age 49. It has a funky undercurrent, an infec-

tious rhythmic drive and a stop-time motif that set up the solos, including some smoking fretwork that seemed to carry all of Stryker's sense of loss and celebration of life that inspired the tune. A longtime friend and mentor of Reedus, Victor Lewis also played with verve and inspiration.

"Gypsy Blue" kicked off the second half of the concert with more Latin lilt, as Wimmer's alto sax joined with Stryker's guitar at a steady medium tempo. Again, a Stryker solo gradually increased in intensity, doubling the tempo for effect and leading to a set of rousing four-bar breaks with Lewis. Stryker's "Carnaval," the CD's sole original tune, kept the mood light and celebrative. With Joey Gulizia on steel drums and Lewis ranging freely over the trap set, it captured all the carefree joy of a Caribbean street parade, with Wimmer soaring high above on soprano sax.

Venturing again from the confines of the CD, Tony Gulizia returned to an

Project Omaha continued on page 16

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old favorite of his, “Just the Two of Us,” the classic Bill Withers song that provides a wonderful setting for Gulizia’s warm vocals and expert keyboard accompaniment. Wimmer’s alto sax solo was followed by a Stryker guitar solo that slyly quoted “Eleanor Rigby.”

With about a dozen Stryker recordings in my collection and having heard him live at least eight times over the last 20 years, it seems to my ears that the 52-year-old guitarist just keeps getting better. He balances a formidable technique with tasteful restraint and knowledge that sometimes less is more. He also knows how to have fun and excite an audience by occasionally turning up the heat.

Neither of the Gulizias was on hand for the so-called New York Jazz Summit three nights earlier, when Wimmer, Stryker, Lewis and Luebbe delivered a powerful, two-hour performance for an exclusive audience of just 40 devoted jazz fans at the Nebraska Club, on the 20th floor of the U.S. Bank building in downtown Lincoln. A benefit for KZUM Community Radio, it was a delightful contrast to the heat, crowded conditions and distractions of the outdoor Jazz in June venue.

It also allowed the quartet to try some new tunes and delve deeper into



Photos by Tom Ileck

Project Omaha (from left) Tony Gulizia, Dave Stryker, Victor Lewis, Mark Luebbe, Joey Gulizia and Bill Wimmerr respond to a standing ovation.

solo statements. Beginning with the familiar “Soy Califa,” the band moved into new territory with Thelonious Monk’s “I Mean You,” which Stryker and Lewis infused with a New Orleans street beat. Wimmer, on tenor sax, harmonized nicely with Stryker’s fat tone. Ellington’s “In a Sentimental Mood” began with an imaginative solo-guitar intro, leading to the melody played by Wimmer on alto sax, followed by solos from Wimmer, Luebbe, and Stryker, with Lewis tastefully switching to mallets.

Stryker’s “One for Reedus”



Bill Wimmer, Victor Lewis and Dave Stryker at New York Jazz Summit

picked up the tempo and set up a series of solos that tested the improvisational skills on a tune that was still new to most of the band. They carried it off beautifully, with fire and feeling. The rumba rhythm of “Gypsy Blue” joined alto sax and guitar in a unison melody line, and the rambunctious “Carnaval” was another great opportunity for Lewis’ stunning percussion work. In this intimate setting, the full force of his world-class technique was apparent, despite a drum kit that was less than world-class.

Lewis’ own “It’s Been a Long Time,” with Wimmer on tenor sax, summed up the evening with a sense of the rarity of such high-quality jazz performances in Lincoln. Here’s hoping that the wait for another such performance is not as long.



Project Omaha performs for a crowd at Jazz in June.

Concert Review

Shank Quartet digs deep into varied repertoire

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—The Kendra Shank Quartet's third appearance at the Jazz in June concert series was ostensibly a showcase for her recent release, "Mosaic," but the June 16 performance also provided an opportunity for the longtime musical collaborators to dig deep into their extensive repertoire.

With temperatures in the upper 80s at show time, Shank was dressed in a black, loose-fitting dress, but she and the rest of the band still generated considerable heat as they worked their way through two sets of highly inspired, give-and-take interplay. Whether interpreting jazz standards or introducing more obscure tunes, Shank and her comrades—pianist Frank Kimbrough, bassist Dean Johnson and drummer Tony Moreno—eschew conventional changes, preferring to delve into long improvisational interludes that challenge the listener and heighten the sense of surprise.

For example, Shank's take on Cole Porter's chestnut "All of You" was to faithfully render the familiar melody only briefly before creating free variations on the theme. Her bandmates were right there with her, exploring alternate chords as fellow-travelers on another jazz adventure. From their 2007 release, a tribute to the songs of Abbey Lincoln called "A Spirit Free," the quartet revisited "Throw It Away," with Moreno playing the drums with his hands and Kimbrough plucking the piano strings as Shank introduced the tune with her improvised "Incantation."

"Laughing at Life," from the new CD, began with a very loose melodic

intro before moving into uptempo solos on piano and bass and an energetic drum solo that furthered the sense of inherent joy that the title prescribes. "Reflections in Blue" featured another bold Shank vocal improvisation, which segued neatly to Irving Berlin's familiar "Blue Skies." As on the CD, one of



Frank Kimbrough, Dean Johnson and Kendra Shank

the highlights of the concert was Shank's reading of Carole King's pop classic "So Far Away," a sentiment that the singer obviously takes to heart. Utilizing her bell-like tone, she proceeded to wring great emotion from the story of long-distance love. In his imaginative solo, Kimbrough also found new ways to enhance an old tune.

An extended improvisation on the traditional "Black is the Color of My True Love's Hair" brought the first set to a stunning climax, despite a brief sound-system malfunction that left the voice and piano unamplified. As sound returned, Kimbrough ranged over the keyboard with rolling fists and discordant notes that provoked Shank to respond with percussive vocalizing.

The leaping, calypso-style mood of Abbey Lincoln's "Wholly Earth" got the second half off to a joyful start, reinforced by Kimbrough's dancing solo.

A special treat was Shank's venture into the Thelonious Monk songbook with her interpretation of "Blue Monk," known in this version as "Monkery's the Blues," with lyrics by Abbey Lincoln. Shank returned to the new release with "I'm Movin' On," a relatively unknown composition by Kirk Nurock with lyrics by Judy Niemack that caution against living in the past. Moreno's brushwork subtly added to the urgency.

"Beautiful Love" received another opening improvisation from Shank, based on the words of mystic poet Rumi and entitled "Water from Your Spring." With Kimbrough again plucking the strings, Johnson bowing the bass and Moreno using soft mallets, the familiar melody of the Victor Young standard began to emerge amid Shank's lilting, cascading vocals and skillful octave leaps.

Kimbrough's ballad "For Duke" received a splendid interpretation by Shank, who introduced the tune as a composition by her favorite piano player, with lyrics by Kimbrough's wife, poet Maryanne De Prophetis. Finally, the quartet pulled out all the stops for a spirited version of "Life's Mosaic," combining the Cedar Walton melody with lyrics by John and Paula Hackett. Everyone had a chance to solo on the uptempo bopper.

The audience of several thousand, many of whom were familiar with Shank from previous Jazz in June performances in 2004 and 2007, showed their appreciation with ample applause throughout the evening. About 50 of them also lined up to buy CDs and have them autographed by the always-gracious Kendra Shank Quartet.

Photo by Tom Ineck

Concert Review

ZARO brings funky good time to Jazz in June

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—A fair-weather capacity crowd of several thousand were in for a raucous and funky good time when the Fort Collins, Colo., quartet ZARO took the outdoor stage for the second of five 2009 Jazz in June concerts.

The June 9 performance was exuberant and high-volume, in both senses of the word, as the well-rehearsed band reeled off nearly 20 tunes in two 60-minute sets at a decibel level that took some getting used to, especially for those of us sitting up front. Once the ears had adjusted, however, it was pure listening pleasure.

For front man and Lincoln native Andrew Vogt, a versatile reed virtuoso, it seemed a pure pleasure to be playing for a hometown crowd, and he took every opportunity to show his appreciation, giving a shout-out to fellow alumni of Lincoln East High School and Pyrtle Elementary School and ending the concert with a “God bless Nebraska.”

Spurred on by Vogt, the rest of the foursome (guitarist Zac Rothenbuehler, bassist Roger Barnhart, drummer Oscar Dezoto) responded with equal enthusiasm. They floated on top of the rhythmic drive created by Vogt’s David Sanbornish alto sax on the Pat Martino composition “Mac Tough.” Vogt’s own “Action Plan” was followed by a funky, witty take on “Fables of Faubus,” the Charles Mingus attack on Arkansas segregationist Gov. Orval Faubus. With Vogt on tenor sax, the tune began in mid-tempo, accelerated and returned before opening up to solos by Vogt and Rothenbuehler.

The guitarist was prominently featured on Stevie Ray Vaughan’s fast blues shuffle “Stang’s Swang,” with



Photo by Tom Ineck

ZARO (from left) is Zac Rothenbuehler, guitar; Andrew Vogt, sax; Oscar Dezoto, drums; and Roger Barnhart, bass.

another exemplary solo by Vogt on tenor and a series of imaginative drum breaks by Dezoto, who sounded great despite a hand injury he sustained just before show time.

Switching to clarinet, Vogt dedicated a bossa reading of the jazz standard “Pure Imagination” to the late Butch Berman, who had taken the young saxophonist under his wing, introducing him to a wide range of music and encouraging his own musical explorations. On a lighter note, the band leaped into the familiar “Sanford and Son” TV theme with glee, as the listening audience responded with instant recognition. Rather than belabor the obvious, Vogt hilariously followed the performance by shouting, in a perfect Red Foxx impersonation, “Lamont, ya big dummy!”

“Tipitina’s,” by fusion guitarist Mike Stern, contained a little bit of New Orleans funk and fire and a sly quote from the “Mission: Impossible” theme by Vogt on tenor sax. Bob Marley’s “Them Belly Full (But We Hungry)” was recast from a straight reggae beat to a

funk fusion rhythm, this time with Vogt on soprano.

ZARO once again had the audience playing “What’s that ‘70s TV Theme Song?” with a dead-on version of “The Rockford Files.” Pat Metheny’s tender ballad “Change of Heart” was the setting for a lilting guitar feature, with Vogt on soprano sax. The energy level rose again for Vogt’s “The Derailer,” with the composer on tenor. Stevie Wonder’s “Sir Duke” contains some difficult-to-negotiate rhythm changes, but ZARO pulled it off with exhilarating, unison alto sax/guitar/bass statements and a great guitar solo.

From out of nowhere came “Red Car,” a bluesy Art Pepper workout from the mid-1970s. Warming to the soulful changes, Rothenbuehler took an unconventional solo, followed by Vogt’s alto sax homage to the composer, with an edgy tone and a series of dazzling staccato bursts of imaginative improvisation. As an appropriate encore, ZARO reached even further back for a funky rendition of Lou Donaldson’s “The Midnight Creeper.”

Tomfoolery

California trip again combines life's pleasures

By Tom Ineck

OCCIDENTAL, Calif.—I hope you're as fortunate as I am to have close friends in a place that you love to visit. If so, you know the satisfaction of combining two of life's pleasures, travel and companionship.

So it is every couple of years, when I fly—or occasionally drive—from Nebraska to Northern California. In late May, I touched down at the San Francisco International Airport in time to pick up my rental car and have a leisurely lunch in the city with friends before heading further north. Wade Wright, a **Berman Music Foundation** advisor and manager of Jack's Record Cellar in the city, also helps his brother at Café Divine, where "heavenly cuisine" is the byword. Butch Berman recommended the place in a column he wrote several years ago, and I wanted to check it out in person.

The stars were properly aligned on this occasion, with Wade celebrating a birthday on the day of my arrival. We met before noon and grabbed a sunny table outside the café. We were later joined by Terri Hinte, a Bay area legend among jazz writers and jazz musicians for her longtime work as writer, editor and publicist with Fantasy Inc. and currently fronting her own jazz publicity agency and managing the career of saxophonist Sonny Rollins. As a jazz writer, I had corresponded with Terri by mail and e-mail for some 25 years, but we had never met until now.

The three of us had a delightful meal, complete with decadent desserts, and conversation that ranged over many mutual interests. More than three hours later, I rose to head out of town, with great thanks and happy birthday wishes to Wade.

My West Coast odysseys always



Photos by Tom Ineck

Wade Wright and Terri Hinte (left) have lunch outside Café Divine in San Francisco. Joe Phillips, Jobee Farrer and Nikki Farrer (above) enjoy the music at the Palette Art Cafe during a performance of the Healdsburg Jazz Festival.

include a few days in Occidental, a wonderful Sonoma County village of about 1,500 people 60 miles north of the city. I still had a couple of hours to make my rendezvous with a friend there, so I drove—somewhat recklessly—up the winding road to the 2,500-foot peak of Mount Tamalpais and along the scenic coastal highway, an exhilarating ride after my long, cramped flight and sedentary urban experience.

Founded in 1876, Occidental first earned its reputation as a railroad and timber-cutting center, with six sawmills operating in the area by 1877. Some of the original 19th century buildings still stand, including the Union Hotel, built in 1879. Today it houses one of the best Italian restaurants in the region, and its saloon is a favorite watering hole for area residents. Just across the street is Negri's, which combines Italian cuisine with a lively bar and occasional live music.

But, like any city that leaves a lasting impression on the visitor, it is the people who make Occidental a favor-

ite return destination. In my case, those people are Joe Phillips, Nikki Farrer, their son, Jobee, and their many friends. Joe and I have known each other since the late 1960s, when we both attended Pius X High School in Lincoln. Joe, Nikki and I later lived together as part of a communal group that settled for a while in Bisbee, Ariz. Later, I returned to Nebraska and they moved to California, eventually migrating up the coast to the country of wine, rivers and redwood forests.

We have never lost touch, though we go months without speaking to each other and years between my visits. It is the essence of friendship that when we do gather, the old familiar thoughts and feelings, the easy camaraderie, come rushing back, almost as though we had never parted ways. Perhaps the 1,500 miles that separate us actually make us closer.

It certainly helps that we are all inquisitive, broad-minded fans of music, from rock to jazz to world music. That love of music has long been our

Tomfoolery continued on page 20

Tomfoolery continued from page 19

common ground, so it's a joy when we can share live performances.

Over the years, my trips to Northern California have often coincided with concerts and festivals, including the Russian River Jazz Festival in 1987, the Cotati Jazz Festival in 1993, the San Francisco Jazz Festival in 1996, a concert by the Frank Zappa tribute band Project Object at the Mystic Theater in Petaluma in 2002, and this year's Healdsburg Jazz Festival.

The Healdsburg gathering was especially memorable, as Jobee, now 34, and his girlfriend, Jen, joined us for an afternoon of Brazilian jazz in a small city ballpark. The weather was ideal and the music was joyous and inspired. Two nights later, Joe, Nikki, Jobee and I took in another jazz concert at the Palette Art Café, where we shared plates of appetizers and consumed a few local brews.

On my final full day in the area, Joe and I took a road trip to another favorite place, the rugged, beautiful

coast at Bodega Bay, where Alfred Hitchcock filmed much of "The Birds." It was a glorious spring day, so we hiked the hillsides above the bay, which were profuse with aromatic wildflowers. It was the perfect end to another memorable stay.

As we reach our late 50s and early 60s and many of our contemporaries take their leave of this life, our visits take on a new urgency. From now on, an annual trip to this neck of the woods is not out of the question. In fact, it seems downright mandatory.

Colorado Correspondent

Legends of Jazz have 250 years of experience

By Dan DeMuth

Colorado Springs, which has been privy to great jazz performances for several decades, notched another winner May 9.

Amy and George Whitesell of A Music Company Inc. (their website is at www.amusiccompanyinc.com) arranged this concert on short notice, with some help from local media persons of prominence. The setting was the plush, but affordable Cheyenne Mountain Retreat, enhanced by an able and appreciative staff. I may be somewhat prejudiced, but when the doorman singled me out from others—while checking in—with the observation, "Here comes a man to listen to jazz," it does start the day off rather nicely.

The ballroom was filled with jazz aficionados who were treated to some straight-ahead jazz from Legends of Jazz, a quintet whose members have been jazzin' in one form or the other for a combined total of more than 250 years. Anyone reading this can simply Google the artists by name, but I will tell you in advance it's akin to reading a *Who's Who* of jazz perusing their careers, both as leaders and in associations with premier jazz artists.



Photo by Dan DeMuth

The Legends of Jazz at Cheyenne Mountain Retreat

I would change the tour name to Legendary Gentlemen of Jazz, as they are gentlemen all, respecting an audience that highly appreciated them. The players are Hadley Caliman on tenor, bassist John Heard, Eddie Marshall drumming, Julian Priester on trombone and pianist Larry Vuckovich.

They opened with the Jerome Kern composition "All the Things You Are" and changed pace with the much recorded but seldom heard "Red Top." We were treated to some Ellingtonia throughout both sets with the likes of "Lush Life," "In a Sentimental Mood," "Take the A Train," "Mood Indigo" (with Eddie Marshall switching to the rarely heard recorder) and "Isfahan," with John Heard contributing some great

bass licks on the latter Strayhorn piece. A soulful version of the aptly titled Miles Davis piece "All Blues" was a crowd-pleaser, as was Todd Dameron's lyrical ode to John Coltrane "Soul Train," which featured the artistry of pianist Vuckovich. Closing with "Savoy" left us all if not stompin' still chompin' for more.

A special bonus for moi' occurred when my wife and I were invited to join Julian, the promoters and Hadley and his wife in the lounge after the show. As the round(s) of choice was Knob Creek Manhattans, and the conversation went into the wee hours of the morning, no notes were taken but I have greatly added some jazz lore to what's left of the memory bank.

Jazz on Disc

Shank takes another step in musical journey

By Tom Ineck



KENDRA SHANK QUARTET

Mosaic

Challenge Records

"Mosaic" is the latest leg in Kendra Shank's spiritual journey through music. Unlike her previous release, 2007's "A Spirit Free"—a very focused, ambitious and loving homage to Abbey Lincoln—she returns to a more varied menu of jazz standards, originals and even a pop tune by Carole King.

As always, the constant here is Shank's outstanding ensemble, longtime bandmates Frank Kimbrough on piano, Dean Johnson on bass and Tony Moreno on drums, plus the versatile reed playing of Billy Drewes and the guitar shadings of Ben Monder. Shank's fidelity to this same lineup has paid off in an uncanny compatibility and flawless interplay, despite (of because of) its penchant for risk-taking. For Shank's take on the new release, see the interview I conducted with her elsewhere in this newsletter.

It's hard to imagine a more compelling opener than King's "So Far Away," a touching interpretation of the pop classic raised to new heights by the sensitive playing of all, including an absolutely gorgeous clarinet solo by Drewes. Shank's ability to plumb the emotional depth of such a timeworn tune is only one of her many strengths. She

fearlessly improvises on Cedar Walton's "Mosaic," here titled "Life's Mosaic," with lyrics by John and Paula Hackett. Drewes turns in a sinuous solo, followed by Monder's own soaring solo excursion. Moreno also leads the rhythm section on a sonic adventure.

Rather than the conventional approach to the standard "Blue Skies," Shank and company slowly enter the melody from an improvised introduction the singer calls "Reflections in Blue." Again, the technique allows listeners to re-imagine the familiar Irving Berlin song. Similarly, the old warhorse "Smile," with music by Charlie Chaplin, is given a new lease on life by marrying it to the more upbeat "Laughing at Life."

Johnny Mandel's lovely ballad "The Shining Sea," with lyrics by Peggy Lee, gets a reverent, but fully engaging treatment, with Kimbrough accompanying with lush chords. In another medley, the mystic verse of Rumi entitled "Water from the Spring" is used to draw new meaning from another standard, Victor Young's "Beautiful Love." Beginning and ending with a rhythmically free section, the music seems to ebb and flow as naturally as the spring water of the title.

One of the most beautiful new compositions on the CD is the ballad "For Duke," with music by Kimbrough and poetic lyrics by the pianist's wife, Maryanne de Prophetis. Shank handles the tune with great sensitivity and respect, and it is made even more profound by an extended piano solo. Shank freely expresses all the joy and surrender inherent in Cole Porter's "All of You," and the band responds with equal delight, especially in Johnson's whimsical bass solo.

"Time Remembered," one of Bill Evans' most evocative ballads, gets an inspired reading by all. Shank caresses the lyric by P. Lewis, Kimbrough and Drewes (on clarinet) engage in an inspired musical dialogue, and Monder's signature guitar tone helps to create a dream-like mood. Kirk Nurock composed the last two tracks, the mid-tempo waltz "I'm Movin' On," with lyrics by Judy Niemack, and "I'll Meet You There," with lyrics that Nurock adapted from Rumi.

With "Mosaic," Shank and her compatriots have created another sterling example of the jazz artist's craft at its most technically accomplished and most emotionally revealing.



BENNY MAUPIN QUARTET

Early Reflections

Cryptogramophone Records

With "Early Reflections," reed virtuoso Bennie Maupin continues a comeback as leader that began with 2006's "Penumbra," also on the Cryptogramophone label. This time, Maupin takes his sublime artistry in a new, evocative direction.

Indeed, Maupin takes it all the way to Warsaw, Poland, where he assembled a quartet that also features pianist Michal Tokaj, bassist Michal

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Jazz on CD continued from page 21

Baranski and drummer Lukasz Zyta, with wordless vocalizing of Hania Chowaniec-Rybka gracing two tracks. The group toured together for two years before retiring to the studio, and the rapport is evident.

A seamlessly organic whole of nearly 80 minutes duration, the music simultaneously evokes the mystery of Poland's natural beauty and the melancholy spirit of its people. With only a few exceptions, the tempos are largely downbeat, but the playing by Maupin on bass clarinet, tenor and soprano saxes and alto flute seems to rise out of the ether in hopeful aspiration. With backgrounds in classical music as well as jazz improvisation, the accompanying trio of players is unfailingly sympathetic.

The mood is intimate and introspective. On the lovely "Escondido," Maupin, on bass clarinet, pairs off with Baranski in a warm and woody dialogue. "Ours Again" is a brooding duet between Maupin's tenor and Tokaj's carefully chosen notes. Maupin's alto flute is a perfectly mournful foil for the keyboard explorations of the pianist's sole composition, "Tears." The composer is allowed ample space to state the melody, and Baranski contributes a bracing bass solo.

Especially potent is the 10-minute, surging modal rendition of "The Jewel in the Lotus," with Maupin on soprano in his most yearning Coltrane-influenced style. It is a lovely reprise of the title track from Maupin's 1974 recording, recently re-issued on ECM Records. The title track bounces along on Maupin's supple soprano and the steady lope of the rhythm section. "Inner Sky" is an exquisitely realized depiction of nature's parading pageantry, with Maupin painting the landscape on tenor sax.

Best-known for his work in the late '60s with Miles Davis and in the early '70s with Herbie Hancock, Maupin's

reputation for avant-garde abstraction re-emerges briefly on the group improvisations "Within Reach," "Inside the Shadows," "Black Ice" and "Not Later than Now." "Prophet's Motifs" fuses the blues with a clever wit, as Maupin gets down and funky on bass clarinet.

"ATMA" and the haunting closer, "Spirits of the Tatras" feature Chowaniec-Rybka, a popular practitioner of both opera and the Polish folk tradition. Having traveled by midnight train through the Tatra Mountains from Krakow en route to Budapest more than a decade ago, I can testify to the authenticity of the spirits evoked here.

The very satisfying music of "Early Reflections" is emotionally complex, but delivered with directness and a startling simplicity that make it vital and alive.



CRIMSON JAZZ TRIO
King Crimson Songbook, Vol. 2
Inner Knot Records

Forty years on, the music of King Crimson shows no signs of age, despite an apparent recording hiatus since the group's 2003 release, "The Power to Believe." In the interim, however, the Crimson Jazz Trio—pianist Jody Nardone, bassist Tim Landers and drummer Ian Wallace—has filled the void admirably with its exciting reinterpretations of Crimson classics.

"King Crimson Songbook, Vol. 2" is the long-awaited follow-up to the group's 2005 debut, which was reviewed in the March 2006 BMF newsletter. In all likelihood, it will be the last volume, as Wallace died in February 2007 after a brief battle with cancer. What remains of this bold experiment,

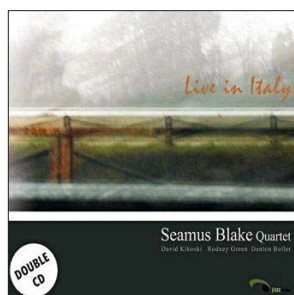
however, are two masterpieces of the art of improvisation. Both are excellent jazz takes on a progressive rock monolith that continues to defy convention.

If possible, the second volume is even more adventurous and stimulating than the first. "The Court of the Crimson King" virtually seethes with energy, largely generated by Wallace's astounding percussion work. It is further propelled by Nardone's surging keyboard attack and Landers' slippery bass lines. "Pictures of a City," from KC's second album, "In the Wake of Poseidon," expands on the original's rhythmic complexity, shifting easily from a loping tempo to the skittering bop beat of a run-away train.

The tempo slows briefly for "One Time," from 1995's brilliant comeback record "Thrak." But, as though unable to repress their enthusiasm, Nardone, Landers and Wallace soon lock into a lilting Latin pulse, then turn it over to Landers for a lyrical solo on the fretless five-string bass. KC alumnus Mel Collins is featured on soprano sax on a blazing rendition of "Frame By Frame," from 1981's "Discipline." Also from "Thrak" comes "Inner Garden," a ballad on which Nardone sings the Adrian Belew lyrics with great beauty and feeling.

"Heartbeat," from 1982's "Beat," is a nifty jazz waltz that showcases Nardone's propulsive piano style, which rocks and swings simultaneously. It also features some inspired drum breaks by Wallace. The session's centerpiece is "Islands Suite," which draws its inspiration from the 1971 album, "Islands." It allows every participant to express himself—from "Press Gang," Wallace's introductory solo focusing on floor toms and cymbals, to Nardone's brief but lovely "Zero Dark Thirty," to the group explorative theme of "Formentera Lady," with Collins on tenor saxophone, which segues neatly into "Sailor's Tale" and ends with an exquisite solo by Landers called "Plank."

"Lament," from the 1974 masterpiece "Starless and Bible Black," is a fitting finale. The first half of the tune swings gently with Wallace on brushes and Landers' moaning bass capturing the bittersweet nature of the tune. The second half moves uptempo to a stirring Latin beat with Wallace firmly in the driver's seat, ending on a positive note. If there is a way to keep CJ3 alive after the passing of its guiding light, we heartily support the idea.



SEAMUS BLAKE
Live in Italy
 Jazz Eyes Records

Seamus Blake is an inventive tenor saxophonist who has been flying under the radar for several years, despite his move to New York City in 1992. A native of Vancouver, B.C., who attended Berklee College in Boston, he first recorded with Victor Lewis on the drummer's 1992 release, "Know It Today, Know It Tomorrow" and has subsequently worked with guitarist John Scofield, pianists Kevin Hays and Darrell Grant, drummer Billy Drummond and the Mingus Big Band.

With the double-disc "Live in Italy," Blake, 40, boldly steps out in extended live performances with his quartet, also featuring pianist David Kikoski, bassist Danton Boller and drummer Rodney Green. It was recorded in Palermo, Senigallia and Cesenatico in February 2007.

The excitement level is infectious from the first tune, Blake's "The Jupiter Line," on which he tastefully employs electronic gadgetry to create the effect of a horn soaring into outer space.

Similarly on the funky "Way Out of Willy," he uses a wah-wah pedal, reminding the listener of Eddie Harris' soulful excursions of the late 1960s. Kikoski contributes a bluesy solo, while Boller and Green maintain the groove throughout.

The second movement of Claude Debussy's String Quartet in G minor is the inspiration for a gorgeous ballad performance. Blake and Kikoski lock in unison as Boller and Green provide free, but sensitive embellishments. The tempo shifts upward for a while before returning to its initial, meditative mood. Blake's "Fear of Roaming" is a pensive modal piece that sets sax and piano against a lively bass line. Boller eventually settles into a bluesy walk.

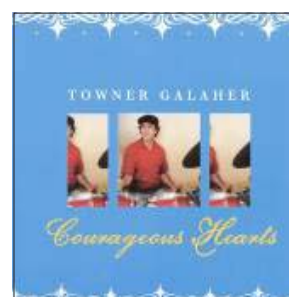
Ellington's "The Feeling of Jazz" sways gently as Blake weaves brilliant double-time passages throughout. Kikoski restates the tune's bluesy, swinging simplicity, and then builds on the theme with his own rhythmic and harmonic ideas. Kikoski's "Spacing" is an aptly named exploration into the stratosphere, launched with a freely improvised piano solo and continuing with uptempo energy and witty exchanges by all.

"Ladeirinha" is a ballad in waltz time by Brazilian composer Djavan. Blake's tenor again steps up the intensity with double-time statements against Kikoski's steady comping, Boller keeping a steady bass pulse and Green expressing more artistic freedom. Blake telegraphs key phrases of the familiar melody of "Darn That Dream" in an extended solo sax introduction before settling down to a true ballad tempo. Never content simply to state the theme or dwell on the changes, he soon takes flight in a wonderful solo excursion over the always-reliable rhythm section. Kikoski and Boller also contribute extended solo statements.

"Dance Me Home" is a bluesy, typically angular John Scofield tune that serves as a fitting finale to this lively live set. Kikoski is especially exciting

here, as he digs deep into the groove with Boller and Green urging him on. Blake ups the ante with a spiraling solo that seems to take off in several different directions simultaneously. Pretty heady stuff!

With nine tracks ranging from eight minutes to more than 17 minutes in length, these two generous CDs are an excellent and very satisfying approximation of a complete concert performance by the Seamus Blake Quartet. It is highly recommended for adventurous jazz fans.



TOWNER GALAHER
Courageous Hearts
 Towner Galaher Music

"Courageous Hearts" picks up where drummer Towner Galaher's debut recording left off. "Panorama" was reviewed in the July 2007 edition of the BMF newsletter. Again, Galaher's star-studded ensemble turns in a set of straight-ahead hard bop that is worth celebrating.

The instrumentation is similar to the earlier session, adding only trombone (the great Fred Wesley) to a lineup that also consists of tenor sax (Craig Handy), trumpet (Brian Lynch), piano (George Colligan), and bass (Charles Fambrough, the only holdover). On four tracks, the rhythmic urgency is bolstered by percussionists Gabriel Machado and Ze Mauricio.

Like "Panorama," the new CD features strong tunes with intricate horn arrangements that make the

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Jazz on CD continued from page 23

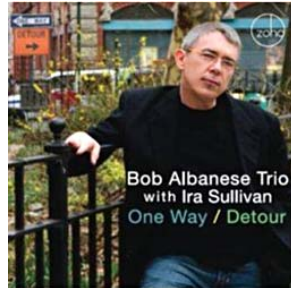
most of the band's talented front line. All but two of the nine tunes are Galaher originals, and they are presented in precise performances averaging about four minutes each. The title track virtually leaps from the disc with a swinging intensity reminiscent of Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, an undeniable influence on Galaher. On their solos, Lynch and Handy establish their formidable technique and brimming soul.

Likewise, the uptempo "Boogalooobop" features Wesley's fat tone and soul-jazz inclinations, but it also is a showcase for Colligan's keyboard improvisations and Fambrough's versatile, shape-shifting bass line. "Second Line Samba" describes itself well, combining the polyrhythmic influences of both New Orleans and Rio in a heady, hard-driving brew.

Galaher slows the tempo to a gently lope and switches to mallets as he concentrates on floor toms and cymbals on the beautiful "Winter Sunrise." Wesley, Colligan and Handy make brief but stirring statements before the band returns to the head and the leader finishes with a drum coda. Tadd Dameron's "Hot House" gets a heated workout with unison horns setting up a clever rhythmic device that cues solos by Lynch, Colligan and Handy—all in less than four minutes.

"April 28th" shuffles along with the relaxed grace of a jazz waltz, creating side passages for Handy, Lynch, and Colligan to weave their magic in solos and group interplay. "Londel's" is a gorgeous, soulful ballad that showcases Wesley's gospel shouts and slides. The title theme is briefly reprised on "Courageous Hearts (Rhythm of Victory)" before the whole project comes to a glorious conclusion with the Mongo Santamaria classic "Afro Blue," a

great vehicle for everyone. The only track that extends beyond seven minutes, it includes well-developed solos by Wesley, Lynch, and Colligan and stellar percussion work by Galaher and Machado. Indeed, the band continues to percolate as the track fades, leaving the listener wanting more.



**BOB ALBANESE TRIO with
IRA SULLIVAN
One Way/Detour
Zoho Music**

A relative unknown, pianist Bob Albanese impresses mightily as composer and player on his Zoho Music debut, "One Way/Detour." He moves comfortably between a post-bop, mainstream style and an infectious Latin tinge. His often-complex, percussive pianistics are ably accompanied by bassist Tom Kennedy and drummer Willard Dyson, and six of the 10 tracks are further enhanced by the presence of the versatile Ira Sullivan on tenor and soprano saxophones, alto flute and percussion.

Albanese's technique is immediately established with the quirky opener, "Major Minority," as he explores all the permutations of a melodic minor scale. Rescued from the dustbin of swing history is "Yesterday's Gardenias," once associated with Glenn Miller. Here it gets a thorough brushing-off with Sullivan on tenor sax still swaggering at age 76. The title track, "One Way/Detour," is a devilishly difficult stop-time burner that, aptly, seems to be moving in opposite directions simultaneously.

One of my personal favorite here is the surging samba "Morning Noc-

turne," with beautiful chord changes, a pulsating bass line and sizzling percussion by Dyson, with help from Sullivan. Albanese couples a lilting left-hand with skittering right-hand improvisations on "Joyful Noise," another Latin jazz winner which also features a wonderful bass solo and impressive rolls by Dyson.

Sullivan returns on alto flute to produce a lush, warm tone on the gorgeous rendition of Thelonious Monk's "Ugly Beauty." Albanese's solo is brief and understated, so this is a superb showpiece for Sullivan. "Waiting for Louis" is a bright, snappy tune written as Albanese waited for his son to be born. The composer notes that he had plenty of time to perfect the tune, as his wife was in labor for almost two days!

Another gem is the brilliant pairing of Albanese with Sullivan, on soprano sax, for the ballad standard "Midnight Sun." These masterful musicians take their time in a dialogue that alternates between unison lines, call-and-response, harmonic invention and even some well-placed discord. Albanese creates shimmering, cascading lines as a lovely counterpoint to Sullivan's melodic improvisations. Two combined takes of "Friendly Fire" end the session with nearly 14 minutes of fast-paced group interplay and solo expression. Sullivan's burnished tone on tenor sax lends plenty of authority.

The Zoho Music label has ascended rapidly to the top echelon of jazz record companies, with an impressive roster of jazz artists, particularly in the mainstream and Latin jazz genres. Founded in 2003 by veteran music producer Joachim Becker, it is the home of the excellent Dave Stryker-Steve Slagle Band, saxophonist Dave Liebman, percussionist Ray Barretto, harmonica virtuoso Hendrik Meurkens, Arturo O'Farrill and his Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra, guitarist Carlos Barbosa-Lima and others. To that impressive list can now be added Bob Albanese and "One Way/Detour."

Feedback

Readers offer comments on grand opening, etc.

Congratulations to one and all. This is very exciting news and a terrific resource for the community. I'll be sure our jazz colleagues hear of this.

John W. Richmond
Professor and Director
School of Music
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Grace,

Nice article on the memorial ping pong tournament, It remains a great tradition to be part of..

We had a great time at the opening the Berman Music Foundation office/museum.

I was thinking that Butch would be happy to imagine things working out this way with the Foundation.

Brad Krieger
Artist
Lincoln, Neb.

I just found out about your new location. Very exciting! The Haymarket is perfect. Congratulations!

Rusty White
Bassist and Professor of Bass
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Thanks for keeping me informed. Congratulations! All the best wishes.

Ted Piltzecker
Vibraphonist
TedVibes.com

I can't tell you how good it is to have The Berman Foundation once again underwriting "Highway Blues." Seeing that brought a smile to my face with instant memories of Butch and I kidding around in the studio together. I sure miss him.

It's good to see Butch is still alive and well through the people he entrusted with his foundation.

Al Lundy
Host, "Highway Blues"
KZUM Community Radio
Lincoln, Neb.

Hi Tom,

Thanks for adding me to the mailing list. Keep up the good work. Saludos.

George Hinman
Panama City, Panama

Hi Tom,

This is Jason Hollar (bass player). You may remember me from a review you wrote about my CD which featured the soon-to-be famous Andrew Vogt on sax!

Congrats on the continuation of the Berman project. I enjoy receiving the newsletters and can't wait until I get the chance to return to Lincoln to visit the new museum facility someday.

I was writing to mention your performance review of Mike Tomaro, a gem of a guy and a helluva musician. It's great to see a fellow Pittsburgher featured in your local productions.

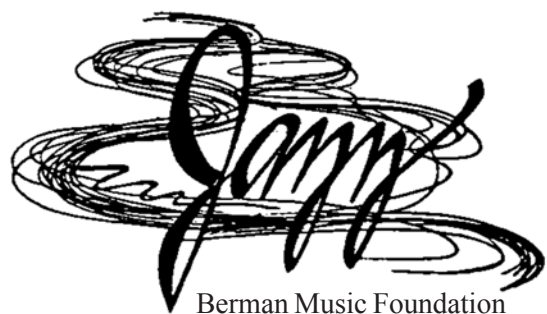
Anyway, keep up the good work. Hope to see you next time I'm swinging through the great Midwest!

Cheers,

Jason Hollar
Bassist

Excellent issue! Thanks for keeping me posted, Tom!

Mark Dalton
Bassist
Seattle, Wash.



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From the Archives

Bill Wimmer fronts trio at 1999 opening reception



File Photo

Pianist John Carlini, saxophonist Bill Wimmer and bassist Jack Lesberg performed together in February 1999 at an opening reception for an exhibition of John Falter drawings of jazz musicians at the Nebraska State Historical Society. Wimmer appeared at the 2009 Jazz in June series with his band Project Omaha.

How can you help the foundation?

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

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