

BERMAN MUSIC FOUNDATION

New Orleans offers best in cultural heritage

By Tom Ineck

NEW ORLEANS—After 15 years, I returned to the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival with mixed emotions and more than a little trepidation. After all, the city and I had changed considerably since 1995.

Nearly five years ago, Hurricane Katrina and subsequent flooding inundated 80 percent of the city and rendered whole neighborhoods uninhabitable. The Big Easy lost many of its residents to other parts of the country, including the musicians who made New Orleans so unique. Some may never return. The total urban population shrunk from a pre-Katrina high of 450,000 to less than half that before rebounding to an estimated 350,000. Now, the citizens who remain must deal with a growing oil spill wreaking havoc with the Gulf of Mexico's ecological system and endangering the vital fishing and tourism industries.

Since I last attended Jazz Fest, I have grown older, slower and less patient with large outdoor crowds. I have less energy to fight my way to the front of the stage, and my knees are too weak to stand for hours in the heat and humidity. In short, I'm too old for Woodstock revisited. But my desire for good music—of all kinds—remains



French Quarter streetscape features wrought iron and neon-lit bars.

strong. Fortunately, the festival still gives the open-minded, eclectic music fan a dozen stages to choose from, and the music sounds just as good while seated under a tent as it does standing in an open field. If you balance the two experiences, you can enjoy both and not suffer early burn out.

Separate stages devoted to different styles of music are positioned throughout the 145-acre site, the infield of the mid-city Fair Grounds Race Course. Some artists are gathered under the festival's broad stylistic umbrella for their star power alone, but most are linked in some way to the Crescent City's unique musical heritage.

For example, the 41st annual fes-

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Photos by Tom Ineck

Dee Dee Bridgewater is interviewed at New Orleans Jazz Fest.

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tival (April 23-May 2) featured Celtic soul icon Van Morrison, jam rockers Widespread Panic, folk veterans Simon & Garfunkel, grunge rock favorites Pearl Jam, the ubiquitous British chameleon Elvis Costello, comic Steve Martin doing his bluegrass thing, and fusion guitar god Jeff Beck. Among the no-shows was Aretha Franklin, who was replaced by Earth, Wind and Fire. These are the celebrated names that ensure that Jazz Fest will remain solvent as it continues to attract hundreds of thousands of people from around the world.

For the \$45 daily admission, the most fanatical of fans scurry from stage to stage to catch the big acts from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. each of seven days spread over two weekends, often standing for hours and settling for a glimpse of their favorite stars on the huge video screens set up at the two largest outdoor venues. Those of us seeking a more intimate relationship with the music historically connected to New Orleans seek refuge in the smaller tents, where we can sit and enjoy the sounds of traditional jazz, progressive jazz, blues, funk, soul, or gospel. Smaller outdoor stages offer Cajun and zydeco music and the spectacle of Mardi Gras Indians dancing in their beaded and feathered finery and parading through the grounds.

These are the traditions on which the city's cultural reputation is based, and they continue to resonate. Whether the artists are the Neville Brothers, Ellis Marsalis, C.J. Chenier, the Dirty Dozen, BeauSoleil and Allen Toussaint, or lesser-known practitioners of the art, they represent a phenomenon more than a century in the making.

So it was with much anticipation and a little anxiety that my wife, Mary Jane Gruba, and I returned to Jazz Fest after a 15-year absence. We arrived in New Orleans April 28 equipped with tickets for the four-day second week-



Antoine's Restaurant is one of New Orleans' oldest eating establishments.

end, a little cash for the rows of vendors offering authentic Cajun, Creole and international cuisine, light clothing with some reliable walking shoes and hats and plenty of sunscreen. My cousin Jerry Siefken, a local resident and Jazz Fest veteran, loaned us a couple of compact folding chairs, which we never used. Typically, the weather varied from warm and sunny the first



Hungry festival-goers line up for traditional New Orleans cuisine.



My cousin Jerry Siefken (left) is among second-liners in the Economy Hall tent.

day to comfortably cloudy the second and third days and persistently rainy the final day.

With a detailed, gridded music schedule, we planned our days in advance, but prepared for last-minute changes—the best way to enjoy a relatively stress-free Jazz Fest experience. For example, on Thursday we took in the distinctly New Orleans funk sounds of Kirk Joseph's Backyard Groove and Ivan Neville's Dumpstaphunk, then retired to the indoor Music Heritage Stage for an interview with singer Dee Dee Bridgewater before fighting the swarming crowds to enjoy a hilarious performance by Steve Martin, sitting in on banjo with bluegrass virtuosi the Steep Canyon Rangers. We ended the day at the WWOZ Jazz Tent for Bridgewater's stunning celebration of Billie Holiday.

Among other memorable moments that weekend were sets by pianist-composer Allen Toussaint's Jazzity Project, Delfeayo Marsalis and the Uptown Jazz Orchestra, Brian Blade and the Fellowship Band, Astral Project, the New Leviathan Oriental Foxtrot Orchestra, Ellis Marsalis, and Steve Riley & the Mamou Playboys. During a rainy Sunday morning, moving performances by several soulful choirs provided a much-needed respite under the gospel tent. And, after 40

Photos by Tom Ineck



Mary Jane Gruba enjoys a beignet and café au lait at Cafe du Monde.

years of hero worship I realized a dream by witnessing Jeff Beck in all his six-stringed glory. *Some of these performances are reviewed in more detail on the BMF website and in a story beginning on the next page.*

The precious hours before and after Jazz Fest should always be spent sampling a few of New Orleans other highlights, especially those in the pedestrian-friendly French Quarter. Stroll through Jackson Square to see St. Louis Cathedral in the morning sunlight before stopping for café au lait and beignets (doughnut-like pastries smothered in powdered sugar) at Café du Monde, also a good place for celebrity sightings. On the day we visited, actress Maggie Gyllenhaal and her three-year-old daughter were there.

For an early lunch, we recom-



St. Louis Cathedral in Jackson Square is the heart of the French Quarter.

mend the deli at Central Grocery, home of the classic muffuletta sandwich, a large helping of Italian meats and cheeses dressed with a special olive salad inside a round loaf of focaccia bread. A leisurely stroll through the Quarter offers a combination of old-country streetscapes, quaint shops, beautiful wrought-iron architecture, eccentric street musicians and pressurized water trucks removing the dregs of the night before.

Evenings should include dinner at one of the many fine restaurants in or near the Quarter. During our stay, we had excellent meals at Tujague's, the Bon Ton Café and the Palace Café. Expect to spend \$80 to \$150 for two, depending on the quality and quantity of the wine. For a special treat, visit one of the city's night spots for a music experience much more relaxed than a day at Jazz Fest. This year, we returned to one of our favorite haunts, the Snug Harbor jazz club, for a Saturday evening performance by New Orleans jazz pianist Henry Butler, fronting a stellar quartet. Among the regular performers at Snug Harbor are R&B singer Charmaine Neville, Marsalis patriarch Ellis and Astral Project. Based on previous visits, we also recommend Tipitina's and the Rock 'n' Bowl.

Jazz Fest's popularity makes careful planning essential. Consider booking a hotel or bed-and-breakfast room six months in advance. Expect to pay at least \$200 a night for a decent room in the Quarter. Stay just outside the Quarter, spend less and still get around on foot, rented bicycle, streetcar or other public transportation. Don't rent a car!

For the 2011 edition, some music artists will be announced later this year or early next year, but detailed schedules are not available until about a month before the festival begins. Some 4,000 musicians perform each year during Jazz Fest.



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Festival Review

Jazz Fest is a music-lover's dream come true

By Tom Ineck

NEW ORLEANS—Four days at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival seem to fly by as in a hallucinatory dream, with alternating flashes of sounds, colors and the enticing aromas of Louisiana cooking.

Among the essential ingredients in Jazz Fest's musical gumbo are traditional jazz, modern jazz, blues, gospel, Cajun and zydeco. The Mardi Gras Indians display their beaded and feathered, hand-crafted costumes in rainbow hues, emphasized even more as they strut and chant on stage and throughout the fairgrounds. When hunger beckons, dozens of vendors are ready to serve up the regional and international favorites. But it is the music that makes Jazz Fest so memorable and unique.

To take full advantage of the mind-boggling array of artists performing simultaneously at 12 stages from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., the intrepid music-lover maps out the day in detail, but always leaves room for serendipity.

On April 29, we began our Jazz Fest adventure in the Blues Tent with Coco Robicheaux and the Swamp Monsters. The long-time Louisiana blues singer delivers a visceral punch with his pungent New Orleans patois, a sound that can be heard nowhere but here, on



Kirk Joseph's Backyard Groove perform at the large Acura Stage.



Steve Martin and the Steep Canyon Rangers drew a huge crowd at Jazz Fest.



Steve Martin shows skill on banjo.

tunes like "Walkin' with the Spirit of Love," and the funky "Street Connection." As Robicheaux said at one point, "They were draining the bayou and they came up with us!"

Kirk Joseph's Backyard Groove and Ivan Neville's Dumpstaphunk delivered back-to-back sets to good crowds at the Acura Stage, one of the festival's two large outdoor venues. The latter band was especially funky, playing "Turn This Thing Around" and "Everybody Wants Some."

After a couple of hours in the sun, we retreated to the Allison Miner Music Heritage Stage inside the large grandstand, where a local deejay was

interviewing jazz singer Dee Dee Bridgewater. During their relaxed, intimate conversation, she spoke of Nancy Wilson's early influence on her, her four years at the Village Vanguard with the Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra, and later work with Sonny Rollins, Dexter Gordon and Dizzy Gillespie. Perhaps most interesting was her commitment to a non-music activity, as United Nations goodwill ambassador for food and agriculture, working in Senegal.

Shifting from the serious to the ludicrous, we joined the swarming hordes en route to the Gentilly Stage to hear Steve Martin perform on banjo with the Steep Canyon Rangers. The set combined humor with straight-ahead bluegrass virtuosity, illustrating Martin's own considerable technique as composer and instrumentalist in the wake of his 2009 Grammy-winning bluegrass CD "The Crow: New Songs for the Five-String Banjo."

Selections from that release included "Daddy Played the Banjo," a tune Martin co-wrote with Randy Scruggs, "Hoedown at Alice's" and "Wally on the Run," written for his dog. As a teaser for Martin's next bluegrass project, they performed the title track, "Jubilation Day." From the lighter side

Photos by Tom Ineck

Photo by Jerry Steffen

of life came Martin originals “Let’s Keep the Minimum Wage Right Where She’s At,” the hilarious “Atheists Ain’t Got No Songs,” and the closer, a bluesy take on his 1970s hit “King Tut.”

The day ended sublimely underneath the WWOZ Jazz Tent, where Dee Dee Bridgewater and her band paid loving homage to Billie Holiday. Pianist and arranger Edsel Gomez was joined by Craig Handy on saxophones and flute, bassist Kenny Davis and drummer Gregory Hutchinson on such tunes as “Lady Sings the Blues,” “Lover Man,” and “Don’t Explain.”

Edsel’s arrangement of “Them There Eyes” drove the tune with an infectious New Orleans rhythm that inspired Bridgewater to a vocal “trombone” solo as she traded fours with Handy on tenor sax. Bridgewater’s lusty and rambunctious “Billie’s Blues” revealed the stylistic differences between her and the more subtle Holiday. “My Mother’s Son-in-Law,” “A Foggy Day,” and a wonderful version of “God Bless the Child” were followed by the closer, “Miss Brown to You.”

One of the natural hazards of having limited space in which to erect so many stages is that the listener is occasionally distracted by sound “bleeding” from adjacent venues. In this case, Bridgewater’s performance was im-



Dee Dee Bridgewater celebrates the music of Billie Holiday.

paired by the rock roar of both Wide-spread Panic at the Acura Stage and Blues Traveler at the nearby Blues Tent.

Friday began at the WWOZ Jazz Tent with the idea of staking out our territory and avoiding a claustrophobic crowd like the one we had to contend with at the Steve Martin concert. Aretha Franklin’s cancellation made that easier, since we wouldn’t have to leave the comfort of the tent to see her. The logistics and psychology of Jazz Fest force some tough choices, and the

fewer decisions the better off you are.

The Julliard Jazz Ensemble delivered a finely-calibrated performance of mostly original tunes. Next, Kent Jordan, on flute and piccolo, led a group with a strong African jazz influence, performing a couple of tunes by the late South African pianist and saxophonist Bheki Mseleku. They also rendered fine interpretations of “Out of This World,” “Feelin’ Good” and Chick Corea’s “Spain.” After more than 30 years together, Astral Project can still deliver, as the quartet showed in their riveting performance of original tunes like “Voodoo Bop,” “McCoy” and “Lauren Z.” We left before the Nicholas Payton Sextet had finished its somewhat disappointing set of fusion jazz.

Friday also included brief side trips to the Peoples Health Economy Hall Tent for Lars Edegran and the New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra and to the Sheraton New Orleans Fais Do-Do Stage for Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys, one of the most popular exemplars of the Cajun folk tradition.

I was determined to pace myself Saturday for the day’s final act at the Gentilly Stage, guitar legend Jeff Beck. So again I spent much of the day in tent seating, beginning at Economy Hall with Connie Jones and the Crescent City Jazz Band. A trumpeter, cornetist and singer, Jones and his nine-piece outfit took listeners through a trad-jazz history lesson that included “Savoy Blues” from Louis Armstrong’s Hot Five period, Jelly Roll Morton’s “Wolverine Blues” and “Do You Know What it Means to Miss New Orleans?” which he dedicated to legendary clarinetist Pete Fountain. The New Leviathan Oriental Foxtrot Orchestra followed with authentic arrangements of traditional popular music from the turn of the last century, performed by an ensemble of some 20 seated musicians in matching white, navel-style uniforms and playing trumpets, saxophones, clarinets, trom-



Astral Project still delivers after more than 30 years together.

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bones, tuba, guitar, banjo, piano, violins, cello, drums and a Theremin!

Over at the blues tent, the blind singer-guitarist Bryan Lee and the Blues Power Band, who replaced an ailing Mem Shannon, was wailing through “TV Mama,” while Germaine Bazzle was giving some lessons in New Orleans jazz vocal technique at the WWOZ tent, where she crooned “My Foolish Heart,” scatted through the Basie standard “Shiny Stockings,” and went uptempo for Cole Porter’s “It’s Alright with Me.”

I eventually settled in to the WWOZ tent for a couple of highly anticipated acts—Brian Blade and the Fellowship Band and The Allen Toussaint Jazzity Project. The Fellowship Band has been one of our favorites here at the Berman foundation since we covered them at the 1998 Kansas City International Jazz Festival. After two remarkable Blue Note recordings in the late 1990s, the seven-piece band went on hiatus for nearly a decade, finally reforming under the leadership of drummer Blade for 2008’s equally compelling “Season of Changes.” Pedal steel guitar had been dropped from the unusual lineup, but the group retained its idiosyncratic sound with electric guitar, two reed instruments, piano, bass and drums.

At Jazz Fest, the group had been further altered with trumpeter Antoine Drye replacing the guitar. The three-



Photos by Tom Ineck

Pianist Allen Toussaint and guitarist Steve Masakowski join forces.

horn front line of Melvin Butler, Myron Walden and Drye was inspired, trading off soaring, squalling solos as Blade urged them on with his thrashing drum attack and pianist Jon Cowherd and bassist Chris Thomas added to the deep harmonic tapestry. The Fellowship Band continues to communicate on a very high level with the audience, despite the absence of any stage commentary. The hour-long set was virtually an unannounced suite of tunes that alternately surged in intensity and waned in spiritual contemplation.

Toussaint’s jazzy set was weighted heavily with tunes from his brilliant 2009 tribute to New Orleans, “The Bright Mississippi,” the first release in 10 years for the legendary R&B composer, arranger, producer, pianist and singer. Astral Project guitarist Steve



Guitarist Bryan Lee replaced an ailing Mem Shannon in the blues tent.

Masakowski was among the prominent soloists featured on such tunes as Django Reinhardt’s “Blue Drag,” Armstrong’s “West End Blues,” “Egyptian Fantasy,” “St. James Infirmary” and the ballad “Long, Long Journey,” on which Toussaint sang the mournful lyric, “when the river stops flowing and the trees lay down and die.” It brought to mind another recent Toussaint project, his 2006 collaboration with Elvis Costello on “The River in Reverse,” a recording to benefit the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Finally, the moment had arrived. I made my way across the fairgrounds to the Gentilly Stage, where Jeff Beck would soon appear with his current



Brian Blade leads the Fellowship Band from behind the drum kit.

touring band—Jason Rebello on assorted keyboards, Rhonda Smith on bass and Narada Michael Walden on drums. He would allow credentialed photographers front-stage access for the first three tunes only, so we jockeyed and jostled for the best positions and started firing. It was somewhat difficult to concentrate on the work at hand while being aurally blasted and awe-struck by the sheer volume and technical virtuosity of this master of the Stratocaster as he launched into the instrumental “Led Boots,” from the 1976 masterpiece “Wired.”

Over the course of the next hour, Beck rolled out a wide range of material, approximating a career retrospective. He played an instrumental version of “People Get Ready,” which was originally sung by Rod Stewart on 1985’s mediocre crossover attempt “Flash.” Smith took the vocal part on Beck’s revamped, supercharged version of the blues classic “Rollin’ and Tumblin’,” and Beck nailed the stop-time fretting of “Big Block,” from 1989’s “Guitar Shop.” Delving into the 1960s, he pulled out a rollicking cover of Sly Stone’s “I Want to Take You Higher,” and treated Lennon and McCartney’s “A Day in the Life” with grace and respect.

He also introduced several num-



Guitar great Jeff Beck performed a career retrospective.

bers from his new release, “Emotion and Commotion.” Those included an ecstatic “Over the Rainbow,” played by Beck as though mournfully vocalizing with quavering tremolo, with Smith on acoustic bass and Rebello on keys. For an encore, Beck slung a Les Paul guitar over his shoulder and reeled off a swinging and virtuosic “How High the Moon,” first performed by Beck to great acclaim during a Grammy Awards tribute to the late, influential guitarist and inventor earlier this year. This time, the vocals came eerily from the original tapes of Les Paul and Mary Ford, with Rebello switching to rhythm guitar.

Beck concluded with the epic “Nessun Dorma (None Shall Sleep),” a Puccini aria featured on the new CD. Rebello contributed synthesized strings, Smith bowed the bass and Walden used soft mallets. The tune’s inherent melodrama is perfectly suited to the guitarist’s soaring, pleading and lyrical attack. For effect, he dropped to his knees for the final devastating note.

As befitting the final day, Sunday was filled with praise and thanks, not just for surviving another Jazz Fest but for the fact that such music exists in the world and that New Orleans provides an annual venue for it. To avoid the morning downpour, we huddled in the gospel tent and listened to the Zulu Male Ensemble, a choir of more than 20 male voices associated with the 101-year-old Zulu Aid and Pleasure Club, another New Orleans tradition. With additional support from organ, trumpet, bass, piano, drums, congas and washboard, they raised the tent roof with “Down by the Riverside,” “I’ll Fly Away” and “When the Saints go Marching In.”

Singer and choir director Jo “Cool” Davis had help from a brass section of three tenors and two trumpets, piano, organ, bass and drums as he rocked the gospel with arrangements of “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms,” “I Found Jesus (and I’m Glad),” “I’ll Fly Away,” “Over in the Glory Land,” “Saints,”



Pianist Ellis Marsalis

“Riverside” and a tribute to Sam Cooke.

The rain let up enough for us to scurry over to the trad-jazz tent for the Dukes of Dixieland, a Crescent City fixture for more than 30 years. Driven by the skillful playing of a female drummer, they ran through favorites like “Hindustan,” “St. James Infirmary,” “(Back Home Again In) Indiana,” “Little Rock Getaway,” “Milk Cow Blues,” and “That’s a Plenty.”

We settled into the modern jazz tent for consecutive afternoon sets by trombonist Delfeayo Marsalis & the Uptown Jazz Orchestra and his father, pianist Ellis Marsalis, fronting a quartet that also featured youngest son, Jason, on drums. Co-founded by Delfeayo and Ellis in 2008, the Uptown Orchestra covers New Orleans classics and standards by Ellington, Basie and others. By contrast, the Marsalis quartet tends toward more modern fare.

While standing in a huge muddy field with thousands of other fans waiting for Van Morrison to take the stage, the skies began to open with rain again, and I concluded that I was too old for Woodstock revisited. Instead, we retreated to the gospel tent for The Davell Crawford Singers, who gave us the strength and inspiration to head for the festival exit in praise and thanks.

Yes, I had missed a few artists I had hoped to see—the all-star Wayne Shorter Quartet, Irma Thomas, BeauSoleil, the subdudes, Stanley Clarke Band, Van Morrison—but the weekend also had delivered on the perennial Jazz Fest promise. Indeed, the good times did roll!

Feature Story

BMF celebrates another Jazz in June series

By Grace Sankey-Berman

LINCOLN, Neb.—I had the pleasure of hosting **Berman Music Foundation** board members at a reception after our annual meeting June 15. Past meetings had been scheduled in the winter, which often presented travel challenges for board members who came from out of town. Also, we thought it would be fun for those members to experience the great Lincoln tradition that is Jazz in June.

After the meeting we all went to the Sheldon Sculpture Garden where Kansas City songstress Angela Hagenbach was to perform. It was a beautiful evening for great jazz. Angela and her band, along with one of my favorite pianists, Roger Wilder, serenaded us with familiar and always pleasing standards like “Summertime,” and she also featured some songs from her own recordings. It was the perfect way to relax after a busy day.

Then we headed to the BMF office for the reception. It was nice to catch up with Dan Demuth, who despite storm, snow or sleet unfailingly makes it to the annual board meeting from his home in Colorado. I always look forward to spending time with

Wade Wright of San Francisco, who is the longest-serving board member. We have the best conversations on just about any subject. Russ Dantzer came for the meeting from New York City, despite his very busy summer schedule. I can’t wait to make it back to the city because he is the best host. Even

though bassist Gerald Spaits had a gig that same night in Kansas City, he made the 3½-hour drive to Lincoln for the meeting and drove back right after.

We are lucky and grateful to be working with such great friends, especially Kay Davis. She worked with Butch for many years and even though she has retired to Arkansas, she continues to make the annual trip back to Lincoln for the board meeting. Kay was kind enough to spend a few days with me while she was here. Our time together is always fun and goes by too fast.

BMF was happy to host two more receptions during this year’s Jazz in June series. Jeff Newell and his New-Trad Octet were great fun to hang out with after their June 22 concert, and guitarist Jerry Hahn graciously joined us after a great performance June 29, the final concert of the season.

Thanks go to Martha Florence, Laurie J. Sipple and all the Jazz in June volunteers who were able to join us. I would like to extend my appreciation to Ruthann Nahorny for always being there, and to Laura Hansen. Thanks for all your help.



Photo by Laura Hansen

BMF colleagues meet June 15 at Lazlo's.



Photo by Grace Sankey-Berman

Catherine Sinclair and Kay Davis



Grace Sankey-Berman, Tony Rager and Martha Florence



Laurie Sipple and Tom Ineck (right)



Wade Wright and Ruthann Nahorny

Concert Review

Henry Butler and Snug Harbor offer refuge

By Tom Ineck

NEW ORLEANS—As a musical refuge from the harsh realities of Gulf Coast life—pummeled by hurricanes and befouled by the sludge of Big Oil—there is no better name for a jazz club than Snug Harbor. As a more intimate alternative to the swarming crowds at Jazz Fest, it certainly lives up to its name.

The quaint, venerable night spot at 626 Frenchman Street in the Faubourg Marigny—just outside the French Quarter—has been the Crescent City’s premier jazz club for more than 30 years, booking some of the best New Orleans musicians available, including regular appearances by Charmaine Neville, Dr. Michael White, Ellis Marsalis and Astral Project.

We ducked inside its cozy confines on the evening of May 1 for a late-night performance by the Henry Butler Quartet, featuring saxophonist Donald Harrison. We grabbed a small table in the balcony, overlooking the stage and patrons below, an excellent vantage point for the entire scene.

Both Butler and Harrison are native New Orleanians whose well-de-

served fame frequently takes them away from home, so it was a rare treat to catch them in a joint performance also featuring Peter Harris on bass and

tempo and make the changes. Sebastian’s outstanding solo proved his ability as an overall percussionist, using every area of every drum, cymbal and rim to dazzling effect. Butler used both hands in unison for a unique take on “Misterioso.”

The tempo was flying on Ray Noble’s “Cherokee,” with Sebastian working the tom-toms and Harrison’s alto taking on the tonal colors of Charlie Parker. Butler performed a long, inventive solo introduction on “Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise.” Wearing a mischievous smile, Sebastian churned up some

complex Latin rhythms that inspired a heated exchange with Butler, who seemed to enjoy the exercise.

Singer Leslie Smith joined the quartet on several tunes, including George Shearing’s “Lullaby of Birdland” and a nice rendition of the Bill Withers soul classic “Use Me.” The quartet closed the show with the swinging “Duke’s Place.”

When planning a trip to New Orleans, check out Snug Harbor at www.snugjazz.com.



Photo by Tom Ineck

Henry Butler Quartet performs at Snug Harbor.

Ricky Sebastian on drums.

Butler, who is blind, has a piano style that runs the gamut from bluesy boogie-woogie and fire-breathing bop to Latin rhythms and intense avant-garde excursions. This evening his choices were typically unpredictable, although he favored the bebop period, beginning with Gigi Gryce’s “Minority.” Butler seemed especially fond of the quirky constructions of Thelonious Monk, essaying a very fast rendition of “Rhythm-a-ning” that had his bandmates struggling to maintain the



Ed and Loretta Love



Brad Krieger and Cathy Patterson



Friends include Kay Wunderlich, Russ Dantzer, Cynthia Taylor and Greg Harms.

Festival Review

Healdsburg Fest impresses with diversity

By Tom Ineck

HEALDSBURG, Calif.—Having first experienced the small-town ambience and world-class performances of the Healdsburg Jazz Festival in 2009, I had to return for the second half of this year's edition to see if my initial experience was just a lucky fluke. It wasn't. The 12th annual event was just as memorable as the previous one.

For the two-week festival, running June 4-13, artistic director Jessica Felix again had assembled an eclectic lineup of musicians, even reprising the popular Brazilian concert, which this year featured Oscar Castro-Neves, Leny Andrade, Romero Lubambo and Claudia Villela. But it was the second week's series of concerts that most intrigued me—George Cables Trio, Esperanza Spalding, Charlie Haden with Ravi Coltrane and Geri Allen, and a “Keepers of the Flame” finale including Jason Moran and the Bandwagon with special guest Bill Frisell, Gretchen Parlato Group with Taylor Eigsti, and the Dafnis Prieto Quartet with Peter Apfelbaum. The first three performances were booked at the quaint Raven Theater in downtown Healdsburg, which holds just a few hundred people in its intimate confines. The finale, as always, was held outdoors at the Rodney Strong vineyards.

A wonderful pianist and a beautiful human being, Cables is generally underappreciated for his many contributions to the jazz legacy over the decades, but not at the Healdsburg festival, where he is a return favorite. For his June 9 performance at the Raven, he was ably accompanied by bassist Peter Barshay and drummer Jaz Sawyer. The trio's repertoire included sterling renditions ranging from Dizzy Gillespie's “Con Alma” to the standard



Photo by Tom Ineck

Pianist George Cables, bassist Peter Barshay and drummer Jaz Sawyer

Photo by Tom Ineck

Guitarist Christian Foley-Beining, bassist Chris Amberger, saxophonist Paul McCandless and drummer Lorca Hart at the Raven Theater

“Up Jumped Spring” and Cables' own composition “Helen's Song.”

Singer Shea Breaux Wells joined the trio for “Softly, As In a Morning Sunrise,” an Annie Ross novelty called “A Mouse Named Jackie,” “I Remember Clifford,” an original called “Dark Matters,” Tim Buckley's “Song to the Siren,” and “Caravan.” While she possessed a well-trained voice and demonstrated the ability to leap several octaves at a single bound, she failed to give “Caravan” the requisite swing. On the other hand, she delivered the classic Buckley tune with great skill and emotion.



Photo by Kelly McKeen

Esperanza Spalding on electric bass

Opening the evening's festivities with an adventurous set was German-born Healdsburg resident guitarist Christian Foley-Beining, with veteran bassist Chris Amberger, drummer Lorca Hart and special guest Paul McCandless of the group Oregon. Wayne Shorter's “Black Nile” got a nice treatment with McCandless on tenor sax. He switched to soprano sax



Photos by Kelly McKeen

Bassist Charlie Haden (right) gave a profoundly beautiful performance with pianist Geri Allen and saxophonist Ravi Coltrane at the Raven Theater.



for a Latin-tinged Foley-Beining original and an intriguing new arrangement of Lennon and McCartney's "We Can Work It Out." Showing his versatility and distinctive sound, McCandless employed the bass clarinet on the guitarist's ballad "Four Good Friends." Foley-Beining himself proved a capable player, drawing on influences as diverse as Wes Montgomery and Pat Metheny.

Two nights later, the Raven was packed for the return of Esperanza Spalding, who made a big splash at the 2009 festival. Rising from obscurity with her 2008 recording, "Esperanza," the 25-year-old bassist, singer, composer and bandleader is the latest "celebrity" jazz artist, but unlike others she deserves much of the hype. Drawing heavily from the infectious rhythms and melodic lyricism of Brazilian samba and Argentine tango, Spalding melds her classical training with the urban sounds of funk, mainstream jazz and even an occasional foray into free jazz. Her excellent band also featured pianist Leo Genovese, guitarist Ricardo Vogt and drummer Justin Brown. Their willingness and ability to shift gears at a moment's notice was matched by their genuine enjoyment, as they exchanged smiles and laughter throughout the performance.

Among her own compositions,

Spalding also sprinkled unexpected tributes to Abbey Lincoln, Wayne Shorter and even Eric Dolphy. Similarly, she took a new take on the old standard "Let's Fall in Love" and introduced a couple of new originals, including "Cinnamon Dreams."

Finally, she demonstrated her ex-

ited, audience-pleasing performance pairing the master with his young protégés. Using traditional African drums and techniques, they demonstrated polyrhythmic complexity and communal teamwork with a sense of good-natured competitiveness.

By comparison, Saturday evening's headlining concert by bassist Charlie Haden, saxophonist Ravi Coltrane and pianist Geri Allen was solemn and profoundly engaging. On the occasion of Allen's 53rd birthday, the audience greeted her with a round of applause as she took the stage for a couple of solo tunes dedicated to the late keyboard great Hank Jones, who died May 16. She was discreetly joined by Coltrane on tenor sax, then Haden on bass as the trio exhibited a telepathic ability to communicate and respond with deep feeling in a performance that included bop standards, originals, folk melodies and even a rendition of the 1920s Irving Berlin tune "What'll I Do?"

The Healdsburg High School Jazz Band opened with a set of familiar tunes that provided an opportunity for soloists to prove that even a city of just 15,000 people can produce a jazz education curriculum that produces considerable talent. The young guitarist showed special promise, both in his leadership capacity and in his chording and solo improvisation.

As always, the festival went al fresco on its final day, taking residence on the green at the lovely Rodney Strong Vineyards outside of

town. This year, Sunday was a relative broiler for the characteristically mild Northern California, climbing to over 90 degrees by late afternoon.

Considering the intense heat, the day's theme of "Keepers of the Flame" seemed especially apt. But the theme

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Photo by Tom Ineck

Jazz fans seek shelter from the heat under the trees at the Rodney Strong Vineyards.

traordinary range and scattling ability by dividing the audience for a "sing-along." Of course, she left everyone struggling in her wake as they attempted to mimic her rhythmic, virtuosic vocalese.

As an opening act for Spalding, popular local drummer and educator Tacuma King led his Children's Percussion Workshop students in a spir-

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was intended to convey the sense that some contemporary jazz artists are preserving and distilling the long legacy of the music while crafting a unique and personal sound in the moment and suggesting where jazz might be headed.

Multi-instrumentalist Peter Apfelbaum has always marched to a different drummer. His legendary Hieroglyphics Ensemble drew on an array of world music influences from West Africa to the Caribbean, as well as the urban American sounds of funk, blues, rock and mainstream jazz. Kicking off the “Keepers of the Flame” concert as a featured member of the Dafnis Prieto Si O Si Quartet, Apfelbaum was among like-minded progressives of a decidedly Afro-Cuban bent.

Since his arrival on the New York City jazz scene in 1999, Prieto has been a highly sought-after drummer, working in ensembles led by Don Byron, Steve Coleman, Henry Threadgill and Apfelbaum. The Cuban possesses a virtuosic grasp of polyrhythmic percussion that was on full display for the opening performance at Rodney Strong. Rounding out the quartet were the equally impressive Cuban pianist Manuel Valera and a German bassist named Johannes Vandenmuller.

Much of the Si O Si Quartet’s program was taken from their 2009 release, “Live at Jazz Standard NYC,” including the Prieto compositions “Si o Si,”



Jason Moran (above) led his trio in a set that also featured special guest Bill Frisell (right) on guitar.

“Claveteo,” “Seven by Seven,” “Ilu-Uli,” and “Trio Absolute.” The time signatures were typically mind-boggling in their degree of difficulty, with Prieto frequently dividing and subdividing the beat, but the band never wavered or hesitated. Their ability to mix complexity with a sense of fun reminded me of Bill Bruford’s Earthworks, another drummer-led quartet with the same instrumentation. Apfelbaum usually alternated between tenor and soprano saxophones, but “Seven by Seven” featured him and Valera hauntingly harmonizing on melodicas. In his percussive, driving style and dazzling technique, Valera at times reminded the listener of Gonzalo Rubalcaba. The leader introduced “Trio Absolute” with an amazing vocalized percussion interlude that epitomized his rare sense of rhythm.

In need of some shade and a cold beverage, I left the concert grounds during the performance by the Gretchen Parlato Group, which also featured



Photos by Tom Ineck

young pianist Taylor Eigsti. A Los Angeles native, Parlato won the 2004 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Vocals Competition, and has received raves for her debut recording.

After conserving my energy and reviving myself, I was prepared for headliners Jason Moran and the Bandwagon, a trio that has remained intact for a decade, a rare occurrence in today’s competitive jazz world. In that time, Moran has established himself as one of the most original and adventurous pianists in modern music, while drawing on past influences like Thelonious Monk, Jaki Byard and even Cecil Taylor. Bassist Tarus Mateen and drummer Nasheet Waits have proven themselves the perfect foils for Moran’s expression. However, it was the added attraction that most intrigued me. Billed as the trio’s special guest, guitarist Bill Frisell seemed an odd choice playing “second fiddle” to a well-established group sound.

To some extent, that’s exactly the role the eclectic and prolific improviser played, preferring to create electronic



Manuel Valera, Johannes Vandenmuller, Peter Apfelbaum and Dafnis Prieto

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Concert Review

Yoshi's brings out the best in Holland quintet

By Tom Ineck

OAKLAND, Calif.—The Dave Holland Quintet was closing a three-night run at the legendary Yoshi's jazz club on the Sunday evening of my arrival in the Bay area. The ensemble typically delivers a technically dazzling and transcendently cerebral experience, but perhaps because of the long weekend stand at this familiar and beloved venue, they seemed particularly at ease and adventurous for the 7 p.m. June 6 performance.

Always a generous bandleader, bassist Holland allowed plenty of self-expression by his bandmates—quintet veterans Steve Nelson on vibes, Robin Eubanks on trombone and Chris Potter on saxophones, and relative newcomer Nate Smith on drums. “Pathways,” the title track from the current Holland release—which features an octet live at Birdland in New York City—served as an introduction to all the players, both their individual talents and their incredible group rapport.

Nelson switched to marimba and Smith set the stage for the rhythmically complex “Jugglers Parade,” from the band’s 1999 masterpiece “Prime Directive.” It is a testament to the quintet’s staying power and continuing sense of adventure that the tune still produces musical surprises after more than a decade on the playlist. Potter on soprano



The Yoshi's marquee advertises current and upcoming attractions.

sax creatively harmonized with Eubanks before the trombonist took off on a long solo statement. Holland’s own solo was a masterwork of rhythmic cohesion that led back to the intricate main theme.

“Not for Nothin’,” from the 2001 release of the same name, was a funky number that gave Smith a chance to excel, not only as masterful timekeeper but inventive drum soloist. His meaty contributions provided provocative transitions between statements from the tenor sax, trombone, vibes and bass. The pensive ballad “Make Believe” was an opportunity for all to create and build

humility, harmonizing with subtle, but interesting chords progressions and occasional single-note phrases. Still, those of us who admire his ability to create intense heat in rock-style attacks were hungry for more. As one impatient listener shouted near the end of the performance, “Take off the handcuffs!”



Dave Holland Quintet are (from left) Nate Smith, Robin Eubanks, Dave Holland, Steve Nelson, Chris Potter.

on the tune’s lush harmonies. A moody, searching Eubanks solo led naturally to Potter’s insinuating soprano sax, which deftly wound its way between Nelson’s ringing vibes and Holland’s stately bass lines.

Eubanks’ composition “Metamorphose” featured the trombonist, but not until Holland and Smith had established a funky foundation. As an encore, the band dedicated “Easy Does It” to the people of New Orleans. Usually a post-modernist in approach, Potter seemed to pay homage to the great Crescent City soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet. Holland anchored the entire affair from the bass, frequently signaling his approval with a beaming smile. The crowd responded with frantic, delightful ovations that let the band know they were among friends.

Having taken the ferry from downtown San Francisco to the dock at Jack London Square in Oakland, it was a quick stroll from the club for the return trip, a wonderful way to finish the evening. My thanks go to Terri Hinte, who joined me for dinner and the show at Yoshi’s, even though she was preparing to embark on a five-day sojourn to NYC.

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background esthetics and trigger looped phrases rather than simply cutting loose on guitar. Not surprising, the piano trio communicated among themselves with the sensitivity of a threesome that has performed and recorded for 10 years.

Frisell was left to fill in the spaces, which he did with typical creativity and

Photo by Tom Ineck

Courtesy Photo

Festival Review

Saturday in the Park with Santana and Winwood

By Grace Sankey-Berman

SIOUX CITY, Iowa—It was Saturday July 3. Eight of us packed into two cars and with great anticipation for a good time we headed to Sioux City to see Carlos Santana and Steve Winwood in concert. The line up looked great and the price was right—free!

On our way we stopped for breakfast at the busy and friendly Penny's Diner in Missouri Valley, Iowa. I enjoyed the décor. The pictures on the wall were of old Hollywood and old magazine advertisements. They also had photos of celebrities who had dined there, one of whom was Ziggy Marley. We even ventured into the town's visitors center for some fresh cherry juice.

This was the 20th anniversary of

the Saturday in the Park Music Festival at Grandview Park. In 1991, Dave Bernstein, Adam Feiges and Tom

looked back. Over the years the festival grew, headlining acts like the Neville Brothers, and B.B. King among others. This year was no exception with Santana—the main act in 1994—returning for an encore performance in front of an estimated crowd of 25,000-30,000.

Photo by Elizabeth Nelson



The travelers make a lunch stop at Penny's Diner in Missouri Valley.

Grueskin co-founded the festival with the goal of just getting a headliner. It was so successful that 5,000 people showed up and had a riot. They never

temperatures, he lay quietly under a chair, occasionally looking around to see what the excitement was about, taking a drink of water and going back to sleep.

The festival had the usual variety of food, from Mexican to Greek, BBQ, funnel cakes, turkey drumsticks, pizza and of course the beer garden, of which we gladly partook before settling down to enjoy the music.

The festival opened at 12:05 p.m. with punk rocker Ron Emory, followed by South Dakota's Native American blues rockers Indigenous, and Cajun fiddler Amanda Shaw. Then came an impressive California band called Fitz & the Tantrums. They were dressed in black and white like the Blues Brothers. This band had a combustible old-sounding style, with Motown influence. Yet it was refreshingly new, a sound that was hard to ignore. It was espe-

Photo by Elizabeth Nelson



An audience of some 30,000 attended the 2010 Saturday in the Park festival.



Photo by Al J. Lalkaitis

Steve Winwood

cially unique because the band did not have any guitars and I did not miss it.

Next up was Michael Franti & Spearhead. Franti was very interactive with the audience, running into the crowd barefoot—he has been shoeless for 10 years!—in a very hilly landscape while singing. He is obviously in very good shape from years of practicing yoga. His top 40 pop hit “Say Hey” got the crowd singing a long, clapping and dancing.

By this time, the excitement was building in anticipation of Steve Winwood, so we moved closer to the stage. I was in line for water as Winwood took the stage, and I heard his voice blaring from speakers, singing his hit “Gimme Some Lovin’.” I got my

water as soon as I could and headed back to the spot my girlfriends Ruthann Nahorny and Elizabeth Nelson were holding for me. The fans were whistling and yelling, “Steve, we love you.” Winwood looked good and sounded even better.

He did not disappoint. The five-piece band went right to work playing song after song, Winwood alternating between organ and guitar. Their sound was clean and tight. He did not say much; it was all about the music.

I gave up my spot near the stage



Photo by Elizabeth Nelson

Carlos Santana

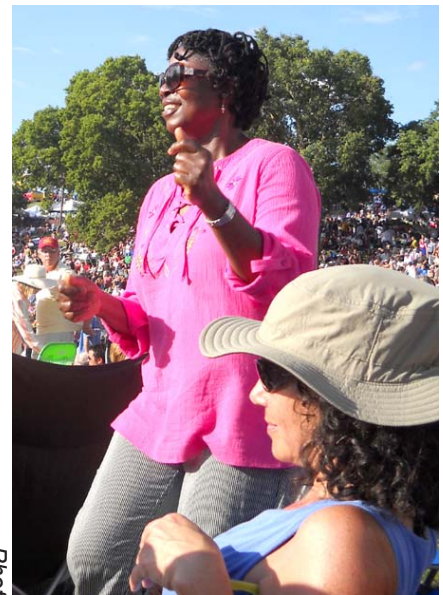


Photo by Al J. Lalkaitis

Grace Sankey-Berman rocking out to the sounds of Santana.

because I could no longer stand the cloud of smoke that kept coming. It gave me a chance to hydrate and get ready for the main act—Carlos Santana!

Santana’s band was 10 men strong, with two horn players, two sets of congas and a powerful, master drummer who played relentlessly—with a sound so deep and hypnotic it took my breath away—two more on guitar and two on vocals. Santana did what he does best, seducing the crowd with his distinctive guitar sound. From “Black Magic Woman” to “Samba Pa Ti,” he kept the crowd on their feet.

“This is what we tried to do at Woodstock!” Santana said. Towards the end he sat down to play some slow tunes, seamlessly transitioning from his Latin rhythms to a more contemplative and jazzy style. The Grammy-winning legend also chimed in on the socio-political issues of the day, from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to legalization of marijuana, Fox News and the new immigration law in Arizona. But most important, he took the audience on an unforgettable musical journey that spanned most of his career and left us wanting more.

The festival ended with a big bang of fireworks...how appropriate.



Photo by Al J. Lalkaitis

Guitarist Carlos Santana and the band headline the festival in the park.

Concert Review

Jerry Hahn returns to Lincoln with great guitar

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—More than five years ago, Butch Berman brought guitarist Jerry Hahn here because he loved the rare, legendary and self-titled 1970 recording by the Jerry Hahn Brotherhood, a brilliant mix of jazz, r&b and rock influences that still defies categorization.

What we heard during Hahn's February 2005 stay in Lincoln was a highly refined jazz guitar style that eschewed the fuzz tone and rock riffs of those earlier days. As witnessed during a June 29 performance with his Kansas City-based quartet at the final Jazz in June concert of the year, Hahn continues to develop that style in ways that continue to make him unique—and underappreciated.

He still knows his way around blues changes, but Hahn seldom relies on conventional variations, as he proved on the opener, his original composition "12 Bars with Entertainment." He is a master string-bender who often uses the technique to make humorous statements, a mood utterly lacking in most blues guitarists. After taking the first solo, he allowed everyone in the band a chance to express himself, from Joe Cartwright on piano to a bowed bass solo by Tyrone Clarke (with Hahn comping like Freddie Green) to an intense drum solo by Mike Warren.

An admirer of the gospel music tradition—a recent Hahn CD is called "Jazz Hymns"—the guitarist launched into a waltz rendition of "That Old Rugged Cross," with equal parts respectful homage and intriguing reharmonization. Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way" received a sensitive treatment by all, with an especially engaging solo by Cartwright,



Jerry Hahn at 2010 Jazz in June

who traded passages of the familiar melody with Hahn. The beautiful ballad "Each and Every Day" again proved Hahn's ability as a composer, whether it's the blues, uptempo bop or romantic song-craft.

Likewise, Hahn's "Spiffy" was a funky r&b tune that provided ample solo opportunities for Cartwright, Clarke, and Warren. Closing the first set was the blues shuffle "Down to the Wire," a spirited affair that left the audience of 5,000 hungry for more.

Hahn displayed his full imaginative prowess on his arrangement of the standard "My Romance," turning the ballad every way but loose, shifting uptempo and delivering a cliché-free guitar solo. The guitarist dug into Bobby Timmons' "Moanin'" with gusto, urging his comrades to follow suit. The quartet returned to the hymnal for a bluesy "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

"Cool Blues," a Miles Davis favorite, featured a wonderful piano solo



Photos by Tom Ineck

The Jerry Hahn Group (clockwise, from bottom) is Joe Cartwright, Mike Warren, Tyrone Clarke and Hahn.

by Cartwright and an imaginative arco bass solo that humorously quoted from Joe Zawinul's "Birdland." Hahn closed the concert with two selections from his great 1995 release "Time Changes." Up first was his self-penned theme song, a whimsical but devilishly difficult workout called "The Method." The audience insisted on an encore and Hahn delivered with "Stolen Moments," the Oliver Nelson standard that elegantly combines a swing motif and the blues. The guitar work on this closer was, indeed, an elegant display of chording technique.

As on his 2005 visit, Hahn arrived in town a day earlier to conduct a guitar workshop for Dietze Music House. About two dozen followers, including fathers with aspiring guitarist sons in tow, attended the 90-minute session at the east Lincoln location. In his usual good-natured way, Hahn deftly kept everyone's attention with a combination of instruction, demonstration and informal question-and-answer. Using a loop system to layer a lead guitar line over the rhythm chords, he essayed several tunes, including "Take the A Train," "How High the Moon" and "The Shadow of Your Smile."

Concert Review

Hagenbach warms to enthusiastic audience

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—It was sunny and mild on the evening of June 15, ideal weather for Angela Hagenbach and her sextet as they took the stage for the third weekly concert at Jazz in June. The audience of several thousand responded with enthusiasm to a performance emphasizing the singer's considerable range and her penchant for Latin rhythms.

The two-hour concert also drew heavily from Hagenbach's current release, a tribute to the tunes of Johnny Mandel, Michel Legrand and Henry Mancini called "The Way They Make Me Feel." Her debut on Resonance Records, it is likely to garner more well-deserved attention nationwide than any of her previous indie releases.

Hagenbach was backed by her longtime rhythm section, consisting of Roger Wilder on piano, Steve Rigazzi on bass and Doug Auwarter on drums. Guitarist Danny Embrey is always a tasteful addition as a singer's accompanist, having loong worked with Karrin Allyson. But it was tenor saxophonist Matt Otto who provided most of the surprises. A recent migrant from the West Coast to Kansas City, he demonstrated admirable technique, a sumptuously breathy and romantic tone, and a rare sense of restraint.

Although the opener, "It Had Better Be Tonight," is a Mancini composition, it does not appear on the new CD. Hagenbach recorded it for a 2001 release called "Weaver of Dreams." It still sounded fresh in the hands of the versatile singer and her Kansas City cohorts. Likewise, Legrand's "Watch What Happens" is from a previous re-

recording, 2004's "Poetry of Love." Embrey took his first turn in the spotlight with a beautiful lilting solo.

The band went uptempo with



The Angela Hagenbach Sextet featured song's from her latest release, "The Way They Make Me Feel."

Legrand's "Old Lovers," allowing Otto his first solo and setting up a duo teaming Hagenbach and Otto in unison. From the new release came Mandel's lively Brazilian romp "Cinnamon and Clove," a great vehicle for Wilder's contrapuntal lines and Embrey's imaginative guitar solo. Taken as a mid-tempo swinger, "Pennies From Heaven" featured an Otto solo reminiscent of Stan Getz.

Rigazzi switched to electric bass for a funky rendition of Gershwin's

"Summertime" that had everyone trading four-bar breaks with Hagenbach's r&b-influenced vocals. The singer demonstrated her lithe scatting technique on a fast-paced "You Do Something to Me," also from her CD "Weaver of Dreams."

The second half opened with a spirited version of "Bye Bye Country Boy," a tribute to the composer, the late singer Blossom Dearie. Returning to the new CD and the rhythms of Brazil, Hagenbach launched into a smooth bossa nova arrangement of Mandel's "Quietly There," which again fea-

tured a tenor solo by Otto. She reached back to 1994 for a take on the Rodgers and Hammerstein tune "The Sweetest Sounds," which appeared on her CD "Come Fly with Me."

Chick Corea's "You're Everything" was an interesting choice. Dedicated to the Jazz in June audience, it was the perfect setting for Hagenbach's sultry lower range and Wilder's skillful improvisations on the Yamaha baby grand, an electric model that is, no doubt, easier to keep in tune at an outdoor concert than its acoustic counterpart.

The Kern standard "Yesterdays" provided another chance for Hagenbach and Otto to join in a duet. The singer returned to the "Poetry of Love" CD for the standard "Never Let Me Go." Recorded in 2004 with saxophonist Jimmy Heath, it proved a good fit for Otto's tenor. Hagenbach finished with a return to Brazil for Jobim's classic "Agua de Beber," also from her debut release "Come Fly with Me." The rhythmic tour de force was a workout for the whole band and provided Otto with another opportunity to shine.

Photos by Tom Ineck

Concert Review

New-Trad Octet mixes a musical gumbo

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—As if custom-ordered to create the right ambiance for the Crescent City sounds of Jeff Newell's New-Trad Octet, the temperature for the band's June 22 performance hovered near 90 and the saturated air hung heavy with humidity. Welcome to Nebraska's version of a New Orleans summer's eve!

The oppressive heat and threatening weather kept some people home, but 4,500 made the effort and were amply rewarded with the best concert of the 2010 Jazz in June series, with just one Tuesday to go.

In its ambitious, multi-cultural repertoire, the eight-piece ensemble summoned musical traditions from yesterday and today and from near and far.

The resulting gumbo challenged some listeners' preconceptions and helped students of music to make the connections, all while instilling a sense of fun.

The band began at a slow-drag tempo with "St. Louis Blues," the classic tune in which W.C. Handy himself combined musical traditions and rhythmic influences. It accelerated to a New Orleans street-marching beat featuring a trumpet solo by Victor Garcia, at 27 the youngest member of the octet. Tuba player Mike Hogg provided provocative counterpoint to Ryan Shultz's bass trumpet solo, and Steve Million managed to "funkafize" the whole thing with soulful keyboard licks as the front line accompanied with assorted percussion.

Newell paid homage to an early influence with his composition "Boots: To the Man Who Ruined My Life," on which he captured Boots Randolph's trademark sound on alto sax—an infectious mix of catchy melody and

country twang. Guitarist Neal Alger added to the effect with his solo. Sousa entered the picture with Newell's brilliant arrangement of "The Manhattan Beach March," complete with a Haitian beat, horns blaring like a traffic jam and a cooking rhythm section.

Among Newell's many musical



Jeff Newell's New-Trad Octet at Jazz in June

interests is a fascination with traditional American hymns. Again mixing traditions, he gave "There's Power in the Blood" a backbeat that drew soulful solos from Million on organ and piano and from Alger on guitar. The leader then joined drummer Rick Vitek for a duo interlude before taking an inspired alto solo that squalled and honked with r&b fervor, as though preaching the gospel from a jazz pulpit. Million's "Crazy Five Jive" was a complex tune in 5/4 time that had the composer soloing B-3 style, followed by a roaring bass trumpet solo and a section in which the brass riffed madly over Vitek's powerful percussion work.

The tune morphed into a New Orleans-style funk before gradually deconstructing with brassy abandon and reemerging as Bobby Watson's lively "Heckle and Jeckle." It was a perfect vehicle for Newell's lithe and supple alto sax playing as he soloed against

tuba and rhythm. Garcia took an exciting solo, demonstrating a bright tone and powerful lungs.

Throughout the evening, electric bassist Tim Fox and Hogg on tuba defied their instruments' traditional roles, with one playing rhythmically and the other more melodically. Here Fox got

his opportunity to solo, while Hogg provided counterpoint. The set ended with "I Like It Like That," a tune from The Dirty Dozen Brass Band songbook that featured great ensemble playing with a calypso beat and a tuba solo. In the street-marching tradition, several members of the band wound their way through the audience, but no second-liners accepted the invitation to join them.

The New-Trad Octet's connection to New Orleans was even more evident in their performance of "Struttin' with Some Barbecue," made famous by Louis Armstrong. Of course, Newell's version contained a pronounced backbeat and added a distinctive rumba rhythm. As though possessed with the spirit of Satchmo, Garcia's solo leaped several octaves to reach the high notes and snarled with confidence before returning to the theme.

On Sousa's "Washington Post March," organ, guitar and bass created a funky undercurrent for another unconventional arrangement. Newell's "St. Gabriel Parish," a tribute to those who did not survive Hurricane Katrina, had an appropriately mournful tone. The most formal arrangement of the evening came on "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans?" Alto

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Concert Review

Otro Mundo sylistically sprinkled and sliced

By Jesse Starita

LINCOLN, Neb.—Under the yawning light of a June 8 evening, Otro Mundo sprinkled and spliced. A pinch of rumba, a dash of samba, a drop of mambo, blended to form a pureed aural tour of 20th century Latin music. Occupying Sheldon’s stage for the second Jazz in June outing, the San Diego quintet played seamlessly, so much so that there was often little distinction between deft execution and insipid interplay. After an erratic opening Tuesday—massive thunderstorms forced the Darryl White Quintet indoors—Otro Mundo did at least lend week two a calming predictability.

The proceedings began appropriately with Miles Davis’ “New Rhumba.” A formula was rapidly established. Bassist Kevin Freeby, guitarist Dusty Brough and percussionist Steve Haney—Otro Mundo’s founding members—anchored the rhythm. Drummer Julian Cantell and flutist Rebecca Kleinmann added texture. The quintet navigated through an expansive opening set, including “Pica Pica,” a traditional Venezuelan waltz, and “Para Sempre,” from contemporary mandolinist Hamilton de Holanda. Regrettably, they rarely interrupted their own listless improvisations to cajole and banter with the audience, a move which would have added desperately needed personality to their efforts. Kleinmann,

New-Trad continued from page 18

sax, bass trumpet and electric bass provided the solemn introduction, followed by Garcia’s more optimistic trumpet. The whole band returned on the theme with respect for the city and the musical traditions to which they owe much.

For an encore, the band served up a crowd-pleasing “Amazing Grace,” done funky, New Orleans style and fea-



Photo by Chi Kaku

San Diego-based Otro Mundo brought Latin rhythms to Jazz in June stage.

the only chair- and sunglass-free member, stood over the hunched bunch, vigorously blowing her flute—perhaps hoping to enliven the band as much as the audience.

Yet, on rare occasions, they sensibly abandoned this generic template. Bassist Freeby slapped, popped and pounded life into Chick Corea’s “Armando’s Rhumba.” A bead of sweat patiently rolled down his forehead, a refreshing sign that Otro Mundo was, in fact, of *this* world. And for her part Kleinmann used her flute persuasively, the humid air delicately absorbing her warm solos. Haney and Cantell drummed up sprightly exchanges, ending the first set with a well-measured and slow-fading percussive dialogue. Their self-imposed sedation had vanished, at least temporarily.

Set two began with a perfunctory

turing a rocking John Scofield-inspired guitar solo by Alger, and a bop-inspired alto solo by Newell. Sousa’s “Stars and Stripes Forever” was dedicated to former University of Nebraska band leader Jack R. Snyder, a teacher from Newell’s early Nebraska days. It was a nice finishing touch from a native son to a beloved mentor.

rendition of Paco de Lucia’s “Entre dos Aguas.” Next up: “Kayla,” an out-of-left-field Middle Eastern number that eagerly butted heads with the Latin heavy set. Brough tilted up his nylon-stringed acoustic guitar, playing it almost as a bass. Cantell’s drum set became tighter, adopting a march-like cadence. And the flute, a perennial favorite in Middle Eastern music, fit naturally, like the missing piece in a jigsaw puzzle that had just been discovered.

Otro Mundo are a work in progress. The agenda tab on their website (www.otromundomusic.com) lists a February CD release party and Jazz in June as their only publicized engagements. A deficit of cohesiveness and charisma is understandable when you only play together once every three months. More crowds, more exposure and more experimentation would deliver their biggest need—an element of passion that collides with their impeccable technique.

A crimson sun descended just after 9 p.m. Otro Mundo took off their sunglasses. Freeby unfurled the opening lines of The Buena Vista Social Club’s “Chan Chan.” One of the band members appealed for audience hand claps. A response pinged and echoed through the verdant shrubs. And as the light faded, Otro Mundo finally emitted a glow.

Concert Review

Darryl White Group rewards soggy audience

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—The Jazz in June concert series began its 2010 season with a washout, as severe thunderstorms kept thousands of fans at home on June 1 and sent about 300 scurrying for the relative comfort of the Sheldon Museum of Art auditorium to hear the Darryl White Group.

The lucky few who braved the elements were rewarded with a stunning performance of originals and standards over two long sets. Trumpeter White and most of his cohorts are well known to Jazz in June regulars, having played there just two years ago. Among the usual suspects were pianist Jeff Jenkins, bassist Craig Akins, drummer Brandon Draper and conguero Michael Pujado, who arrived in time for the second set only.

The single unfamiliar face was that of saxophonist Dick Oatts, who is best known for his work with the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, the Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra and the fusion group Flim & the BB's. Equally adept on alto and soprano saxophones, he repeatedly illustrated his superb technique and penchant for weaving intricate variations on a theme. Just a few minutes into the opener, his tribute to Joe Henderson called "Owe Joe," he was confidently trading convoluted lines with Draper, an adventurous, all-around percussionist who always welcomes a good challenge.

On "Ancient Memories," the title track of his debut CD of a decade ago, White displayed his trademark warm tone on flugelhorn, making fluid octave leaps before passing it off to Oatts for an alto solo with sensitive accompaniment by Jenkins, Akins and Draper, who kept time on tambourine. The title track from Freddie Hubbard's 1978



Photo by Tom Ineck

Darryl White Group entertains an exclusive audience at Sheldon Museum of Art.

release "Super Blue" had White pairing off with Oatts on soprano. Each took a confident solo, with White reaching high, sustained notes in the manner of the composer.

Oatts introduced the next piece as a tune based on the standard "What's New." He hinted at the original melody during his solo introduction on alto sax, and then fully engaged the changes with White joining him on flugelhorn, followed by a lyrical bass solo. Flugelhorn and piano joined company for a beautiful balladic opening to "Amazing Grace," which soon went uptempo with White switching to trumpet and Oatts on alto sax. Oatts' solo was inspired, deftly voicing unusual harmonic variations on this well-worn tune.

By request, White opened the second half of the concert with an unusual choice, "O Magnum Mysterium," a choral piece by modern classical composer Morten Lauridsen. With trumpet and piano only, the melody had a haunting, elegiac quality that was warmly received, despite its questionable inclusion in a jazz set list. More suited for the occasion was Kenny Garrett's "2 Step,"

which included a wonderful, searching piano solo, followed by Oatts with a keening statement on alto sax. Pujado added considerable rhythmic heat on congas. From the bop songbook came Hank Mobley's bluesy "This I Dig of You," beginning with a piano-bass vamp leading to a statement of the melody on flugelhorn and alto sax. The swinging uptempo nature of the piece inspired outstanding solos by both White and Oatts.

Draper bore down on the New Orleans street beat for a rousing rendition of "When the Saints Go Marching In." At one point, the rhythm section dropped out for some polyphonic playtime on trumpet, alto sax and piano. A standing ovation brought the band back for another Oatts composition, "King Henry." White allowed the composer to front the band for a couple of minutes, returning for a trumpet solo, followed by Oatts quoting from "If I Only Had a Brain." Draper and Pujado also had ample space to mix it up, raising the excitement level and sending everyone home a little dampened by the rain, but certainly not dejected.

Concert Review

Marilyn Maye scores a success with avid fans

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—In the first attempt to sell its concert series directly to the Lincoln market, the Brownville Concert Hall scored an artistic success May 13 with veteran cabaret singer Marilyn Maye and her sterling trio at the lush, downtown Rococo Theatre.

Series organizers are celebrating the 20th year of bringing world-class music to the tiny Missouri River village—Nebraska’s oldest town—and they hope the ambitious outreach effort will encourage music lovers in the state’s two largest urban areas to make future trips to Brownville. With that in mind, they are staging several concerts in Lincoln and Omaha this year, in addition to the regular season at their home venue, a beautifully restored church with excellent acoustics.

I hadn’t seen Maye perform for many years and feared that her considerable vocal technique, vivacity and magnetic stage presence might have declined with age. I needn’t have worried. At 82, she proved herself a showbiz trouper of the old school, running through dozens of tunes from the Great American Songbook without dropping a lyric, telling humorous stories and even demonstrating a couple of high kicks during her performance.

Her accompanists were equally adept at shifting gears from ballads to jazzy swingers. New York-based pianist Tedd Firth also served as music director and arranger. As always, Kansas City bassist Gerald Spaits provided solid grounding and a sure sense of harmony. Drummer Jim Eklof, who has been a Maye sideman for nearly 50 years, delivers clockwork time-keeping and a flair for dramatic punctuation.

Maye is a master at thematic development in the context of a single



Marilyn Maye and bassist Gerald Spaits

performance. From a rainbow-themed medley that included “Look to the Rainbow,” “Over the Rainbow” and “The Rainbow Connection,” she delved into the blues with “I Love Being Here with You” Then she was off on an astounding round of Cole Porter masterpieces—“I Concentrate on You,” “I Get a Kick Out of You,” “It’s Allright with Me,” “It’s Just One of Those Things,” “I’ve Got You Under My Skin,” and “All of You”—all delivered with emotional conviction and jazzy self-assurance.

But it was Johnny Mercer’s lyrical genius that received the most attention, as Maye paid homage with “Day In, Day Out,” “Too Marvelous for Words,” “You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby,” “Jeepers Creepers,” “I’m Old-Fashioned,” “Clear Out of This World,” “That Old Black Magic,” and “The Summer Wind.” She cleverly ended the first set with the obscure “Drinkin’ Again” and the more familiar “One for My Baby (and One More for the Road),” introducing the tunes with

references to the lyricist’s penchant for alcohol and her own experience with over-imbibing former husbands.

But Maye had just begun. In the second half of the show, she picked up the Mercer thread with the heartbreakers “Blues in the Night,” “Guess Who I Saw Today,” and “I Won’t Be Around to Pick Up the Pieces,” highlighted by a Spaits bass solo. Firth got a solo spotlight during a swinging arrangement of “Come Rain or Come Shine.”

The Mercer love-fest continued with film favorites “Moon River,” “Days of Wine and Roses,” “In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening,” “Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe,” and “Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive.” Ever the romantic, Maye led to a strong finish with “I Remember You,” “I Thought About You,” “Dream,” “Time to Hit the Road to Dreamland,” and “Anyplace I Hang My Hat Is Home.” On “It’s Today,” a great closer from the musical “Mame,” Mercer’s lyrics are typically clever, but profound, a plea to live in the moment:

“It’s a time for making merry, and so I’m for making hay. Tune the grand up, call the cops out, strike the band up, pull the stops out. Hallelujah! It’s today!”

An artistic success, the concert drew only a small crowd of about 75 avid Maye fans, many of whom were in her approximate age demographic, not a hopeful sign for building a future audience in Brownville. The Berman Music Foundation has long been aware of this underappreciated gem 90 minutes southeast of Lincoln, and recently awarded the concert series a \$1,000 grant. In the hope that others will take the hint and make the trip to Brownville, we will continue to inform our readers with concert previews and reviews.

Photo by Tom Ineck

Concert Review

NJO and Bob Krueger pay tribute to Basie

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—There were horns a-plenty April 13 when the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra paid tribute to the riffing swing music of Count Basie, aided in part by NJO trumpeter Bob Krueger and one of his trumpeter sons, Tommy.

The program began with a Ben Webster-Lester Young-style tenor saxophone duel on Neal Hefti's "Whirlybird," with Cully Joyce and Paul Haar taking the roles of Webster and Young. NJO composer Mark Benson contributed "Ides of March," a lushly romantic ballad featuring saxophones, two bass clarinets and two flutes in unison. They returned to the Hefti songbook for a very slow version of "Lil' Darlin'," with Brad Obbink soloing on muted trumpet.

Tommy Krueger, named the NJO's young jazz artist of the year, took the stage for Freddie Hubbard's "Red Clay," arranged by Dave Sharp. Krueger showed great control and warmth on the flugelhorn and was ably assisted by Andy Hall on electric bass, Cully Joyce on tenor sax and Peter Bouffard on guitar. The focus remained on trumpet players with "Thad Had," a John LaBarbera tribute to Thad Jones on which Krueger briskly articulated the jazz-waltz time and the complex melody line.

Frank Foster's "Blues in D Flat," also known as "Blues in Hoss Flat" or "Blues in Frankie's Flat," was shared by Bob Krueger on plunger-muted trumpet, Paul Haar on tenor sax and Todd Thatcher on trombone, with the rest of the brass swinging soft to loud, Basie-style. Thad Jones' own "Three and One" featured the



Photos by Tom Ineck

Tommy Krueger (right) takes a solo on flugelhorn accompanied by pianist Tom Harvill, guitarist Peter Bouffard and bassist Andy Hall.



Father and son Bob Krueger and Tommy Krueger lock in playful combat, trading tricky licks and high notes.

trio of Krueger on flugelhorn, Scott Vicroy on baritone sax and Andy Hall on bass. Krueger switched to trumpet, first with Harmon mute then open horn and finally back to the mute, for the Sammy Nestico favorite "How Sweet It Is." Long an essential element of the NJO sound, Krueger's playing was typically fluent and swift, doubling the tempo with ease.

Ellington's "Concerto for Cootie" again showcased Krueger's plunger-muted trumpet, this time in the classic growling style of the song's namesake, Cootie Williams. The lilting jazz waltz "Get Up" is the composition of yet another trumpeting Krueger son, Paul, written while he was still a student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. In this arrangement for septet, it featured the elder Krueger on trumpet, Haar on tenor sax, Thatcher on trombone, Bouffard on guitar, Tom Harvill on piano, Hall on bass and Greg Ahl on drums.

Wayne Bergeron's tribute to Maynard Ferguson, "Maynard and Waynard," closed the concert as Krueger father and son locked in playful combat, trading tricky licks and high notes. To name the victor and risk opprobrium from either would be unwise for this reviewer. Suffice it to say that the future of the NJO is likely in good hands.

Concert Calendar

NJO, Lied Center and Folly Theater schedule

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—Jazz and other great American music are on the bill in coming months at various area venues. Mark your calendars and support live music!

After a year of financial struggle, re-assessment and re-trenchment in which most of its concerts featured members of the band the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra is back with one of its strongest seasons in years. It all begins Oct. 15 at the Lied Center for Performing Arts, where the NJO again will feature famed trumpeter **Wayne Bergeron**, who was in less than stellar condition when he appeared with the band last October. Having just suffered a lip injury that curtailed his playing, he had to rely on able protégé Willie Murillo. Rest assured, Bergeron fans will hear from the man himself at the Lied.



Wayne Bergeron

Courtesy Photo

On Dec. 14, local actress and singer **Melissa Lewis** will join the NJO for its annual Christmas concert at the Cornhusker Marriott. Well known for her skills on the theatrical stage, Lewis is also garnering raves as a vocalist of formidable technique and crowd-pleasing showmanship.

Multi-instrumentalist **Scott Robinson** will appear as guest soloist with the NJO Feb. 18 at the Marriott. A 1981 graduate of the Berklee College of Music in Boston, he joined its staff the next year to become the youngest faculty member in the school's history. He stayed until 1984, when he

moved to New York City, later working with Buck Clayton, Lionel Hampton, and Paquito D'Rivera. He has also written film music and has been awarded four fellowships by the National Endowment for the Arts. Among the unusual reed instruments he plays are the contrabass saxophone and C-Melody saxophone.

On April 26 veteran NJO bassist **Andy Hall** will be featured in "Ace of Bass," a program devoted to the music of Jaco Pastorius as arranged for big band by

Peter Graves, whose band Pastorius played with when still quite young. Graves has produced two all-star CD collections of his big-band arrangements of Pastorius tunes, 2003's "Word of Mouth Revisited" and 2006's "The Word is Out!" Hall's aggressive, virtuosic bass style, which owes much to Pastorius, should be ideal for these challenging tunes.

In addition to the NJO appearance Oct. 15, the upcoming Lied Center season includes several other notable jazz concerts. **Branford Marsalis** and **Terence Blanchard** will team up for a Feb. 25 performance that brings together two New Orleans natives who are among the leaders in mainstream

jazz of the 21st century.

A concert Dec. 11 will feature the **Boston Brass and Brass All-Stars Big Band** in a holiday tribute, with 14 horns and a rhythm section performing the famous Stan Kenton Christmas carols and other holiday hits. The ensemble's recording of the Kenton pieces was released in 2005.

More than 26 years after the death of its founder, the legendary **Count Basie Orchestra** continues to thrill audiences with its unique style of blues-based Kansas City swing. The band will appear March 18 at the Lied. Now directed by trombonist Bill Hughes, the band has never stopped touring and recording. Its most recent release is "Basie Is Back," recorded live in Japan in 2005.

Down the road about 80 miles, the Brownville Concert Hall continues its 20th anniversary season with additional performances booked in Lincoln and

Omaha. World-class cabaret singer **KT Sullivan** and singer-pianist **Mark Nadler** will perform Sept. 9 at the Rococo Theater in Lincoln and Sept. 10-12 in Brownville.

If you want to venture still further down the road, the



KT Sullivan and Mark Nadler

Courtesy Photo

Folly Theater in Kansas City continues another excellent jazz concert series with performances Sept. 25 by **The Bad Plus**, Oct. 14 by the **Dave Brubeck Quartet**, Dec. 10 by singer **Sachal Vasandani**, Jan. 15 by the **Earl Klugh Quartet**, April 2 by **Joe Lovano Us Five**, and May 7 by **Karrin Allyson**.

Memorial

Benny Powell's passing reunites trio of friends

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—As **Berman Music Foundation** consultant Russ Dantzler noted, a trio of BMF friends who also were frequent collaborators were reunited with the June 26 death of trombonist Benny Powell at age 80.

Preceding Powell were bassist Earl May in January 2008 (also at 80), then Jane Jarvis in January of this year at age 94.

The three shared the stage here on Oct. 8, 1999, at the Cornhusker Hotel, a fundraiser for the Lincoln Seniors Foundation that was partially funded by the BMF. “Lifelong Living and All That Jazz” was the theme that night, and it proved to be a valid philosophy for Powell, Jarvis, and May. The trio at that time had already lived a combined 225 years, and much of that time was spent performing the music they loved.

When the trio received a standing ovation before playing the first note, Powell quipped, “We chose the right time to become older persons.” As I later wrote, the performance “joyfully illustrated that creativity need not be stifled by longevity. Indeed, it offered ample evidence that the creative arts can help prolong a youthful approach to life.”

The trombonist was also a fine vocalist of great sensitivity. That night in 1999, he sang the Jarvis composition “I’ll Make it This Time,” a tune the pianist wrote for a Broadway production. Later in the evening, Powell used his trombone to state the melody of the Jarvis-penned tearjerker “Here Lies My Love,” another tune written for the stage. Powell summed up the poignancy of the evening (and of aging) in his vocal rendering of “For All We Know.”



Butch Berman and Benny Powell

Born in New Orleans, March 1, 1930, Powell was admired equally as a performer and an educator. He attended Alabama State Teachers College before going on the road with the King Kolax band. He also worked with Ernie Fields and Lionel Hampton until joining the Basie band in 1951. He remained with Basie for 12 years, winning *DownBeat* magazine’s critics’ poll in 1956.

After leaving Basie, Powell was became a popular studio musician, making many small group dates and big band sessions. He played in the Broadway pit orchestra for “Funny Girl” in 1964. As an occasional actor, he had a small role in “A Man Called Adam” (1966), starring Sammy Davis Jr., and played in the onscreen Basie band in “Blazing Saddles” in 1974.

Powell’s adventurous sound bridged the gap between swing, bop and world music, later working with Abdullah Ibrahim, Randy Weston and John Carter.

As an educator, Powell helped to direct the Jazzmobile program, which brought jazz to disadvantaged areas of New York City. He also



File Photos

Trombonist Benny Powell joined bassist Earl May and pianist Jane Jarvis (above) for a 1999 concert.

taught at the New School University until the close of his career. He was named a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master.

Powell died at Roosevelt Hospital in New York City, apparently of a heart attack, while recovering from successful spinal surgery.

Three times divorced, Powell is survived by his daughter, Demetra, and grandchildren, Faith and Kyle, and by his sister, Elizabeth.

A traditional jazz service was held July 12 at St. Peter’s Church in New York City. Among those who performed were Randy Weston and African Rhythms and Nextep, a group featuring saxophonist Frank Wess (the group with whom Powell recorded a 2008 release).

One of Powell’s nieces performed a classical piece on violin. Weston also gave a moving nine-minute eulogy in honor of his longtime friend and bandmate.

“Benny Powell represents the essence of our music,” Weston said. “Our music is more than notes and scales. It’s more than paper and gigs. It’s spirit, and musicians have been given the gift of spirit.”

Tomfoolery

Natural disaster, death, youth and music

By Tom Ineck

Even in the best of times, travel is a process of self-discovery. In the midst of cataclysmic natural disaster and the long-distance death of a loved one, the lessons you learn can assume epic proportions. For me, those lessons usually involve the healing power of music and the importance of friends and family. Of course, you don't have to leave home to appreciate the resilience of life, love and friendship. Three recent events brought these thoughts home.

My wife and I arrived in New Orleans on April 28 for Jazz Fest music, food and fun. But just eight days earlier, the Deepwater Horizon oil rig had exploded, killing 11 people and causing the worst oil spill in U.S. history. Already, experts were predicting the immense scale of ecological damage and economic misery that would follow. With typical fatalism, longtime New Orleans residents, like my cousin Jerry Siefken, took it in stride, mixing a healthy distrust of authority with the sense that life would go on. It was a lesson they had learned many times, most recently in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina nearly wiped the city off the map. What would help them get through the dark days ahead? Music!

In early June I returned to Northern California and the Healdsburg Jazz Festival, where I had spent a week last summer with friends who live near Occidental. While we were in the middle of a particularly profound performance by Charlie Haden, Geri Allen and Ravi Coltrane at the Raven Theater in Healdsburg, I learned that my brother-in-law Bob Doulas had died back in Lincoln. I knew he was near death when I left on the trip and had been in touch with my sister for up-



Cousins Jerry Siefken and Tom Ineck

Photo by Mary Jane Gruba



Tom Ineck, Joe Phillips, Nikki Farrer and Kelly McKeen, friends for 40 years

Photo by Michelle Jensen

dates on his condition. When the call came, my cell phone began to vibrate. Oddly, it felt like the passing of a spirit. What helped me cope with that sad realization? Friends and music!

For the second consecutive year, the Jazz in June concert series offered five Tuesday evening concerts. They ran the gamut from the straight-ahead jazz of trumpeter Darryl White and his excellent combo to the Latin lilt of Otro Mundo to the sensuous vocals of Angela Hagenbach to the New Orleans swagger of Jeff Newell's New-Trad Octet to the progressive guitar work of Jerry Hahn. The last two were especially delightful, allowing us to bring friends of the Berman Music Foundation back to Lincoln after an absence of several years. Newell had not performed here since 2006 and Hahn was

last here in 2005.

Best of all, Newell and Hahn were able to join us at BMF offices for post-concert receptions. The entire New-Trad ensemble partied with us until midnight, and then ventured to the Zoo Bar to sit in with the local Jazzocracy band until closing. Hahn arrived alone, but stayed for two hours, chatting about everything from the foundation's 15-year history to his own 50-year career as a performer, recording artist and music educator.

Among other things, we revisited the meteoric rise and fall of The Jerry Hahn Brotherhood, the legendary quartet that combined elements of jazz, rock and r&b. Hahn, bassist Mel Graves, and drummer George Marsh had been gigging as a jazz trio in the San Francisco Bay area in the late 1960s when they were introduced to the brilliant organist and vocalist Mike Finnigan. Armed with a set of great tunes by Lane Tietgen, Ornette Coleman's "Ramblin'" and a couple of originals by Hahn, they recorded a single self-titled recording on Columbia and toured behind it until the record company promotion fizzled and the money ran out. Left behind are the memories of those lucky few of us who attended a Brotherhood concert. My opportunity came in July 1970 at the band's Denver stop, a performance also attended by a 19-year-old Bill Frisell, who I just saw in June out in California. Serendipity.

It seemed that talking about those events of 40 years ago allowed both Hahn and me to revisit our youth and an exciting period in American pop culture. What was the common bond? Music, of course!

Essay

Charles Mingus and the Racial Mountain

By Tom Ineck

The following essay was written for a class in African-American literature that I took at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln during the spring 2010 semester. It was a mid-term paper required by course instructor Megan Peabody. Since it deals with the music and personal struggle of Charles Mingus, I thought it appropriate for BMF readers. I also liked the idea of recycling the essay for a broader audience. I have altered the scholarly formatting and page citations for a more journalistic approach.

“Our folk music, having achieved world-wide fame, offers itself to the genius of the great individual American composer who is to come.”

When this prophetic statement by Langston Hughes first appeared in his essay “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” in 1926, jazz was still in its infancy. Its earliest recordings were less than 10 years old, and its most influential artists—Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Duke Ellington—were just beginning to build a popular following at dance clubs and concert halls in Chicago, New York City and abroad. But in the ethnic idiosyncrasies of the music’s melodies, harmonies, rhythms and lyrics, Hughes already hears the free expression of his race as it draws material and inspiration from every aspect of life and transforms it into art that speaks to everyone.

Since Hughes sounded his clarion call for black artists to draw on their own lives and the history of African American culture for inspiration, generations of black musicians have



Langston Hughes

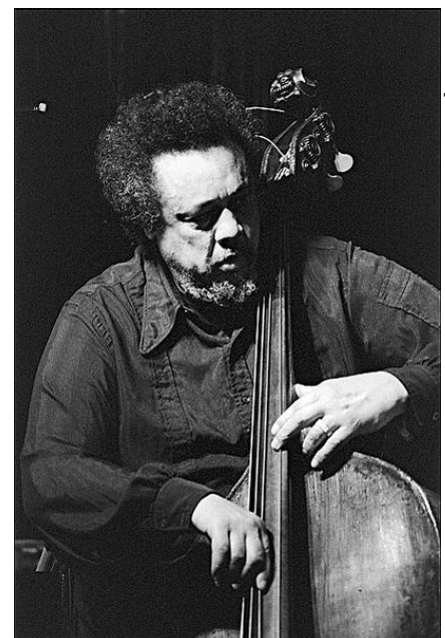
heeded the message. They find ample material in the spirituals of their religious practices, in the unfettered joy of their roadhouses, even in the drudgery of their workaday worlds.

Composer, bandleader and bassist Charles Mingus (1922-1979) is one of the most vivid examples of a black artist who draws on his own experiences in the context of African American history and culture and creates potent music. He combines the power of the blues, work songs, and spirituals with the complex rhythms of African folk drumming and black dance forms. He occasionally orchestrates his larger ensembles in the manner of European symphonic music, but always in a style that is distinctly—even defiantly—his own, an attribute that Hughes would have appreciated.

By looking at just two Mingus recordings—“Blues and Roots” from 1960 and “The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady” from 1963—we can form a

portrait of the artist and the impulses that stimulated his artistic vision, impulses rooted in the African American experience of which Hughes wrote. Original liner notes and re-appraisals by Mingus and others reveal an artist who struggles with racism and acceptance, emotional pain and depression, but always strives to create music that is genuine.

A man sensitive to racial discrimination, as well as the larger issues of human rights and world peace, Mingus tells jazz critic Nat Hentoff, “It’s not only a question of color anymore. It’s getting deeper than that. I mean it’s getting more and more difficult for a man or woman to just love. People are getting so fragmented, and part of that is fewer and fewer people are making a real effort anymore to find exactly who they are.” (“Blues and Roots” liner notes). He epitomizes the black artist whom Hughes envisions when he



Charles Mingus

Courtesy Photo

Courtesy Photo

writes, “jazz to me is one of the inherent expressions of Negro life in America; the eternal tom-tom beating in the Negro soul—the tom-tom of revolt against weariness in a white world, a world of subway trains, and work, work, work; the tom-tom of joy and laughter, and pain swallowed with a smile.” The composer is brutally honest as he tells Hentoff, “music [...] is, or was, a language of the emotions. If someone has been escaping reality, I don’t expect him to dig my music.... My music is alive and it’s about the living and the dead, about good and evil. It’s angry, yet it’s real because it knows it’s angry.”

Hughes singles out “the low-down folks, the so-called common element” as those most likely to create genuine art from everyday experience, including religious experience. “Their joy runs, bang! into ecstasy. Their religion soars to a shout.... These common people are not afraid of spirituals, as for a long time their more intellectual brethren were, and jazz is their child.” As Hughes urges, Mingus taps his spiritual roots for the fiery gospel tune “Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting,” which the composer describes as “church music. I heard this as a child when I went to meetings with my mother. The congregation gives their testimonial before the Lord, they confess their sins and sing and shout and do a little Holy Rolling.” (“Blues and Roots” liner notes)

Hentoff helps us understand Mingus’ musical influences, writing in the liner notes to “Blues and Roots,” “Mingus sure knew and felt his roots. He had played, after all, with the whole range of jazz—from Kid Ory to Charlie Parker. He knew the entire language—from the inside.” Most blues tunes are simple constructions of just three predominant chords repeated over and over, allowing jazz soloists to freely express themselves with infinite melodic varia-

tions within the finite chord structure. Both Hughes and Mingus understand the potential for black artists to relate a range of emotions using the blues. In the relations between blacks and whites, Hughes suggests a wealth of potential themes that “the Negro artist can give his racial individuality, his heritage of rhythm and warmth, and his incongruous humor that so often, as in the blues, becomes ironic laughter mixed with tears.” With “Cryin’ Blues,” “Moanin’,” and “Tensions,” Mingus thoroughly explore the blues, eventually shouting in ecstasy (or anguish?) near the end of the final piece.

Despite its thematic title and dance references, “The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady” is a large-scale symphonic piece comprised of four “movements” totaling 40 minutes. It contains no libretto or plot line other than that vaguely suggested by the provocative subtitles, such as “(Soul Fusion) Freewoman and Oh, This Freedom’s Slave Cries,” and “Of Love, Pain and Passioned Revolt, then Farewell, My Beloved, ’til It’s Freedom Day.” The music seethes with a range of emotions, the horns alternately weeping and crying out, the complex rhythms colliding or accelerating wildly, the result sometimes closer to

cacophony than harmony. As Mingus asserts in the liner notes, “This music is only one little wave of styles and waves of little ideas my mind has encompassed through living in a society that calls itself sane.” It is a statement of personal integrity and bold defiance in the face of the dominant white culture, and it recalls Hughes’ ultimatum that, “If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn’t matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too.”

Aware that he has difficulty articulating—in words—the conflicted impulses behind the music of “The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady,” the composer asks psychologist and friend Dr. Edmund Pollock to shed light on the artist and this monumental work. Pollock quickly gets to the heart of the matter, writing of Mingus, “His music is a call for acceptance, respect, love, understanding, fellowship, freedom—a plea to change the evil in man and to end hatred. The titles of this composition suggest the plight of the black man and a plea to the white man to be aware. He seems to state that the black man is not alone but all mankind must unite in revolution against any society that restricts freedom and human rights.”

A note of hope arises near the end of the piece, and Pollock offers a cautious prediction about the composer, his music and his struggle to function in a dysfunctional world, writing, “It must be emphasized that Mr. Mingus is not yet complete. He is still in a process of change and personal development. Hopefully the integration in society will keep pace with his.”

As Pollock foresaw, Mingus continued to develop as an artist, releasing a dozen more recordings before his death at age 56 in January 1979, from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig’s disease). His music still resonates more than 30 years later. Summarizing “Blues and Roots,” Hentoff writes, “As this album powerfully affirms, Mingus’ music will remain alive so long as there is life in the world.”

In his immortal recordings and their impact on countless composers, musicians, writers and other artists, Mingus seems to echo the Hughes credo: “We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves.”



Jazz on Disc

Jeff Beck's latest is more emotion than commotion

By Tom Ineck



JEFF BECK
Emotion and Commotion
ATCO Records

What the listener immediately notices about the new Jeff Beck CD is its “lyrical” beauty, the guitarist’s ability to “vocalize” with his instrument. Every solo sounds like an aria for guitar—a “guitaria.”

Beck’s eccentric six-stringed forays have always had an element of heartfelt lyricism, from his early days with the Yardbirds and the fuzz-toned psychedelia of “Heart Full of Soul,” “Shapes of Things,” and “Happenings Ten Years Time Ago.” His mid-1970s solo recordings eschewed conventional vocals entirely, allowing his guitar to assume the role with gorgeous instrumental versions of Stevie Wonder’s “Cause We’ve Ended as Lovers,” Lennon and McCartney’s “She’s a Woman,” and Charles Mingus’ elegy for Lester Young, “Goodbye Pork Pie Hat.” The brilliant 2008 recording “Performing This Week... Live at Ronnie Scott’s” made it abundantly clear that Beck had lost nothing in the way of technique or emotional wallop, and his first studio recording in seven years, “Emotion & Commotion,” reaffirms that fact while adding to his stature as the greatest rock guitarist of all time.

It opens modestly, with Beck’s guitar movingly singing the melody of

Benjamin Britten’s “Corpus Christi Carol,” with keyboards and orchestral arrangement by Pete Murray, who adds similar lush touches throughout the recording. Beck’s version was inspired by that of another J.B., the late Jeff Buckley, who recorded the tune on his 1994 debut, “Grace.” Lasting less than three minutes, it abruptly segues into “Hammerhead,” a typical Beck rocker based on an irresistible riff by keyboardist Jason Rebello, with Tal Wilkenfeld on bass and Alessia Mattalia on drums. Beck uses the repeated phrase as a springboard for one of his exciting, fuzz-toned flights into the stratosphere.

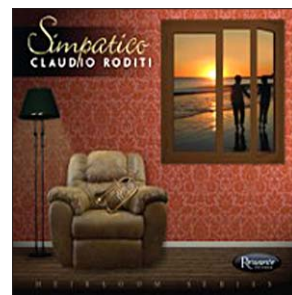
Rebello achieves a truly vocal sound on his gorgeous composition “Never Alone.” Beck, of course, takes the lead “voice,” spinning his guitar magic around the chord changes. Perhaps the CD’s most obvious attempt at lyrical precision is the guitarist’s stunning take on the classic “Over the Rainbow,” a yearning, moaning performance aided again by Murray’s orchestral flourishes.

Beck returns to his bluesy roots on a brief rendition of the Screamin’ Jay Hawkins tune, “I Put a Spell on You,” sung with great emotion by Joss Stone. “Serene” is what the name implies, a meditative melody by Beck and Rebello that also features atmospheric vocalizing by Olivia Safe and some soaring, but sensitive slide guitar work. Singer Imelda May beautifully interprets another Buckley favorite, the poetic 1949 love song “Lilac Wine,” usually associated with Nina Simone’s definitive version. Again Beck makes it his own with touching lyricism, which leads naturally into the astounding “Nessum Dorma,” a Puccini aria that gets the full orches-

tral treatment to great effect. Beck’s final notes are heavenly.

Joss Stone returns on the soulful “There’s No Other Me,” for which she also wrote the lyrics to Rebello’s composition. Halfway through this four-minute song and again at the fade, Beck tempting injects short shredding solos, but otherwise confines himself to able accompanist. Dario Marianelli’s “Elegy for Dunkirk” is another guitar-vocal collaboration with the operatic Safe, whose wordless vocal interlude enters as a light into the moody darkness. Beck seems inspired to find that same hopeful brightness in his solo.

Yes, Beck’s latest produce is more emotion than commotion. That may disappoint some fans who were hoping for more rock-oriented guitar shredding, but the sheer beauty of “Emotion & Commotion” is undeniable.



CLAUDIO RODITI
Simpatico
Resonance Records

A favorite of the **Berman Music Foundation** since the BMF brought him to Lincoln with saxophonist Greg Abate in 1996, Brazilian trumpet virtuoso Claudio Roditi has followed up his 2009 Resonance Records debut with “Simpatico,” another sterling example of Roditi’s bop-oriented Latin jazz.

Whether on trumpet, flugelhorn or

piccolo trumpet, his playing always maintains a high level of excitement and his recordings are never less than dazzling, consistently satisfying and imaginative. In this case, “Simpatico” may refer both to Roditi’s close association with the material—he composed all of the 12 tunes—and his compatibility with the other players. Among them are young trombonist Michael Dease, guitarist Romero Lubambo, pianist Helio Alves, bassist John Lee and drummer Duduka da Fonseca.

The sympathetic nature of the project is evident from the first track, the jumping and joyous “Spring Samba.” Roditi moves through the difficult changes with bright and breezy abandon, followed by an equally adept trombone solo by Dease. Alves and da Fonseca also get solo statements that ensure their rhythmic credentials. “Alfitude” is a beautiful bossa that celebrates underappreciated Brazilian composer Johnny Alf. Roditi and Dease harmonize their horns in lush precision.

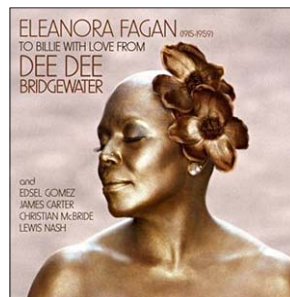
Roditi utilizes a muted piccolo trumpet to good effect on the aptly entitled “Piccolo Blues.” The smaller horn is not only in a higher register but creates more resistance for the player, making it a difficult instrument to play, but the effort pays off here. One of Roditi’s minor masterpieces, the ballad “Slow Fire” is the title track of his 1989 release. Here it gets the full orchestral treatment with an arrangement by Kuno Schmid and the composer pouring out his heart on flugelhorn.

“How Intensive” is a variation on Jobim’s standard “How Insensitive.” Roditi’s flugelhorn deftly navigates the tricky changes at a medium tempo before turning it over to Lubambo for a delectably tasteful solo on the nylon-stringed acoustic. “A Dream for Kristen” is a loving tribute to Roditi’s wife on which Lubambo switches to electric steel strings for some Wes Montgomery-style chording.

Keeping it all in the family, Roditi continues with “Alberto and Daisy,” a

light-hearted samba dedicated to his parents. Alves also shines on his imaginative piano solo, and da Fonseca makes another breath-taking drum statement. Roditi and Dease meld their horns again on “Blues for Ronni,” with Dease taking a brawny and blustery solo. A da Fonseca drum solo sets the pace and the mood for “Slammin’,” a blistering cycle of changes that everyone handles with seeming ease.

Roditi lends an engaging sensitivity to his vocal on “Waltz for Joana” before taking over the theme on muted trumpet. Both Alves and Lubambo contribute brief, but lovely solo variations leading to the vocal reprise. “Vida Nova (New Life)” is referred to by the composer as “Zen Samba.” It does, indeed, seem effortless and elemental in its execution, thanks to flawless solos by Alves, Roditi and Lubambo. The drummer again sets the stage with a percussion introduction to the fast-paced finale, “Winter Dreams.” Roditi’s generosity with his fellow musicians throughout this project seems to bear out its title.



DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER
Eleanora Fagan: To Billie with Love

At age 60, Dee Dee Bridgewater may be the greatest living jazz singer at the pinnacle of her career, but she has not forgotten the jazz lineage from which she sprang or the jazz artists who inspired her. “Eleanora Fagan” is the latest in a string of tributes that also include 1995’s “Love and Peace” collection of Horace Silver tunes, and 1997’s

homage to Ella Fitzgerald called “Dear Ella.”

A sprightly personality with a more virtuosic voice than Holiday possessed, Bridgewater does not attempt to mimic the great “Lady Day.” Her style is closer to that of Betty Carter, Sarah Vaughan or Ella. But there is no doubting Bridgewater’s profound respect for Holiday’s tragic genius and her unmatched ability to put a song across with emotion. She is aided in this effort by the arrangements of pianist Edsel Gomez and the accompaniment of bassist Christian McBride, drummer Lewis Nash and the multi-instrumental reed master James Carter.

Appropriately, “Lady Sings the Blues” kicks things off with a Holiday original that leaps with rhythmic counterpoint and lyrics that introduce the subject with an autobiographical story line. Carter accompanies with bluesy urgency on tenor sax. Most of the remainder of the CD contains standards that were prominent in Holiday’s repertoire. Bridgewater joyfully scats through the brisk “All of Me,” with Carter on soprano. She caresses the blues-tinged “Good Morning Heartache” as Carter’s quavering bass clarinet plumbs the lower depths of the lyric’s despair. Her rendition of “Lover Man” is alternately wistful and hopeful.

Carter wails on the mournful “You’ve Changed,” as the rhythm section provides a rock-solid canvas for Bridgewater’s painterly vocal colors. The two-minute “Miss Brown to You” demonstrates the singer’s talent for swinging swagger and mischief as she sets up Lewis for a drum solo and Carter soars overhead on tenor. Carter’s flute is the perfect foil for Bridgewater’s shadowy voice on “Don’t Explain.”

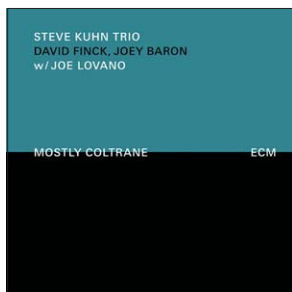
McBride is in his bluesy Ray Brown mode as he sets up the walking bass line on “Fine and Mellow,”

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Holiday's trademark composition. At Bridgewater's urging, Carter enters the fray on tenor, going uptempo in a thrilling solo. The clever "My Mother's Son-in-Law" showcases an unbridled dialogue between McBride's playful bass and Bridgewater's suggestive vocals. Holiday's most famous original, "God Bless the Child," gets a respectful reading that emphasizes the lyrics of self-determination, while giving Carter a chance to shine on soprano sax.

After a faithful recital of the introductory verse with piano accompaniment only, Bridgewater launches into a swinging version of Gershwin's "A Foggy Day" replete with irrepressible scat-singing and some fleet piano work by Gomez. Holiday's own struggle with racism and personal acceptance are reflected in Lewis Allen's "Strange Fruit," which Holiday performed to spellbound audiences and which makes for a powerful closer to this collection. A veteran of the theatrical stage, Bridgewater dramatically evokes a public lynching in a voice that cracks as she describes the gruesome scene.



STEVE KUHN TRIO with JOE LOVANO
Mostly Coltrane
ECM Records

Pianist Steve Kuhn gets short shrift in most jazz commentaries, where he's usually identified as the guy who preceded McCoy Tyner in John Coltrane's classic quartet. As his tenure in that ensemble lasted only two months, the reference does Kuhn a

disservice and relegates him to little more than a footnote in history. On the contrary, the 72-year-old Kuhn also played in the bands of Stan Getz and Art Farmer and has produced a string of wonderful recordings under his own name over the years. The most recent evidence of his staying power is "Mostly Coltrane," a tribute to his former employer featuring the sympathetic, Trane-like tenor of Joe Lovano and Kuhn's exemplary trio mates David Finck on bass and Joey Baron on drums.

The 13 tracks included here are largely Coltrane originals and wide-ranging examples of his incredible impact on the evolution of modern jazz and on the development of the tenor sax as its most iconic instrument. "Welcome" is a relaxed meditation, while the bluesy "Song of Praise" is a more passionate spiritual exploration, with Lovano delivering the theme in a high, keening tone. Their take on the lovely "Crescent" is carefully measured as Kuhn creates lush keyboard soundscapes for Lovano's gorgeous passages and Baron tastefully uses mallets on cymbals.

Billy Eckstine's ballad "I Want to Talk About You" and the standard "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes" are the only tunes not written by Coltrane or Kuhn. Lovano sits out the first one, allowing the trio to fully work the variations suggested by the beautiful chord changes. The trio opens the latter tune, taking it uptempo to a blistering pace before Lovano makes his entrance with burry gusto about halfway through the nine-minute burner, and his explosive attack urges Kuhn, Finck and Baron to new heights.

"Living Space" is a dreamy, rhythmically free exploration that allows all players to express themselves. By contrast, it is followed by "Central Park West," one of Coltrane's most mellow and memorable melodies. Lovano brilliantly finds the common ground between Coltrane

and Rollins on the Latin-tinged "Like Sonny," which is also a springboard for superb solo statements by Finck and Baron.

Kuhn penned the piano solo piece "With Gratitude" as a personal homage to Coltrane. "Configuration" is an obscure Coltrane tune given a raucous free-jazz interpretation, first by Lovano and Baron, then adding Kuhn and Finck to the fray. Another rarity, "Jimmy's Mode," gets a more meditative reading and allows the players to make their statements in more orderly fashion. On the bluesy "Spiritual" Lovano switches to tarogato, a Hungarian reed instrument that sounds a bit like soprano sax. The CD closes with "Trance," another beautiful solo piano tribute by Kuhn.

Not surprisingly, the mood throughout this Coltrane tribute is alternately respectful, relaxed, intense and spiritually transcendent, adhering both to the ECM reputation and the legacy of John Coltrane. With "Mostly Coltrane," Kuhn also delivers one of his most heartfelt recordings.



THE STRYKER/SLAGLE BAND
Keeper
Panorama Records

The latest release from longtime friends and collaborators Dave Stryker and Steve Slagle is another adventurous exploration of the deep groove, common ground where the guitarist and saxophonist are again joined by bassist Jay Anderson and drummer Victor Lewis to create a magical group sound.

Stryker's edgy guitar lines blend seamlessly with Slagle's sax, as the rhythm section churns beneath. This high degree of compatibility is not achieved overnight and is a tribute to the sensitive, four-way communication on display throughout "Keeper." Stryker's catchy opening title track aptly defines the entire project, as he works the funky guitar chords, Slagle matches the melody line with short alto bursts, and Lewis reaffirms his standing as a world-class percussionist who is never at a loss for ideas.

Never too far from the blues, the band swings with bluesy feeling on Slagle's "Bailout," wherein the composer and Stryker contribute equally compelling solos, then trade fours with customary glee before returning to the theme. The only cover tune here is Monk's familiar ballad "Ruby My Dear," and it gets a sensitive reading by Slagle, with lush, chorded harmonies by Stryker. "Come to Believe" contains an irresistible groove with also sax and guitar doubling the main theme before Stryker and Slagle each cut loose with a solo, aided and abetted by Lewis and Anderson.

"Bryce's Peace" is a lovely Slagle-penned ballad that perfectly demonstrates the natural ease with which these players interact. Slagle takes the lead, Stryker's gentle, Metheny-like comping is subtly personified, Lewis tastefully uses the brushes and Anderson is especially notable for his relaxed, inspired solo. With Stryker's cleverly titled "Blue State" we find ourselves seated front and center at an imaginary blues club, where the foursome are getting down and dirty. The outlook brightens with Slagle's snappy uptempo "Sister," a great vehicle for Stryker's Wes-tinged guitar chording and a joyous workout for Lewis and Anderson, who takes a sublime solo.

"Gold Dust" is a minor-key gem that manages to evoke a kind of hopeful melancholy. Stryker takes a rare

and wonderful solo on acoustic guitar, followed by Slagle on soprano sax. Stryker's unusual "Convergence" again features Slagle on soprano as the guitarist returns to the electric six-string for some breathtaking fretwork and Lewis takes a signature solo of great imagination and fire. The closer is "Good 4 U," a lively Latin tune by Slagle that again documents the all-round camaraderie and technical proficiency of these four individuals.



JOE CHAMBERS
Horace to Max
Savant Records

A stalwart session player since the mid-1960s, drummer and vibraphonist Joe Chambers has only recently renewed his reputation as a bandleader of considerable skill and imagination. "Horace to Max" is Chambers' second excellent CD on the Savant label, a follow-up to 2006's "The Outlaw." As the title of the new release implies, it is homage to the funky, Afro-Caribbean music associated with Horace Silver and Max Roach.

Kenny Dorham's brawny "Asiatic Raes" starts things in a hard-bop style, led by the driving drums of Chambers, the swaggering tenor sax of Eric Alexander and the propulsive rhythmic support of pianist Xavier Davis, bassist Dwayne Burno and conguero Steve Berrios. Chambers switches to vibes and Berrios takes over the drum chores on Silver's beautiful ballad "Ecorah." "Man from South Africa" is a Roach composition with Chambers doubling on drums

and vibes in the richly harmonized theme. As always, Alexander's tenor playing is superb.

Nicole Guiland makes a guest appearance singing the overtly political lyrics of Roach's "Mendacity," from the drummer's 1961 classic "Percussion Bitter Sweet." Evoking the original recording as sung by Roach's former wife, Abbey Lincoln, Guiland cynically sings, "The campaign trail winds on and on, in towns from coast to coast. The winner ain't the one who's straight, but he who lies the most."

Marcus Miller wrote "Portia" for the 1986 Miles Davis project "Tutu," and it gets a respectful reading with Chambers doubling on vibes and marimba, and taking a stunning solo on the latter instrument. Davis and Alexander also contribute atmospheric solo statements. Another subtle reference to Miles is "Water Babies," a lilting, whimsical Wayne Shorter tune that served as the title track of a 1977 Davis release. Here, Chambers covers all the bases on vibes, marimba and drums as Alexander's tenor leaps through the changes.

Guiland returns for a glowing rendition of the bluesy "Lonesome Lover," co-written by Roach and Lincoln for a 1962 record. Chambers gives a respectful nod to Thelonious Monk with a brisk version of his rhythmically complex "Evidence." Again, Alexander excels in the confident, honking style of Sonny Rollins. Chambers' own "Afreeka" confirms his latest project's Afrocentric nature with its roots-derived percussion "dialogue." More than ever, Chambers emphasizes the ringing, melodic sounds of the vibes and marimba and downplays his work on drums, allowing Berrios to provide much of the percussion. The result is a very satisfying listen.

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JEFF JENKINS
The Healing
Mile High Music

Listening to “The Healing” is an intimate act, as though catching a glimpse of someone in the process of a slow, painful recovery. Solo pianist and composer Jeff Jenkins admits as much in the liner notes. As he writes, “I’ve seen loss and disappointment, illness and death, divorce, marriage, addiction and recovery, depression and hope.”

A Denver-based musician and educator, Jenkins is a Nebraska native who still maintains ties with the state. Earlier this year, he returned to Lincoln for an indoor Jazz in June performance

with trumpeter Darryl White’s band. The best evidence of recovery and hope in Jenkins’ own life is his recent marriage to Terri Jo, who left Lincoln last year for a new life in the Rockies.

“The Healing” opens meditatively with “The Three Flames (for Frank).” Its melancholic theme occasionally allows for a shaft of light to break through the darkness as Jenkins ranges over the keyboard with Chopinesque soulfulness. “End of Sides” is brisker and brighter in tone, setting a lilting melody against dark chords. The moody “Inside Out” has a more tentative, unresolved conclusion, while “Lost Waltz,” for all its initial sadness, gives us hope that all is not lost. Perhaps that is the message of every waltz, with its inherent lilt and irresistible swing. At least, Jenkins treats it that way here.

Sometimes all that healing requires is a “Second Chance,” and the gorgeous changes of this one do have peaceful, healing qualities. Though the title of “Highlife” may allude to a life of revelry, I prefer to think of it as a celebration of the clean, high-altitude living in Jenkins’ adopted state. He gives

it a soulful gospel strut that is undeniably positive in its outlook. Amen!

“Song for Jo” is the composer’s tender tribute to his wife. Again, the listener feels a little voyeuristic being allowed to witness such an intimate and heartfelt expression of love. Despite its dedication to “Lee,” we can all take comfort in the uplifting, pastoral balm of “The Healing Hymn.” With “Waltz for Ellington,” Jenkins pays homage to the quintessential bandleader, again conveying the sense of swing in three-quarter time as he explores variations.

With its bold, sustained chords, spiritual aspiration and firm resolution, “El Sanctuario” does, indeed, feel like a place of refuge from the storms of life. By layering improvised lines, Jenkins reinforces that sense of safety and self-assurance. “The Girl with the Soulful Eyes (for Zoe)” is an expression of pure syncopated joy, allowing us a brief glimpse of this marvelous creature. Jenkins closes by returning to a more introspective mood on “The Goodbye Season,” as though reluctantly closing a door on the past while opening a new one to the future.

Feedback

Newell and New-Trad Octet send best wishes

Hello Tom,

I just want to thank you and everyone at the Berman Music Foundation for all of your efforts in helping to bring the New-Trad Octet to the Jazz in June series this year. We had a wonderful time! Of course the setting was great. Having enjoyed the Sheldon Sculpture Garden as a place to practice late at night over 30 years ago, it was so much fun to share our music with thousands of friends there last week. Laurie Sipple, Martha Florence and the volunteer staff were

most welcoming and helpful.

And speaking of hospitality, the whole band really enjoyed hanging with Grace and the foundation crowd at the after party. We were all fascinated by Butch’s collection of recordings, video and photos. Steve Million especially enjoyed seeing all of his Kansas City buddies on the wall. Everyone got so excited that we had to go to the Zoo Bar afterward to sit in and ended up closing a great Mexican restaurant on F Street at about 2 a.m. What a great night! I’m glad that we didn’t have far to drive the

following day.

Tom, I truly appreciate all that you did to bring us there. Please tell Grace how much we admire her work and let the whole Berman foundation community know that we love what they are doing to keep the music alive in Lincoln. Please be sure to let us know if we can assist you in any way.

With deepest sincerity,

Jeff Newell
New-Trad Octet
Brooklyn, N.Y.

*Jazz Essentials, Part 4***Five masters of their respective instruments**

By Tom Ineck

Since we began this series of features on the jazz recordings essential to any music library, we have taken a look at classic releases of 1959, five artists who shaped the music in its early days and six examples of the vocal art. This time we offer recommended CDs by five significant jazz artists who have something important to say on their respective instruments—saxophone, piano, drums, trombone and guitar.

Of these chosen five, only **Sonny Rollins** remains alive and active in the studio and in performance. A true titan of the tenor saxophone, Rollins cultivates a firm middle ground between the breathy quaver of Coleman Hawkins and the nimble-fingered, thinner-toned attack of Lester Young, between the lush romance of

Ben Webster and the boppish twists and turns of Dexter Gordon. In a career spanning nearly 60 years, Rollins, who turns 80 in September, has raised himself to the pinnacle of the jazz art.

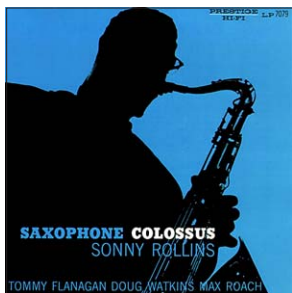
Oscar Peterson brings a prodigious technique to the piano keyboard, and his prolific recorded output provides ample opportunity for fans to witness his astounding skills in a variety of settings, including many live sessions. His favored format was the trio—first with bass and guitar, later with bass and drums—but no one ever doubted Peterson's role as leader.

Art Blakey, besides being one of the most exciting jazz drummers of all time and an architect of the bebop movement, was a skilled band leader and mentor whose Jazz Mes-

sengers served as a finishing school for dozens of future jazz stars, including Horace Silver, Kenny Dorham, Wayne Shorter, Freddie Hubbard, Curtis Fuller, Cedar Walton, Bobby Watson and Wynton Marsalis.

J.J. Johnson single-handedly shaped the future of the modern jazz trombone with his amazing dexterity and wealth of ideas. He made the difficult changes and hot tempos of bebop sound easy to maneuver, while bringing a resonant vocal quality to his instrument.

Grant Green has too often taken a back seat to Wes Montgomery in the annals of modern jazz guitar, but his ability to combine fleet-fretted bop lines, the soulfulness of a blues player and a biting tone make him Montgomery's equal.



SONNY ROLLINS
Saxophone Colossus
Prestige Records

I had the great good fortune to interview Sonny Rollins in the early 1990s, shortly after the death of Miles Davis and Art Blakey. He expressed his respect and reverence for them and others who had passed on and said he felt not only honored, but obliged to uphold the jazz tradition in their memory. It is

amazing to me that he remains just as dedicated and passionate about his music in 2010 as he did then and at the dawn of his career in the early 1950s. In the course of his musical mission, Rollins has recreated himself many times, most famously during a sabbatical of a couple of years in the 1960s. There are so many great Rollins recordings, it is tempting to recommend a boxed set, but I will go with "Saxophone Colossus" from 1956 because it contains the saxophonist's great originals "St. Thomas," "Strode Rode," and "Blue Seven." This early example of Rollins at his most imaginative and technically challenging also features Tommy Flanagan on piano, Doug Watkins on bass and Max Roach on drums.



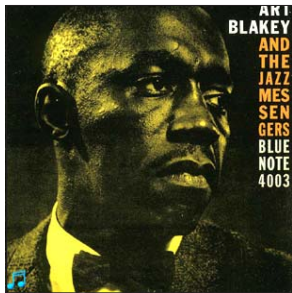
OSCAR PETERSON TRIO
At the Stratford Shakespearean Festival
Verve Records

It is difficult to go wrong with any of Oscar Peterson's many recordings (Amazon lists 376 separate titles), released primarily on Mercury, Verve, Pablo and Telarc from 1950 to 2007, the year of his death. His staying

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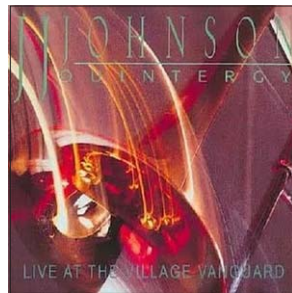
power and talent were as prodigious as his girth. I recommend 1956's "At the Stratford Shakespearean Festival" because it is the pinnacle of the early Peterson trio that also featured guitarist Herb Ellis and bassist Ray Brown. It captures them in thrilling live performances of "Falling in Love with Love," "Swinging on a Star," "How High the Moon," "52nd Street Theme" and others, plus two bonus tracks on the expanded 75-minute CD. This drummerless threesome was together for about five years before Ellis left and Peterson added drummer Ed Thigpen, so it documents a very significant period in Peterson's career. I also recommend it because it is an essential that my own collection lacked for too many years.



ART BLAKEY AND THE JAZZ MESSENGERS
Moanin'
Blue Note Records

The many editions of Blakey's Jazz Messengers—from the 1950s through the 1980s—produced some of the most memorable and historic hard-bop recordings of all time, but 1958's classic "Moanin'" must take the prize for both outstanding compositions and exemplary musicianship. The lineup was undoubtedly one of the best, with tenor saxophonist Benny Golson, trumpeter Lee Morgan, pianist Bobby Timmons, and bassist Jymie Merritt. Since this recording, the title track

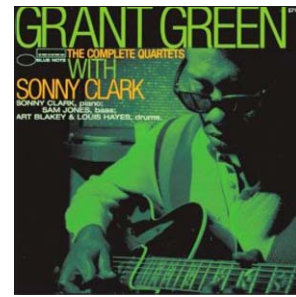
by Timmons, and Golson's "Along Came Betty" and "Blues March" have become jazz standards. The seven-and-a-half-minute "Drum Thunder Suite" is palpable evidence of Blakey's mastery of his instrument, and even "Come Rain or Come Shine" gets a bold new arrangement. "Moanin'" is the apogee of the group sound, with all the individual talent, empathy and compatibility that implies.



J.J. JOHNSON
Quintergy
Antilles Records

J.J. Johnson's early '50s recordings on Prestige and Blue Note are worthy of mention as the first examples of his breakthrough sound on trombone, both on ballads and bebop flag-wavers, and his many two-trombone collaborations with Kai Winding are interesting, but I offer "Quintergy" as the quintessential live recording of his later years and proof positive that Johnson remained relevant and even revelatory. He was 64 when it was recorded at the Village Vanguard in 1988. Accompanied by saxophonist Ralph Moore, pianist Stanley Cowell, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Victor Lewis, the 68-minute set represents the traditional bop quintet's state of the art, with excellent renditions of "Blue Bossa," "You've Changed" and Johnson's own contribution to the jazz standard songbook, the beautiful "Lament." Also recommended is the CD "Standards: Live at the Village," taken

from the same sessions and released contemporaneously.



GRANT GREEN
The Complete Quartets with Sonny Clark
Blue Note Records

A St. Louis native who only moved to New York City in 1960 and died in 1979, Green appeared on an amazing number of recordings in less than 20 years, usually accompanying such notables as Jack McDuff, Lou Donaldson, Stanley Turrentine, Hank Mobley, Jimmy Smith, Herbie Hancock and Lee Morgan. He also fronted more than two dozen of his own recordings, mostly on Blue Note. Green's profusion of ideas is best appreciated on longer tracks, making "The Complete Quartets with Sonny Clark" an easy choice. This two-CD set includes 19 tunes totaling more than two hours of brilliant interplay among Green, pianist Clark, bassist Sam Jones and either Art Blakey or Louis Hayes on drums. Recorded during a five-week period in 1962, the sessions were shelved until 1980, and then released only in abbreviated form in the U.S. and Japan. This 1997 Blue Note package is a feast for Green fans and newcomers alike, with the guitarist soaring through extended takes on "Airegin," "It Ain't Necessarily So," "The Song Is You," "Gooden's Corner," "Hip Funk," and "My Favorite Things."



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From the Archives

**Marilyn Maye and fan
 Butch Berman embrace**



File Photo

Singer Marilyn Maye and Butch Berman embrace during a break in Maye's performance at Jardine's in Kansas City, in early 2006. Maye performed in concert at Lincoln's Rococo Theater in May of this year. The story is inside.

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