



Courtesy Photo

Dan Thomas

# Dan Thomas overcomes grave illness to play again

By Tom Ineck

At age 28, Kansas City saxophonist Dan Thomas is feeling reborn since his recent recovery from a diabetic coma. As he regains his lost weight and learns to manage the disease, he is playing with renewed vigor and making plans for a second recording.

Thomas first appeared on the **Berman Music Foundation** radar in January, when Butch Berman wrote a glowing review of “City Scope,” the young saxophonist’s debut recording as a leader. The Dan Thomas Quintet will launch the Berman Jazz Series Sept. 19 at the Topeka Performing Arts Center in Topeka, Kan.

Just a few months ago, it was uncertain whether Thomas would live to see September. In early March, he began to exhibit flu and cold symptoms. He made an appointment to see a doctor, also asking for a blood sugar test for diabetes.

He never made the appointment. He suddenly lost more than 70 pounds—dropping 50 pounds in two days. He eventually lapsed into a coma, unable to either talk or walk.

There were no vital signs. He remained in intensive care for five days before being moved into the hospital’s general population.

Diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes, Thomas gives himself daily insulin injections and maintains a healthy diet. Bottoming out at 105 pounds, the 6-foot, 1-inch Thomas has since regained most of the weight he lost. He’s philosophical about his life-changing experience.

“It’s been a life adjustment, but I’m eating healthier now,” he said in a recent phone interview. “I feel strong. For disciplined folks, you can lead a relatively normal life. Being a musician, there are a lot of temptations out there that can send your diabetes spiraling. I’m very disciplined, so I just cut out the alcohol and live straight as an arrow. I feel great.”

A native of Winnipeg, the capital of Manitoba, Canada, Thomas left home when he was just 17 to pursue a music education and a career in music. He taught in the Portland, Ore., area and played regularly in Portland and Seattle before heading east to fin-

*Dan Thomas cont. on page 3*

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*Prez Sez***It's summertime and the music is swinging***By Butch Berman*

Dear Readers,

Well..."It's summertime, and the living is easy"...NOT! I've mentioned before that even though my mother and I had a difficult relationship, she was right about a lot of stuff. One of those messages was that as you get older, time just flies by. Well, this summer proved to be no exception to the rule. Fall is quickly approaching, and we've been working our tails off since April getting ready for the Topeka Jazz Festival, doing it, and then Lincoln's own beloved Jazz In June. No rest for the wicked, they say. If that's the case, I must be one mean S.O.B. (Hey, no way...I can read your minds on that one). Anyway, looking back, it was all a ball, and that ain't all.

Becoming the new artistic director of the Topeka Jazz Festival starting in 2005 was my first order of business, and it was a tall one, but still a labor of love. I had to book the entire 2005 festival, plus a separate series of five Sunday afternoon concerts named the Berman Jazz Series to be scattered throughout the fall and winter months to be held at the beautiful Topeka Performing Arts Center (TPAC). This had to be in play so they could announce the directorial changeover from Jim Monroe to moi and advertise and promote the upcoming festivities at this year's festival.

All appeared to go fairly smoothly as Jim and I carried on our rolls in parallel fashion. Grace and I arrived early to catch the student jazz master classes that we help sponsor (*see the related story in this issue*) and then enjoy the next three days of music, music, and music. To avoid



Photo by Tony Rager

*Butch Berman holds up flyers for the upcoming Berman Jazz Series and the 2005 Topeka Jazz Festival, for which he is the new artistic director.*

repetition, read Tom Ineck's in-depth report of the entire festival. In all, it was the usual four-day jazz party that carried more highs than lows with few surprises.

The Friday afternoon outdoors Taste of Topeka food fest combined with the jazz entertainment nicely. A large crowd assembled early to catch Danny Jackson's big band followed by an array of talent to showcase the weekend's lineup. The huge stage looked great, and the sound was very good. My new pal Giacomo Gates wowed the throng with his strong show and swell vocal delivery. Karrin Allyson and her excellent Kansas City band previewed tunes from her new CD and went over quite well. I know Jim's departure had something to do with the fact that she could only do the Friday picnic and not the rest of the weekend, but hey, that's show biz.

Grace and I could only stay through early Sunday, but had a ball meeting and greeting everyone. We tried to pass out enough info on the Berman Music Foundation and my changes for next year festival to quell any doubts on our passion and dedication to the genre at hand. The questionnaires that people filled out on our "take-over" proved that we have some big shoes to fill as Jim worked hard to bring the TJF to the level it maintained. I know that some fans are worried about how we plan to evolve this organization and some accept us with open arms...yet I stand true to my dreams. The proof will be in the pudding, as they say. With the inclusion of a wider variety of jazz including some Latin music, a little more bebop, and a Django-infused string band like The Hot Club of San Fran-

*Continued on page 4*

*Dan Thomas cont. from page 1*

ish his graduate work and serve as a graduate assistant at the University of Missouri at Kansas City (UMKC). He currently holds the position of adjunct professor in the school of music, where this fall he will teach jazz pedagogy and jazz history, as well as some administrative duties.

He was recruited with the promise that the school was scouting a “heavyweight” to revitalize the jazz program. A year later, the legendary Bobby Watson was hired to fill those shoes.

“Bobby’s a real blessing in the community,” Thomas said. “The man has got the biggest heart of anybody you’ll ever meet, and he doesn’t have a head to match, so that’s great. He’s a wonderful human being.” When the life-threatening diabetic reaction landed Thomas in the emergency room, Watson soon appeared at his bedside.

“That’s the type of guy he is,” Thomas said. “It really speaks to his desire to know people and care for people as individuals, not just as musicians.”

Thomas also counts Watson among those jazz saxophonists who most influenced his playing style, along with Charlie Parker, Cannonball Adderley, John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter and Kenny Garrett.

As on “City Scope,” the stellar bop quintet that Thomas will front in Topeka consists of fellow UMKC educator Joe Parisi on trumpet and flugelhorn, Roger Wilder on keyboards, Bram Wijnands on bass and Jim Eriksen on drums. Some fans of KC jazz may be unaware that Wijnands is equally adept on the bass as he is in his stride piano technique. He also provides what Thomas refers to as “another leader.”

“His leadership helps the ensemble. He plays real fundamental, rock-solid bass. He makes things easy. He’s a very easy guy to play

with.”

Thomas wants to take the quintet into the studio by October, anticipating a release before year’s end. A distributor already is interested in picking up “City Scope” and the new CD.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, Kansas City jazz musicians—as in other cities—struggle to land gigs in a climate of fiscal restraint and public caution. Clubs that previously hired quartets and quintets have pared down to duo and trios, often leaving horn players out in the cold. Only recently have some venues begun to expand their visions once again.

“One of the strengths in this city, and it may not last long, is that a lot of us young guys read about the history of the music and listen to the records, and in this community you can get tied into that history with these living artists.” Thomas is thankful that he has had the opportunity to play with local veterans like Rusty Tucker and Lucky Wesley, whose careers reach back to the city’s golden age.

The rest of the Berman Jazz Series is as follows:

**The Doug Talley Quartet** performs Oct. 24. The band consists of saxophonist Talley, pianist Wayne Hawkins, bassist Tim Brewer and drummer Keith Kavanaugh.

**The Russ Long Trio** is scheduled for Nov. 14. Pianist Long is joined by bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Ray DeMarchi.

**Luqman Hamza and Lucky Wesley** appears Feb. 13, 2005. Pianist-singer Hamza and bassist-singer Wesley are well known in KC.

**George Cables** will perform a solo piano concert March 13, 2005. Cables helped to define modern mainstream jazz piano.

All concerts are at the Topeka Performing Arts Center (TPAC) in downtown Topeka, Kan.

*To order tickets for the Berman Jazz Series, see the full-page order form on page 6.*



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cisco, to name a few, may attract a younger audience and bring in more enthusiasts from the KC area, as well as Manhattan and Lawrence. I know some of the fans will miss a few of the regulars not scheduled, or may not recognize all of the newcomers, but I promise you won't go away disappointed. The "Monroe Doctrine" has come and gone, and there's a NEW "sheriff" in town.

Tom will tell the rest of the story, but let me just say that, as always, Eldar was a gas; Paul Smith with the trio of Jim DeJulio and Joe LaBarbera just knocked me out; Jennifer Leitham was a treat; Wycliffe Gordon is one of the best in the business; Giacomo Gates continued to blow everyone away; Brent Jensen made us all feel wistful thinking about Paul Desmond; and Ken Peplowski and Jay Leonhart, as always, remained the true pros they are.

The current TPAC staff and I have been meeting monthly both in Topeka and here in Lincoln to plan for next year's blockbuster happening. We sincerely hope to garner your interest and support to keep this fine festival going for years to come. Get ready for 2005!

This year's Jazz in June proved to be a major success. Read Tom's wonderful review of each act in this issue but let me rap on a bit. Eldar Djangirov's return to the Sheldon Sculpture Garden stage to kick off this year's concerts was well received.



*Singer Giacomo Gates, Grace and Butch Berman relax during a break at the Topeka Jazz Festival.*



*Photo by Rich Hoover*

*Emil Djangirov (from left), Gerald Spaits, Eldar, Tommy Ruskin, Butch Berman and Tom Ineck at Misty's after Eldar's Jazz in June performance.*

Backed this year by bassist and BMF consultant Gerald Spaits and KC drum legend Tommy Ruskin, filling in for Todd Strait, he simply tore the place up. Eldar, now 17, keeps getting better. His new CD being released later this year by Sony is incredible. Several years ago, he was the first Jazz in June performer to ever receive a standing ovation and an encore, and this year was no exception. He earns and deserves all the acclaims he gets. He even beat me—the old master—at Ping-Pong at my post-concert party following a great meal for the performers at Lincoln's downtown Misty's. I was lucky to whip his father, Emil, who's no slouch himself. Rematches are in order.

My dear friend New York songstress Kendra Shank, along with a band that fits her like a glove, charmed an audience of 3,000-plus at the second concert of the series. Frank Kimbrough on piano, bassist Dean Johnson and the amazing Tony Moreno at the drum helm hushed the crowd and kept them in a trance-like state for both of her beautiful sets. Steve Watts made the outdoors sound like an evening at New York's Village Vanguard with his perfect sound system and astute staff.

Both of these shows were affili-

ated with the BMF, and the support gained from Jazz in June head honchos Doug Campbell and Ted Eschliman made working on their committee a pleasure. I just wish the rest of the members could see the "big picture" as they do and allow us to maintain the momentum we've established. You can't buy this kind of appeal, and I sincerely hope we can keep the ball rolling as years go by.

The last three shows of the series, featuring John Carlini and Don Stiernberg; Ingrid Jensen; and Lincoln's Nebraska Jazz Orchestra continued to draw large audiences.

Jensen, a superb trumpeter with a marvelous group, seemed to be the only performer to chase away some folks. The music was perfect, but her



*Photo by Butch Berman*

*Trombonist Wycliffe Gordon and friend at the Topeka Jazz Festival.*

rather cold, distant delivery didn't carry the music as well as Kendra, whose repertoire was equally cerebral, yet her personality was much, much warmer.

Upcoming events and projects are as follows:

On Oct. 21, at P.O. Pears in Lincoln, the BMF is excited and proud to present the return of the Rob Scheps/Zach Brock Band. The combined energies of five very talented musicians from the Portland/Vancouver area and the windy city of Chicago make for one not-to-be-missed engagement. Mark this date. They shook the walls of Pears the last time they hit town...so expect anything.

Part of our mission statement is to provide help by ways of grants and donations, when possible, to further the careers of budding musicians, mostly in the jazz field. On our last trip to New York, while visiting my old friend, sound engineer Lou Holtzman, and checking out his new Eastside Sound recording studio in the Lower East Side I heard and met a young vocalist named Teraesa Vinson. While listening to the playback of Bonnie Raitt's "I Can't Make You Love Me," I knew she was a potentially major player in the jazz market, so I decided to help her put out her



Photo by Rich Hoover

Members of The Cronin Brothers Band (from left) are Craig "Cronin" Kingery, Butch "Cronin" Berman, Don "Cronin" Holmquist and Bill "Cronin" Lohrberg.

first recording, entitled "Opportunity Please Knock." I just received the test pressing, and it sounds lovely. Watch our updates for the review of this fine new CD when it comes out in the very near future.

Other news includes our purchase of the original masters of the first two jazz CDs I helped produce. With New York's Arabesque Records going down the tubes, I am happy to own the rights to Andrienne Wilson's "She's Dangerous" and Norman Hedman and Tropique's "One Step Closer." Future plans to reissue these fab CDs are being formulated even as I write this and will be reported on our website.

Better close here soon. Grace and I are in the middle of remodeling projects at both of our homes. One

top of that, her lovely sister Lois Sankey and her son are coming from Nigeria to visit. Also, my new rockin' rhythm 'n' blues group, The Cronin Brothers Band, will be debuting at Bob's Gridiron Grille. You can catch us again Sept. 3-4, prior to Big Red's first game. As I've said before...be there or be square.

Grace and I also plan to do a jazz trip to Colorado sometime soon. Just saw saxophonist and old friend Andrew Vogt, who stopped by with recording mate and bassman Jason Hollar, who was moving eastward to Pittsburgh. With Andrew living and gigging in the Fort Collins area, and my good buddy Dan Demuth doing his thing in Colorado Springs, this trip has possibilities. Wax Trax is one of my fave Colorado record stores in Denver, along with the new club, Dazzle, and old haunt, the "Pec," so there ya go. After that, we'd like to visit San Francisco, which Grace has never seen. The SF Jazz Festival is in October, the Giants may still be playing and in the pennant chase, and of course we get to hang with my best man Wade Wright and revisit his great Jack's Record Cellar.

Gotta go now. Hope to see many of you at our first Berman Jazz Series concert, Sunday Sept. 19 at the Topeka Performing Arts Center in Topeka, Kan. KC sax man Dan Thomas and his band, featuring pianist Roger Wilder, will be blowing it out starting at 3 p.m. Later.

Lots of love to all,  
Butch Berman



Photo by Rich Hoover

Dean Johnson (from left), Kendra Shank, Butch Berman, Tony Moreno and Frank Kimbrough relax at Misty's in Lincoln.

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## Concert Preview

## Scheps-Brock Quintet to perform Oct. 21

By Tom Ineck

The Rob Scheps/Zach Brock Quintet returns to Lincoln Oct. 21 for a reprise of its spell-binding performance at the same venue earlier this year.

The quintet made its Lincoln debut Jan. 22 with funding by the **Berman Music Foundation**, as part of the Thursday night jazz programming by Arts Incorporated.

Saxophonist Scheps, an Oregon native, has lived and worked in Boston and New York City, as well as performing worldwide with artists as diverse as the Gil Evans Orchestra, trumpeters Clark Terry, Arturo Sandoval, Eddie Henderson and Terumasa Hino, trombonist Roswell Rudd, singers Mel Torme, Dianne Reeves and Nancy King, bandleaders Buddy Rich and Mel Lewis, organist Jack McDuff and avant jazz legends Sam Rivers, Muhal Richard Abrams, Henry Threadgill and Julius Hemphill.

A member of the Mannes College of Music faculty, Scheps has been a workshop clinician at Bowdoin, Dartmouth, Hunter, Lewis and Clark, Warner Pacific and Whitman Colleges, as well as Portland State and the University of Connecticut.

Violinist and co-leader Brock draws on a broad tradition of jazz violin, from Johnny Frigo to Stephane Grappelli and even fusion pioneers Jean-Luc Ponty and Jerry Goodman. Born in Lexington, Ky., he pursued his musical training in Chicago.

Returning with the band are a couple of talented young Windy City musicians, pianist Jordan Baskin and bassist Matt Ulery, and drummer Morgan Childs of Vancouver, B.C. All three are in their early 20s.

Scheps and Brock like to keep



Photo by Tom Ineck

*The Rob Scheps-Zach Brock Quintet will return to Lincoln Oct. 21 to perform at P.O. Pears, where they played Jan. 22. From left are Zach Brock on violin, Jordan Baskin on keyboards and Rob Scheps on saxophone.*

the audience guessing, sometimes alternating between the music of Cole Porter and Nirvana. For his finales on "The Cougar," Scheps pulled out all the stops, first working out on the tenor sax, then combining the flute mouthpiece and the sax body to take a solo

on the "saxaflute."

Like last time, the Scheps-Brock Quintet will make a stop in Nebraska City before its Lincoln appearance, performing Oct. 20 at the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts.

### Connected Jazz Artists

For more on some of the jazz artists mentioned in this issue of *Jazz*, visit the following:

#### Karrin Allyson

<http://www.karrin.com/>

#### Joe Cartwright

<http://www.joe-cartwright.com/>

#### John Clayton

<http://johnclaytonjazz.com/>

#### Eldar Djangirov

<http://www.eldarjazz.com>

#### Jennifer Leitham

<http://www.jenniferleitham.com/>

#### Jay Leonhart

<http://www.jayleonhart.com/>

#### Rob Scheps

<http://www.robscheps.8m.net/>

#### Kendra Shank

<http://www.kendrashank.com>

#### Terell Stafford

<http://www.terellstafford.com>

#### Dan Thomas

<http://www.danthomas.info/>

#### Bobby Watson

<http://bobbywatson.com/>

## Concert Review

# Seventh annual TJF was another music marathon

By Tom Ineck

TOPEKA, Kan.--After taking a year off from covering the Topeka Jazz Festival, the **Berman Music Foundation** returned to the Midwest's best jazz party with some trepidation. The seven-year-old event had begun to show signs of premature hardening of the arteries in recent years, so we hoped for the best and feared the worst.

What we got was something in between. The 2004 TJF featured many of the same musicians performing many of the same tunes as in the past, but there were enough surprises and a consistently high level of performance quality to make it enjoyable over the course of the three-day marathon, May 29-31.

For the seventh consecutive year, TJF Artistic Director Jim Monroe had done yeoman service in booking and scheduling a daunting number of artists for the Memorial Day weekend, this year comprising a series of 40 sets in formats ranging from a duo to a sextet. It was to be Monroe's final festival, and on the opening morning he was deservedly awarded a plaque for all of his accomplishments as a volunteer organizer.

As several hundred avid jazz fans settled into their seats in the comfortable confines of the Georgia Neese Gray Performance Hall at the Topeka Performing Arts Center, trombonist Wycliffe Gordon kicked things off, fronting a six-piece ensemble that also featured Warren Vache on cornet, Brent Jensen on alto sax, Joe Cartwright on piano, Bob Bowman on bass and Jackie Williams on drums.

Gordon is one of those virtuosi who always keep the listener on the edge of his seat. On Ellington's "I Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)," he played in the old style, us-



*Jim Monroe in his last year as artistic director of the Topeka Jazz Festival.*

ing a plunger mute to "sing" the notes and even vocalizing in the growling style of Louis Armstrong. Vache, another adherent of traditional swing, took an appropriately jumping cornet solo. Jensen was an unexpected surprise, playing with a cool, honey-smooth tone reminiscent of alto legend Paul Desmond.

Gordon displayed his slide pyrotechnics on "Donna Lee," the bop restructuring of "Back Home in Indiana." Vache and Jensen easily shifted to the more modern approach, and Cartwright showed his typically inventive personality in his brief piano solo. But it was on "Darn That Dream" that Cartwright constructed a masterful solo, as Jensen led the rhythm section through the classic changes and Williams set the mood with superb brush work.

Cartwright led Bowman and Williams in "Invitation" before the full sextet returned for a rousing "C Jam Blues," with Gordon delivering three choruses

of scat vocals. In typical good humor after flubbing a note, Vache shook out his horn and stomped on the offending "bug."

Now thoroughly engaged, the audience was ready for the duo teaming bassist Jennifer Leitham and guitarist Rod Fleeman. The Kansas City-based fret master effortlessly quoted other tunes in his breezy treatment of "East of the Sun (and West of the Moon)." Leitham took the melody on Jobim's "How Insensitive," teasing the sustained notes out of the bass in lyrical, emotive fashion. In their dialogue, Leitham and Freeman perfectly illustrated the conversational aspect of jazz improvisation.

On Hoagy Carmichael's ballad "Skylark," the two seemed similar in musical temperament, both demonstrating subtle shadings and rococo filigree in their phrasing. Leitham showed her mastery of percussive thumb popping and string slapping on a mid-tempo "Alone Together," with Fleeman cleverly interpolating "I Got Rhythm." They finished with a tender reading of "So Many Stars."

Pianist Paul Smith returned to the festival leading a trio that included bassist Jim DeJulio and drummer Joe LaBarbera, two welcome additions to the TJF mix. Smith's effortless improvisations, in which he hilariously quotes classical compositions, English dance hall melodies, French art songs, folk tunes and novelty numbers, leave the listener breathless as he tries to identify all the sources. In short order, Smith raced through "It's All Right With Me," "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most," "Fascinatin' Rhythm" and "Ain't Misbehavin'." Even a solo piano rendition of "Over the Rainbow" was handled in epic fashion with classical

Photo by Tom Ineck





Bassists Jim DeJulio and Jennifer "Lefty" Leitham fool around.

Photo by Tom Ineck

DeJulio kept the loose ends neatly tied with his solid bass grounding.

English songstress Lee Gibson also proved a charming surprise, bringing a classy polish to the proceedings as she fronted a quartet that included pianist Jon Mayer, bassist Bob Bowman and drummer Tommy Ruskin. She demonstrated her breezy, lilting style with the familiar opener, "I've Got the World on a String," then turned to the obscure "That's When I Miss You the Most," a tune written by a 20-something student of hers. From "Guys and Dolls" she drew a medley of "My Time of Day" and "If I Were a Bell."

Gibson injected some of the historic of the London stage on "A Foggy Day," and added the rarely heard verse to "Over the Rainbow." Her intonation briefly wavered off the mark as she and the band took "Love for Sale" at an uptempo Latin lilt, and she finished with a convincing "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone."

A set led by festival favorite Ken Peplowski on clarinet was abbreviated to play catch-up with the clock, but not before he performed a lovely rendition of Jobim's "Louisa" also featuring pianist Bill Mays and bassist Jay Leonhart. Gordon again applied some bluesy

flourishes and a fugue.

"The Lady Is a Tramp" was a showcase for LaBarbera, a master drummer perhaps best known for his tenure as Bill Evans' last percussionist. Smith finally delivered a straight rendition of Gershwin's "Someone to Watch over Me" before returning to his antics on "Lullaby of Birdland," introducing the number in a baroque style and quoting "Chattanooga Choo Choo" and "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise."

plunger-muted trombone and growling vocalise to a tune from the Ellington songbook, this time "Cotton Tail."

Leitham returned fronting her own trio with newcomer pianist Shelly Berg and drummer Joe Ascione, another festival favorite. This exciting, inspired set consisted almost entirely of original compositions and rarities, proving that TJF music need not be familiar to the audience to be appreciated. Leitham's own uptempo "Turkish Bizarre" had an Eastern spice with virtuosic bass chording in octaves and an animated solo by Berg, a marvelously gifted improviser. Ascione followed with another inspired solo.

Having undergone a sex-change from John to Jennifer a few years ago, Leitham exhibits a refreshing sense of humor about her transformation, introducing "The Altered Blues" as a tune written for her surgeon, Dr. Alter (really!). It was a haunting piece with a repeated bass motif, an inventive use of harmonics and Ascione's spirited hand-drumming.

"Riff Raff," also by Leitham, was an infectious harmonic riff. The trio finished with the poignant beauty of "One Hand on the Heart" from "West Side Story." Berg's piano solo was totally enraptured and touched the listener with visceral power.

We were pleasantly surprised by the soulful sophistication of singer Giacomo Gates, a natural-born hipster with an easy delivery, a throaty baritone voice and an engaging stage presence. Accompanied by pianist Bill Mays, bassist Jennifer Leitham and drummer Todd Strait, he enthusiastically launched into Tadd Dameron's "Ladybird," the first of several tunes from Gates' new release "Centerpiece," reviewed elsewhere in this issue of *Jazz*. Combining scat and yodel somewhat in the style of the late Leon Thomas, Gates immediately established himself as a formidable vocal stylist.



Photo by Tom Ineck

British singer Lee Gibson is accompanied by pianist Shelly Berg and bassist Gerald Spaits.

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Up next was Harry “Sweets” Edison’s “Centerpiece,” with lyrics by Jon Hendricks. Gates’ own lyrics were the focus of “Lullaby of Birdland,” complete with a vocalization of Dexter Gordon’s timeless tenor solo. The lyrics to “Hungry Man” by Bobby Troup are the ultimate in hipster chic, rhyming “chop suey” and “St. Louie,” “steamed clams in a bucket” and “Pawtucket,” “turkey” and “Albuquerque.” Whoa!

Gates slowed the tempo down for “You’d Be So Nice to Come Home To,” and added a very convincing “trombone” solo in his aptly burnished vocal timbre. With a tip of the hat to Thelonious Monk, he ended his first set of the weekend with “Too Many Things,” which is his own lyric version of “Think of One,” and Monk’s “Straight, No Chaser.”

One return act that never gets old and always has something new to offer is the Eldar Djangirov Trio. Now age 17, Djangirov has appeared at every TJF since its inception in 1998. He was just 11 years old, then, and already his enormous potential was obvious. Now playing and composing and leading in a fully mature manner, he has lived up to that potential in every way.



*Giacomo Gates takes off on a scat solo.*



*Eldar Djangirov, at age 17, still astounds listeners at the keyboard.*

Photo by Tom Ineck

From the solo piano introduction to Juan Tizol’s “Caravan,” his astounding speed and dexterity signaled another leap forward for Djangirov since we last heard him. His near-psychedelic rapport with longtime bandmates bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Todd Strait also was immediately apparent. With powerful two-fisted block chords, Djangirov lifted Bobby Timmons’ “Moanin’” to a new level of blues sophistication, while Monk’s “Round Midnight” received a gentle treatment and a profound keyboard cadenza.

Djangirov’s funk leanings became even more evident on a rousing “Watermelon Man,” Herbie Hancock’s classic. “Raindrops” showcased the young composer’s own gift, and a very fast “All the Things You Are” had mouths agape as listeners marveled at his ever-developing technique.

Alto saxophonists Gary Foster and Brent Jensen co-fronted a competent sextet through a varied set. After the whole band performed Lee Konitz’s “Dream Stepper,” which is based on the changes of “You Stepped Out of a Dream,” and Hank Mobley’s rarely heard “Funk in Deep Freeze,” a medley spotlighted individuals—Jensen on “Lover Man,” pianist Jon Mayer on “But Beautiful,” bassist Gerald Spaits

on “Someone to Watch Over Me” and Foster on “I Thought About You.” The band reformed for an alto summit on “Friends Again,” Lannie Morgan’s take on “Just Friends.”

Unlike years past, the late evening sets on Saturday and Sunday were staged in the lower-level Hill Festival Hall, formerly the setting for TJF buffet dinners. The setting is intimate, just large enough for the few dozen hold-outs who hadn’t given up the ship by 9:30 p.m.

Sunday morning’s opener, a solo set by pianist Bill Mays, was a tour de force. Mays proved his thorough knowledge of the jazz repertoire and the keyboard by taking requests from the audience. Always a risky business, Mays upped the ante by playing them as one long medley. From “Stardust,” he cleverly segued into Herbie Hancock’s “Dolphin Dance,” then into a deft deconstruction of “All the Things You Are.” From there, he shifted into “The Nearness of You” and “Misty,” before choosing one of his own favorites, Jelly Roll Morton’s “Grandpa’s Spells,” and finishing with Ellington’s “I Let a Song Go Out of My Heart.”

Gary Foster and Ken Peplowski faced off on clarinets to launch a set accompanied by Mays, bassist Jay

Photo by Tom Ineck

Leonhart and drummer Joe LaBarbera. On “There Will Never Be Another You,” they imaginatively wove interweaving clarinet lines before the rhythm section entered the fray. Switching to alto and tenor saxes respectively, Foster and “Peps” tackled Horace Silver’s “Strollin’,” which also featured some tasteful, restrained but virtuosic drum work.

Good listeners, Foster and Peplowski responded in a heartbeat to each other’s tenor and alto lines on a duet rendition of “Alone Together.” But the blockbuster was “Hot House,” Tadd Dameron’s bop transformation of Cole Porter’s “What is This Thing Called Love.” Mays set the pace with a driving, inventive piano solo, followed by Foster and Peplowski solos, building in intensity and imagination. LaBarbera switched easily from brushes to sticks to increase the momentum and Leonhart swung the bass with a vengeance.

Paul Smith returned for a comparatively straight solo set, beginning with “Yesterdays” and a ballad treatment of Michel Legrand’s “How Do You Keep the Music Playing?” with some beautiful chordal flourishes. Classical influences were evident on “Send



*Ken Peplowski on tenor sax (left) and Brent Jensen on alto sax face off.*

in the Clowns,” which, Smith joked, was played on the recent election day in California, when some 95 candidates vied for governor. Smith displayed his stride chops on his own composition, “Here Comes Ralph and Dick,” dedicated to Ralph Sutton and Dick Hyman. He finished with “Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered,” an apt description of slack-jawed listeners who marveled at Smith’s uncanny ability.



*Pianist Paul Smith hovers over the keyboard.*

*Photo by Tom Ineck*

The Leitham trio again challenged the audience with lesser-known tunes like the bluesy “Bittersweet” by bassist Sam Jones. They performed Henry Mancini’s “Dreamsville” in 5/4 and 6/4 instead of the usual 4/4, and “Besame Mucho” featured a booming, dramatic bass drone. Leitham’s snappy tune “The Studio City Stomp” had bluegrass underpinnings. The closer, Basie’s “Jumpin’ at the Woodside,” was taken at a very fast clip.

Gates again mesmerized the audience with a set of smart scat vocals and horn-like legato phrasing on such tunes as “Jeanine,” by Duke Pearson and Oscar Brown Jr., “Lady Be Good,” Eddie Jefferson’s “Disappointed,” which is based on a Charlie Parker solo, and a very slow and bluesy “Route 66.”

The very cool “I Told You I Love You, Now Get Out” was followed by the tasteful ballad “P.S. I Love You,” and Paul Desmond’s “Take Five,” with lyrics by Gates. Ascione’s drum solo in the final tune was reminiscent of Joe Morello, the drummer in Brubeck’s classic quartet.

Smith returned with his trio for some more keyboard fun and games, including “Here’s That Rainy Day,” a very slow “Makin’ Whoopee,” “One Note Samba,” “It Might as Well Be Spring,” “Jeepers Creepers,” and “It Never Entered My Mind,” with Jim DeJulio skillfully taking the melody on bass.

The annual aggregation of bass players yielded some bright moments, despite the disappointing sound quality of six unmiked instruments vying for attention. Gerald Spaits got things rolling with Sonny Rollins’ “Doxy,” and Bob Bowman followed with his “Mexican Happy Hour,” but John Clayton took the prize with a lovely arrangement of “Gales Force,” his tribute to the late bassist Larry Gales. Five bassists bowed their instruments as Jennifer Leitham kept a pizzicato pulse during

*Photo by Tom Ineck*

*Continued on page 12*

*Continued from page 11*

the somber piece.

Leitham reprised “Riff Raff,” DeJulio contributed a chart for “Amazing Grace,” and Jay Leonhart’s arrangement of “It’s a Wonderful World” had Leonhart, Clayton and other singing along with the song’s cheerful sentiment.

Leaping into Wayne Shorter’s “Footprints” with both feet and both hands, Djangirov virtually exploded with a driving attack on the keyboard. He continues to close in on Oscar Peterson and Art Tatum in terms of spellbinding technique, perfectly integrating his two hands and exhibiting a keen understanding of dynamics. The trio created an irresistible funk riff on Herbie Hancock’s “Chameleon,” building to an intensity that was nearly overwhelming, due in part to a sound system that was operating in the red zone.

Even on the ballad “Nature Boy,” Djangirov injected incredibly fast right-hand runs. He introduced a solo piano rendition of Chick Corea’s “Armando’s Rumba” with a classical flourish not unlike Rachmaninoff might have attempted before taking off at breakneck speed. One doubts that even the virtuosic composer could play it at this tempo.

Peplowski and Vache teamed up for an all-star quintet also featuring pianist Berg, bassist DeJulio and drummer LaBarbera. Highlights included a lively “Doggin’ Around,” with “Peps” on tenor and Vache on muted cornet, Billy Strayhorn’s “Lotus Blossom,” with Peplowski on clarinet and Berg contributing a tasteful and emotive solo, and the bebop standard “Scrapple from the Apple,” on which everyone took a scrappy solo.

Lee Gibson, backed only by a piano trio, was the perfect choice to host the first set of Sunday’s “late-night cabaret.” Her stately British demeanor and personal approach to a lyric connected instantly with her small, but rapt audience as she sang “They Can’t Take



Photo by Tom Ineck

*Saxophonist Ken Peplowski (left) and cornetist Warren Vache jam during the grand finale of the 2004 Topeka Jazz Festival.*

That Away From Me,” a waltz-time “Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most,” and an uptempo reading of “On a Clear Day.” Breaking from the rigid format, she invited guitarist Rod Fleeman to the stage for a duet on “Cry Me a River,” replicating the hit by Julie London and guitarist Barney Kessel. She also offered such favorites as “Time After Time” and—from Gershwin’s “Porgy and Bess”—“It Ain’t Necessarily So,” and “I Loves You Porgy.”

Also excelling in the late evening spotlight was a quartet consisting of Gary Foster, Joe Cartwright, Gerald Spaits and Joe LaBarbera. Foster switched to flute for a bossa nova take on “Here’s That Rainy Day,” and LaBarbera’s composing skills were on display on “Bella Luce (Beautiful Light),” a ballad he wrote for the late trumpeter and legendary eccentric Conte Candoli.

The final day of the festival began with an Ellington-heavy set fronted by alto saxophonist Jensen and trombonist Gordon and backed by the superb rhythm section of Mayer, DeJulio and Williams. Gordon soloed on “In a Mellotone” before Jensen segued into “I Let a Song Go out of My Heart.” Both took solos on Joe Henderson’s

“Recorda Me (Remember Me),” then the band launched into the ballad “In a Sentimental Mood,” a Gordon vehicle demonstrating his amazing tonguing technique, embouchure control and articulation with a plunger-muted solo. The set ended with an uptempo “Joy Spring,” on which Gordon and Jensen stated the melody in unison.

For its last set of the weekend, the Paul Smith Trio blazed through a series of familiar tunes, including “On Green Dolphin Street,” “They Can’t Take That Away From Me,” and a medley of “Honeysuckle Rose” and “Scrapple From the Apple.” “A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square” received the only straight ballad reading by the mischievous keyboard wizard, before he launched into an outrageous rendition of “Surrey with the Fringe on Top,” followed by “I’ve Grown Accustomed to Your Face,” “I Could Have Danced All Night” and “Get Me to the Church On Time.”

Gary Foster and Brent Jensen matched alto saxes on Lee Konitz’s “Subconscious-Lee,” as they co-led a sextet also featuring pianist Cartwright, bassist Clayton, guitarist Fleeman and drummer Ruskin. Foster switched to flute for Jobim’s “Wave,” but

Cartwright delivered the standout solo. Jensen and Fleeman, with bass and drums only, evoked saxophonist Paul Desmond and guitarist Jim Hall in their performance of “Polka Dots and Moonbeams.” Ruskin set the pace and Cartwright drove the tempo for an uptempo “Invitation,” with both Foster and Jensen on altos.

Djangirov and company embarked on Herbie Hancock’s “Maiden Voyage” with another astonishing burst of keyboard brilliance. Benny Carter’s “When Lights Are Low” was followed by “Body and Soul” and a solo piano tour de force on “It Might as Well Be Spring.”

After the original composition “Perplexity,” Djangirov wrapped up the set with “Sweet Georgia Brown,” taken at a furious tempo that had bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Todd Strait straining to keep up.

The vocal magic of Giacomo Gates returned with pianist Mays, bassist Leitham and drummer Ascione and an original take on Gershwin’s “Summertime,” complete with flute-like whistling. Gates wrote the lyrics for Lee Morgan’s bluesy “Speedball,” replacing the drug-related theme with the more common addition to a woman. In “Since I Fell For You,” Mays cleverly



*Bassist John Clayton keeps a steady, swinging pulse whenever he plays.*

injected a snippet of “Round Midnight” as Gates sang, “I get the blues for you around 12 o’clock each night.”

Gates sang the Babs Gonzales lyric for “Ornithology,” Charlie Parker’s treatment of “How High the Moon,” then returned to his own lyric contribution to Oliver Nelson’s “Stolen Moments.” His lyrics to Miles Davis’ “Milestones” are very hip, making one hope that Gates will continue to practice his craft as a wordsmith.

Photo by Tom Ineck

Jensen and Foster again teamed up, this time with pianist Berg, bassist Clayton and drummer LaBarbera, for a set highlighted by two Lennie Tristano tunes. The tricky little number called “317 E. 32<sup>nd</sup> St.” is the legendary pianist’s restructuring of “Out of Nowhere,” and “Ablution” is his impression of “All the Things You Are.” Both provided a little variety in an otherwise conventional set list that included “My Funny Valentine” and “Stella by Starlight.”

Pianist Bill Mays provided most of the excitement in Lee Gibson’s final appearance, which included Gershwin’s “But Not for Me,” “That Old Black Magic,” “I Can’t Give You Anything But Love,” “Never Let Me Go” and an uptempo “My Shining Hour.” Mays contributed outstanding solos on nearly every tune.

Ken Peplowski fronted a quartet that put the finishing, swinging touches on TJJF 2004. “Peps” delivered some solid tenor sax work, Shelly Berg contributed a Garnerish two-fisted solo and Jennifer Leitham followed with a thick-chorded bass solo on Johnny Mandel’s “Low Life.”

Peplowski switched to clarinet for Sergio Mendes’ “So Many Stars,” the TJJF veteran’s tribute to Artistic Director Jim Monroe for his long dedication to the festival and to jazz in general.

I attended 30 of the 40 sets, enough live jazz to satisfy even the most voracious listener. The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Topeka Jazz Festival is history, and it is time to set our sights on No. 8, a slight stylistic departure with, among others, headliners Bobby Watson & Horizon, Norman Hedman & Tropicque, the Hot Club of San Francisco, Alaadeen & Group 21, the Doug Talley Quartet, the Joe Cartwright Trio, the Russ Long Trio and Interstring. The festival was booked by new TJJF Artistic Director Butch Berman and promises to be another enjoyable gathering of world-class jazz.

**For more on the 2005 Topeka Jazz Festival, see the ad on page 33.**



*Bassist Jim DeJulio and drummer Todd Strait anchor the rhythm section.*

Photo by Tom Ineck

## Master Class

# Music education still is “key to the highway”

By Butch Berman

TOPEKA, Kan.--When I think of music education today, the old fabled blues song by Big Bill Broonzy, “Key to the Highway,” always comes to mind. It seems to me that a fair majority of today’s youth seem to have a “lock” on what they think is required listening, due to either our jaded mass media or simple peer pressure. If you ask any kid on the street today, “Whose CD are you buying or downloading?” you’ll probably hear Britney, Brandy or Fantasia. Even references to the Beatles, let alone Elvis, will draw blank stares, as I’m sure all my baby-boomer great ones will seem archaic.

That’s why a “key,” or a method to spark curiosity and creativity, must be imposed to unlock their closed minds and keep all the wonderful traditions alive and intact.

Luckily, at least for jazz aficionados, our educational system is on the mark, nationwide offering courses from the history of jazz to discovering one’s own inner talents through improvisation. This was all very apparent as this year’s master class for youth unfolded prior to the 2004 Topeka Jazz Festival.

Fourteen young musicians (all boys...come on gals, I know you’re out there) from three area schools—Topeka High School, Washburn Rural High School and Seaman High School—were chosen to participate in this year’s Topeka Jazz Festival All-Star Academy Master Class. They are:

Benet Braun, Topeka High School, piano; Zachary Carr, Washburn Rural High School, bass; Dustin Damme, Seaman High School, baritone sax; Nathan Frost, Seaman High School, guitar; Clinton Jacob, Seaman High School, vocal; Daniel Juarez, Washburn Rural High School, vibraphone; Adam



Photo by Butch Berman

Students and professional musicians gather for master class.

Karol, Topeka High School, vocal; Ben Leifer, Topeka High School, bass; Jason Pulach, Seaman High School, tenor sax; Philip Sanders, Topeka High School, trombone; Charlie Stern, Topeka High School, trumpet; Joe Swann, Seaman High School, trumpet; Lefan Thompson, Topeka High School, guitar; Galen Zachritz, Topeka High School, drums.

Also present was educator Cliff Manning from Washburn Rural High School, a swell chap who reminisced with me about old ‘60s r&b bands, i.e.



Photo by Butch Berman

Jay Leonhart demonstrates bass technique to student musicians.

The Fabulous Flippers from the Kansas-Missouri circuits. Filling in for pianist Shelly Berg was Marilyn Foree of Seaman High School.

New York drummer Joe Ascione again led the esteemed collection of all-star mentors this year. Aiding him were vocalist Lee Gibson of London, KC guitarist Rod Fleeman, Mr. New York himself, Jay Leonhart, on bass, and the one and only reed master, Ken Peplowski, to round out this incredible crew of players and educators.

Topeka Jazz Festival Artistic Director Jim Monroe gathered everyone in coffee-laden round-table discussions to administer all the proper introductions, whereupon Joe Ascione took over leadership of the proceedings.

After introducing the teachers to the students, a panel discussion was in order, mostly led by Joe, Jay and Ken. Many superb tips and developmental ideas and thought patterns were projected unto these eager young musicians’ minds.

1) Everything in music reflects who you are.

2) You may or may not make a lot of money in the music biz. Either

way, you must be true to yourself, and be happy just to be able to follow your dreams.

3) Technique is important, so absorb as much as you can...then just let go and blow.

4) Music chooses you.

5) After you've tried to master jazz theory, learn the blues and "rhythm changes," then concentrate on getting

to know each song, its meaning and lyrics if applicable.

6) Jazz education can be the best thing that happens to aspiring players, but you have to *learn to listen*.

7) You NEVER stop learning.

Both the educators and students adjourned to the stage for some hands-on teaching of their instruments and lots of jamming. Lucky kids. When I was

young we learned music by the old "note" or "rote" methods. It's amazing that some of us got enough out of it all to end up as musicians, professional or not.

The **Berman Music Foundation** is proud to be able to help support this most important endeavor, the musical education of our children. Can't wait until next year.

## 2004 Topeka Jazz Party primes the weekend pump

By Tom Ineck

TOPEKA, Kan.--In an attempt to entice more area jazz fans to buy tickets for the three-day 2004 Topeka Jazz Festival, organizers ramped up a free pre-fest Friday evening event, called the Topeka Yard Party, featuring festival favorite Karrin Allyson and an all-star assemblage of TJF artists.

By all reports, the yard party—staged on the lawn west of the Topeka Performing Arts Center—successfully encouraged many participants to spend at least part of their Memorial Day weekend inside TPAC listening to some of the best jazz around. For festival novices, it was a nice introduction to the level of talent and the format that they could expect. For those of us TJF veterans who were going to be there anyway, it was simply a great way to get the long weekend off to a good start.

The TJF all-stars included trombonist Wycliffe Gordon, saxophonist Ken Peplowski, pianists Shelly Berg and Bill Mays, guitarist Rod Fleeman, bassists Jennifer Leitham and Jay Leonhart, drummers Joe Ascione and Jackie Williams and singers Lee Gibson and Giacomo Gates, rotating on and off the stage in "jazz party" fashion. I failed to take detailed notes during this part of the party because I was too busy sampling food by local restaurants, which had set up booths in the street nearby.

Allyson's performance was a treat for area fans who hadn't seen much of



Photo by Tom Ineck

Karrin Allyson is backed by (from left) Paul Smith, Bob Bowman and Todd Strait.

her since her move to New York City a few years ago. Governor Kathleen Sebelius was on hand to introduce the popular headliner, who was accompanied by some of her old Kansas City cohorts, including pianist Paul Smith, guitarists Rod Fleeman and Danny Embrey, bassist Bob Bowman and drummer Todd Strait.

Karrin introduced a handful of tunes from her just-released CD, "Wild for You," her ninth recording for Concord Records (*reviewed elsewhere in this issue of Jazz*). But first she turned to a familiar standard, "Nature Boy," followed by Mose Allison's "Everybody's Cryin' Mercy" and Tommy Flanagan's "The Bluebird," with lyrics by Jay Leonhart.

The first number from the new release was Allyson's marvelous Latin-tinged interpretation of Joni Mitchell's

"All I Want." Fleeman, who usually plays an acoustic instrument, surprised listeners with some hot licks on electric guitar. Allyson followed with the gorgeous Jimmy Webb ballad "The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress," before turning to Jobim's "So Danca Samba," an old favorite of the singer's.

Also on the evening's set list were Dave Brubeck's "The Duke," "Blame it on My Youth," "Under Paris Skies," and Melissa Manchester's "I Got Eyes," from the new release. Allyson finished with a lively rendition of "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," with guest artists Leonhart on bas, Ken Peplowski on clarinet, and Joe Ascione on drums.

Despite the heat of the evening, the performance perfectly primed the pump for a weekend of air-conditioned comfort and swinging sounds indoors.

## Travel Story

# It's a tale of two suite(s) in Kansas City

By Butch Berman

KANSAS CITY, Mo.--Leaving our tales of Topeka to my legal eagle Tony Rager, let me tell you all about Grace and my most recent trip to our favorite getaway, Kansas City, Mo.

We tried to celebrate Grace's June 25 birthday there a few weeks ago, but got hung up and decided to expand our bi-monthly trips to Topeka to continue getting ready for the 2005 TJF, and head to KC afterwards.

As I reported in past issues, we've grown to love staying at a cozy little loft-style hotel Karrin Allyson turned us onto called The Historic Suites at Sixth and Central. It was perfect in every way, except that the rooms were almost too large for two people to hang in. Well anyway, due to who-knows-what, they decided to shut down and turn the rooms into condos. So we decided to "Yup" it up a bit and do the Embassy Suites near Westport and the Plaza on 43<sup>rd</sup> Street. There were too many screaming kids, a lack of intimacy, and the free breakfasts were not quite as yummy, but in all it may be a better location for us to



Photo by Butch Berman

Gerald Spaits (from left), Stan Kessler and Ray DeMarchi at the Fairmont

do our jazz and/or shopping thing. The rooms were just the right size, and their staff was very efficient. A little pricier, but you get your money's worth. Also, you can't beat a hotel that's just around the corner from my all-time favorite record store in KC, The Music Exchange, now on Broadway.

After checking in, we got together with friends and BMF consultants Gerald and Leslie Spaits for a great dinner at a new-to-us establishment called The Thai Place. Scrumptious, very hot and spicy, and great service adds this eatery to our ever-growing list. We then headed down to The Fairmont to catch another dear pal and great player, trumpeter Stan Kessler, who was doing the weekend with their regular house band, the Joe Cartwright Trio, which also includes Gerald on bass and Ray DeMarchi on drums. It was Latin night at the Oak Room, and they performed well and classy as always. We were bushed, and caught a cab back to the Embassy after a set and a half to hit the rack.

On Saturday night, we took Claude Williams' lovely widow, Blanche, out for dinner to catch up on old times. I've known Claude and Blanche for more than 30 years and hadn't seen Blanche since their illnesses befell them and Claude died.

We chose the Plaza III, which was their special haunt and the main stage for Claude's gigs for many years. Blanche looked great. She and Grace got along wonderfully, and the staff treated us like royalty, so glad to have Blanche back. It may be one of



Photo by Butch Berman

Joe Cartwright



Photo by Butch Berman

Ray DeMarchi and Gerald Spaits





Photo by Butch Berman

*Luqman Hamza at the Plaza III*

KC's finest restaurants, super food and service, plus a gorgeous room loaded with mucho jazz memorabilia, a great stage, and a fine line-up of acts nightly.

We were lucky to catch a double bill—the magnificent vocal and piano stylings of Luqman Hamza followed by the ageless and still swinging Scamps. We all have known each other for years, and they had all hung and swung with Claude for over half a century. The Scamps on this occasion were made up of these most talented musicians: Rudy Massingale on piano; Lucky Wesley on bass; Wallace Jones on drums and Art Taylor and Eddie Saunders on saxophones. Many stories, a few tears and



Photo by Butch Berman

*The Scamps at the Plaza III*



Photo by Grace Sankey Berman

*Blanche and Butch at the Plaza III*



Photo by Butch Berman

*Blanche and Luqman Hamza*

gales of laughter were shared. I hope you enjoy the pictures we snapped that sweet, summer evening.

### *From the (Legal) Eagle's Eye*

## **Discussions expand the jazz potential in Topeka**

By Tony Rager. . . . .

TOPEKA, Kan.—On July 22 Butch, Grace and I headed down to Topeka, Kan., for a mid-summer meeting with our friends at the Topeka Performing Arts Center. The TPAC group had an especially busy day, as they were preparing for a Ron White Blue Collar Comedy concert that night. Mark Radziejewski graciously took the time to stop by for a nice dinner and relaxed conversation about status of the 2005 Topeka Jazz Festival and the Berman Jazz Series. Butch plans

to meet again with TPAC just prior to the first concert of the Berman Jazz Series in September.

The following morning we met with Bill Leifer and Scott Henson. Bill and Scott are committee members for the Coleman Hawkins Neighborhood Festival. "Hawkfest," as it is known, is another jazz festival in Topeka that plays the weekend following the Topeka Jazz Festival.

Our preliminary discussions centered on exploring ways that the

two festivals could benefit each other and establishing a relationship that has never existed in the past between these two festivals. Although we are only in initial discussions, we all agreed that an open dialogue should ultimately benefit the Midwest and the promotion of jazz as a truly American art form.

*Editor's Note: Tony Rager is a paralegal with Cline Williams law firm, which represents the Berman Music Foundation.*

## Concert Review

## Darryl White records live in KC with Watson

By Tom Ineck

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—When a Lincoln-based musician and educator travels to Kansas City to team up with a group of heavyweights for a two-night live recording, it's newsworthy.

So when Darryl White, University of Nebraska-Lincoln professor of trumpet, announced his intention to tape performances July 29-30 at Kansas City's famed Blue Room with saxophonists Bobby Watson and Gerald Dunn, pianist Jeff Jenkins, bassist Kenny Walker and drummer Mike Warren, I made plans to cover the second evening for the **Berman Music Foundation**.

With the exception of Warren on drums, it was the same lineup that gathered for a 2003 Jazz in June concert in Lincoln. The drummer on that occasion was Matt Houston, but Warren fit the bill admirably.

White and his longtime Denver-area associates Jenkins and Walker always work well together, but the addition of Watson and Dunn ups the ante considerably, making for an exciting and challenging musical exploration as the virtuosic Watson continually pushes the envelope and Dunn lends his soulful, full-bodied tenor sound to the mix. Billed as a White-fronted sextet, it was in fact a meeting of like minds and musical equals.

Watson announced the opener, "Alter Ego," as a tribute to the recently deceased composer, the brilliant pianist James Williams, who died July 20 of liver cancer at age 53. First recorded by Williams 20 years ago, it was the perfect homage to the fallen master, with solo contributions by White on flugelhorn, Dunn on tenor and Watson on soprano sax.

"Lynn," by Jenkins, also a gifted



Bobby Watson (from left), Darryl White and Gerald Dunn at the Blue Room



Darryl White

composer, was a funky number set up with a percussive riff stated by the three-horn front line of muted trumpet, alto and tenor saxes. Dunn and White—on open horn—punctuated the proceedings with appropriately funky solos.

Victor Young's romantic ballad "Beautiful Love," was given a searching, uptempo treatment, a variation of the version White recorded for his 1999 debut CD, "Ancient Memories." White's trumpet solo soared with a bright, piercing tone. Watson, whose wealth of ideas and technical mastery are always a joy to listen to, dove into a typically exciting alto solo, prompting Jenkins to deliver a simi-

larly inspired piano solo.

Jenkins' moody arrangement of "America the Beautiful" seemed an odd choice, but proved musically rewarding. Flugelhorn, alto and tenor saxes stated the melody in a wistful harmony with a tempo that shifted in and out of waltz time. Solos by Jenkins, Watson, White and Walker gave new meaning and depth to a time-worn patriotic anthem.

The horns again joined forces on the funky Charles Mingus tune, "Nostalgia in Times Square," a favorite of White's that he recorded for his 2002 CD "In the Fullness of Time." Like that version, the live performance was highlighted by Jenkins masterful comping and Walker's intensely swinging bass solo.

"Beatitudes" comes from a 1983 Watson recording of the same name. Watson's astounding breath control and virtuosity on alto sax command your attention. In response, White delivered a bravura trumpet solo and Dunn chimed in with a swinging tenor

Photo by Beverly Rehkop

Photo by Beverly Rehkop



Jeff Jenkins

Photo by Beverly Rehkop

another inventive piano solo, the trumpeter-composer dug into the melody with feeling.

“Blues for E.J.” is a jaunty little number purportedly “composed” by Jenkins’ four-year-old son, Ellington Jenkins. The elder Jenkins explained that he merely transcribed a melody that “E.J.” was singing while they rode in a car together. Everyone got a solo spotlight during the loping blues progression, climaxing with some lively exchanges between Jenkins and Warren, who firmly and persuasively held the rhythmic reins throughout the evening.

statement, demonstrating his beautifully burnished tone. For White’s lovely ballad “Nanpet (The Called of God),” the three horns stated the melody before Watson switched to flute, sweetening the sound. After

Wayne Shorter’s “United” was another showcase for the entire ensemble, with exceptional solos offered by White on flugelhorn, Dunn on tenor, Watson on soprano sax, Jenkins on piano and Warren on drums. Dunn was especially impressive in a Trane-inspired solo. “When the Saints Go Marching In,” another White favorite, ended the second set with flair.

Thanks go to Kansas City photographer Beverly Rehkop for the excellent accompanying photographs.

Stay tuned here for details on the CD release date.

## KC columnist: Jazz deserves a patriotic response

By Joe Klopus

KANSAS CITY, Mo.--It’s been said before, and in a time when the meaning of “patriotism” becomes twisted, it bears saying again:

No America, no jazz.

Art Blakey used to say that very thing as he circled the globe evangelizing for this great American music.

Oh, and Blakey was a Muslim. Make of that what you will.

The elements of this creation come from all over, just like the people of this country.

Listen to the beat that they say is a living link to Africa. Listen to the horns and the piano and the bass that were designed in Europe. Listen to the scales and keys that have been used in classical music for centuries then listen to the bent notes and blues inflections like those you’d hear in Africa or Asia or India.

And in modern jazz, listen to the rhythmic and harmonic intricacies that were brought to perfection by Charlie Parker, a guy from Kansas City. Make of *that* what

you will.

Trace it anywhere you like. Still the roaring, funky final product is nothing but American.

America didn’t make anything easy for those who created jazz. But in conditions of poverty and Jim Crow oppression, they somehow found the fire and spirit that made these musical elements sing together in a courageous new way.

And in doing that, they created Western culture’s most durable system for improvising music.

The genius of it is its simplicity, its adaptability. It’s universal. And the whole world knows it now.

Sometimes it’s called America’s classical music, as if everyone here knew it well. (Only in our dreams.)

Sometimes it’s called America’s only original art form. (We’ll leave it for others to debate the truth of that.)

Tourists come to America from every part of the globe to hear the music. Chances are someone from a faraway land is in Kansas City this weekend, looking to hear jazz.

Often these travelers go away amazed and frustrated that we don’t pay enough attention to this cultural treasure right under our noses.

The rest of the world knows the true value of this music. It’s too bad that so many American’s don’t.

Other nations might hate us for other reasons, but we still have this powerful export called jazz, and they still look to us for leadership.

Jazz shows the beauties of the American spirit even as it shines a light on many of our faults.

From those African roots and those European building blocks, we’ve built something that’s American through and through. To write it off as a relic of the past, to ignore it when it needs our support, to do anything that pushes it further from the mainstream, would be more than simply stupid.

It would be unpatriotic.

*Editor’s Note: Joe Klopus writes for the Kansas City Star, where this column first appeared. It is reprinted with the permission of the author.*

## Tomfoolery

# Guitarist Duke Robillard deserves wider recognition

By Tom Ineck

God bless the Zoo Bar for 31 years of introducing and educating the unsuspecting residents of Lincoln, Neb., to the joys of live music in an intimate setting, especially the many diverse forms of the blues.

Almost single-handedly nourishing an audience for a style of music that otherwise languished in near obscurity, original Zoo Bar booker and owner Larry Boehmer established a worldwide reputation for excellence that continues to this day, under the guidance of current owners Pete Watters and Larry's sons Sean and Jeff Boehmer.

But they can't do it all, folks. It is up to people who appreciate high-quality music to continue to patronize the Zoo and its top-rank artists. That brings us to the subject of this column.

To coincide with the recent celebration of the bar's 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary, a week of indoor performances were booked at the club in the week preceding the two-day outdoor festivities. Among the longtime Zoo Bar favorites who made appearances were rock-heavy guitar player Jimmy Thackery and harmonica wailer Rod Piazza.

But for my money, the one show not to miss was a rare performance by guitarist Duke Robillard, who hadn't set foot in the club for at least two years. His ample credentials include more than 20 recordings under his own name, as well as four with Roomful of Blues, two with the Legendary Blues Band and one with the Fabulous Thunderbirds. He has toured and recorded with Jay McShann, Johnny Adams, Ruth Brown, Jimmy Witherspoon, Ronnie Earl, Pinetop Perkins, John Hammond and Bob



Photo by Rich Hoover

Duke Robillard at the Zoo Bar in 2002

Dylan (on the 1997 Grammy winner "Time Out of Mind"). He won the W.C. Handy award for best blues guitarist in 2000 and 2001.

Hoping to beat the rush before the tiny venue sold out, I visited the club Friday afternoon to buy an \$8 advance ticket for the Monday night gig. I was unable to persuade anyone else to join me on a "work night," so I went alone, certain I would encounter a packed house and hook up with plenty of friends and Zoo Bar regulars when I got there.

To my disappointment, only 40 or 50 people showed up all evening for Robillard's typically astounding display of tasteful guitar mastery, showmanship and stylistic variety ranging from straight-ahead blues to swing and r&b. As always, he was backed by a quartet of thorough professionals capable of shifting gears on a dime. Duke himself was armed with a Stratocaster, a Telecaster and a big hollow-body Gibson to achieve the



Two of Duke Robillard's jazziest CDs

perfect sound for any occasion. Saxophonist Doug James switched from tenor to baritone horns, the bassist was adept at both acoustic and electric instruments, keyboardist Matt McCabe adapted well to any tempo and the drummer laid down a monster groove.

They played several tunes from Robillard's latest release, "Blue Mood," a tribute to T-Bone Walker, including "T-Bone Shuffle," "You Don't Love Me" and the great "Love is a Gamble." Drawn from his wealth of previously recorded material were such classics as "Buy Me a Dog" and "I Live the Life I Love." He even pulled one out of his hat, granting a wish from a young lady near the bandstand for "Just Kiss Me," a Robillard composition from the mid-'80s that he hadn't played for a long time.

During a break, I bought two of Robillard's jazzier CDs, "Conversations in Swing Guitar," with fellow fretmaster Herb Ellis, and "Duke Robillard Plays Jazz," a wonderful compilation from his years with Rounder Records. Both immensely talented and extremely modest, Robillard nearly blushed when I later told him that he is the best. "You do it all, man!" I raved.

"Well, I do *some* of it!" he replied with a grateful smile.

Concert Review

Eldar Djangirov's skill continues to impress

By Tom Ineck

Eldar Djangirov's appearance June 1 in the lead-off performance at this year's Jazz in June series in Lincoln, Neb., was actually the caper on a generous four-day exposure to the 17-year-old's pianistic accomplishments.

Those of us who attended the 2004 Topeka Jazz Festival already had basked in the glory of his playing over the entire Memorial Day weekend, in three daily sets with bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Todd Strait. After marveling at that steady infusion of Djangirovian genius, there were few surprises during his two-hour, outdoor Lincoln concert. Nonetheless, we continued to marvel at his mastery of the keyboard.

For his Lincoln appearance, Djangirov was joined by Spaits and drummer Tommy Ruskin, another Kansas City stalwart sitting in for Strait, who returned to his Oregon home after the Topeka gig. Having performed and recorded with Djangirov for several years, Spaits has developed an innate sensitivity to the pianist's whims. Ruskin, an accomplished and swinging timekeeper,



Eldar Djangirov

Photo by Rich Hoover

was new to the trio and missed a couple of cues, but he quickly recovered.

Djangirov opened with Juan Tizol's "Caravan," one of his favorite showcases for his amazing speed and drive. Bobby Timmons' "Moanin'" showed a penchant for unusual harmonies with swinging, two-fisted block chords in mid-tempo. "Body and Soul," of course, offered the perfect opportunity to demonstrate his skills with a ballad. Among many jazz musicians, it has become the standard for excellence in that tempo.

As Djangirov's musical taste develops, he seems to be acquiring a preference for more modern jazz masters, especially Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea and Wayne Shorter, whose compositions are beginning to play a more prominent role in his setlists. During his Lincoln performance, he played no fewer than three Hancock tunes, in addition to a solo piano performance of Corea's "Armando's Rumba" and a stunning rendition of Shorter's "Footprints."

Hancock's "Maiden Voyage" was showcased in the first set, with his "Dolphin Dance" and "Cantaloupe Island" grouped together in the second set, making for a powerful funk groove, especially in his exciting interpretation of the latter soul-jazz classic.

The impressionistic "Raindrops" was the only original composition that Djangirov chose for this evening. Instead, he drew primarily from the more familiar standards of swing, bebop and the Great American Songbook. He and Spaits took the melody line in unison on the superfast "Scrapple from the Apple." "Nature Boy" received a very slow reading with lush arpeggios contrasting with rapid single-note runs.

For a second solo piano showcase,

D j a n g i r o v

wisely chose the timeless "It Might as Well Be Spring." He applied orchestral shadings to his treatment of the Sinatra classic, "Fly Me to the Moon." As is often the case,

he completed the regular performance with a rip-roaring rendition of "Sweet Georgia Brown," before returning for an encore performance of "Take the A Train."

One can only wonder, with much anticipation, what direction Djangirov will take under his new multiple-CD contract with Sony Records. His first entry on that label is due for release in August, with John Patitucci on bass, Todd Strait on drums and a special guest appearance by saxophonist Michael Brecker.



Gerald Spaits

Photo by Rich Hoover



Tommy Ruskin

Photo by Rich Hoover

Concert Review

Kendra Shank returns to Lincoln in good form

By Tom Ineck

Kendra Shank's much anticipated return to Lincoln after nearly 10 years was on June 8, a perfect spring evening for the 1,000-plus audience attending the outdoor Jazz in June concert.

Shank has come a long ways from her days as a folksinger-guitarist plying her trade in Seattle. Inspired later in life by the vocal magic of Billie Holiday and other jazz stylists, she made a career change that has brought her to New York City and to the forefront of modern jazz vocal technique. But rather than abandon the essential elements of her folk and pop music craft, she blended them seamlessly into her new musical direction, creating a uniquely personal sound.

For her Lincoln appearance, Shank was joined by a group of New York musicians who are not afraid of new directions and unique sounds, pianist Frank Kimbrough of the Jazz Composers Collective, bassist Dean Johnson and drummer Tony Moreno.

Shank showed her scat-singing expertise on a mid-tempo rendition of



Kendra Shank with bassist Dean Johnson at Jazz in June

Photo by Rich Hoover

Moreno. Kimbrough also contributed "For Duke," a wonderful ballad with lyrics by his wife.

"This Is New," composed by Kurt Weill with lyrics by Ira Gershwin, got an uptempo workout to close the first set. The standard "Beautiful Love" kicked off round two, beginning slowly then moving uptempo. Shank is not afraid to try something unfamiliar, such as "I'm Never Sure" by Seattle bass player Jeff Johnson.

Lincoln's wonderful "I've Got Thunder (and It Rings)" was followed by the Jimmy Rowles masterpiece "The Peacocks," but the unusual, exotic melody defies vocalization and, as a result, the lyrics by Norma Winstone do not scan very well.

Shank exhibited a powerful vocal presence on the traditional folk tune "Black is the Color of My True Love's Hair." Best of all was the finale, an exquisite rendition of Lennon and McCartney's "Let It Be," with a gorgeous solo by Kimbrough that expanded on the tune's spiritual nature.

"Alone Together," with Kimbrough also contributing an interesting choice of backing chords, which were anything but predictable. As she is preparing for the release of a CD tribute to the uncompromising music of singer and composer Abbey Lincoln, Shank performed several of Lincoln's tunes throughout the evening, beginning with "Throw It Away," which she and this same combo already recorded on her "Reflections" CD.

Stylistically, Shank seems very closely attuned to Lincoln's unusual approach to music and lyrics, exhibiting a rare compatibility with the life-affirming message of tunes like "Throw It Away." She also did justice to the expansive, joyful Lincoln anthem "Wholly Earth," which featured a great piano solo by Kimbrough, and "The Music is the Magic," a hypnotic riff which was created by Shank on kalimba (or "thumb piano") and by the inspired playing of Kimbrough, Johnson and



Frank Kimbrough

Photo by Rich Hoover



Tony Moreno

Photo by Rich Hoover

## Concert Review

# Something is missing in Carlini Quartet concert

By Tom Ineck

When the John Carlini Quartet took the stage June 15 for the third concert in the 2004 Jazz in June series in Lincoln, all the elements were in place for a performance reminiscent of last year's appearance by the Don Stiernberg Quartet.

Here was a foursome of competent musicians wielding instruments usually associated with bluegrass music (guitar, mandolin, upright bass and drums) but possessing sufficient jazz smarts to deliver an incendiary performance. Here, in fact, was Stiernberg himself, a virtuoso mandolinist returning to a Jazz in June setting that seemed so ideal in 2003. The weather cooperated, and the audience swelled to over 3,000 people.

But it seemed something was missing, and I don't think it was merely that the novelty of jazz mandolin had worn thin. Stiernberg's playing was as inspired and his stage banter was as captivating as last year's.



Brian Glassman

Photo by Rich Hoover

For some reason, this quartet, with a stellar rhythm section consisting of bassist Brian Glassman and drummer Phillip Gratteau, did not generate the same level of excitement. Perhaps it is just one of those musical mysteries.

That said, the cool swing of "Blues Al Dente" got things off to a good start, with Carlini and Stiernberg doubling on the melody. Bluegrass master Tony Rice's composition "Devlin" was taken with at a shuffle rhythm and the jazz



John Carlini

Photo by Rich Hoover



Don Stiernberg

Photo by Rich Hoover

standard "Secret Love," usually performed as a ballad, received an uptempo reading with Stiernberg leading the way on mandolin. The tune appears on "Angel Eyes," the latest recording by Stiernberg and Carlini, which is reviewed elsewhere on this website.

The band followed with another jazz standard from the new release, a bossa-styled version of Jerome Kern's "All the Things You Are," which segued neatly into Juan Tizol's "Carnavan," perhaps the highlight of the evening. Stiernberg, Carlini and Gratteau turned in exemplary solos.

"Bittersweet," from Carlini's CD "The Game's Afoot!" is a melancholy minor-key melody that received an aptly wistful performance. The quartet's take on Gershwin's "They Can't Take That Away From Me" was a recasting of Errol Garner's live improvisation on the classic 1955 recording "Concert by the Sea."

Carlini's "Kook Kitsch," also from "The Game's Afoot!" was taken at a fast clip and featured a dexterous solo by Glassman. The final standard of the evening was Kern's "The Way You Look Tonight." Taken uptempo, the tune was a showcase for Stiernberg's playing and a segment of impressive mandolin-bass trades, although the two instruments are sonically lopsided.

Carlini contributed a fine ballad "So It Goes," and Stiernberg finished the second set and the concert with his clever vocalizing of "Brain Cloudy Blues," with



Phillip Gratteau

Photo by Rich Hoover

apologies to Kokomo Arnold's "Milk Cow Blues." All in all, the capable Carlini quartet was disappointing only when compared with the special magic of last year's Stiernberg-led band.

## Concert Review

## Jensen Quartet delivers stunning concert

By Tom Ineck

The wild card of the 2004 Jazz in June series came on June 22, with a stunning performance by the relatively unknown trumpeter Ingrid Jensen and her quartet.

Born in Vancouver, B.C., and a veteran of the Lionel Hampton big band and the all-female orchestra Diva, she has established a reputation with her own small groups in more recent years. The hard-charging outfit she fronted in Lincoln also featured Seamus Blake on tenor sax, organist Gary Versace and drummer Clarence Penn. All come with impressive credentials and a common desire to push the envelope and challenge the musical status quo.

They began with an explosive opening salvo with Jensen weaving an intricate trumpet line, Versace aiding and abetting on the Hammond B-3 and Blake contributing a free-blowing solo. Versace's composition "Now as Then" is a haunting piece, which featured Jensen on flugelhorn.

Hoagy Carmichael's "Georgia on My Mind" was treated with unconventional harmonies as Jensen launched on a flight of fancy with Versace switching to piano. As the tune evolved into "Flowers," he moved back to the organ, soon followed by solos on tenor sax and flugelhorn.



Seamus Blake

Versace layered an organ solo over a single-note drone to dramatic effect.

The quartet next performed the original ballad "Silver Twilight." Constructed from muted trumpet with sax and organ, the piece reflected the



Ingrid Jensen

group's knack for group improvisation. In her arrangement of "The Night Has a Thousand Eyes," Jensen reimagined the standard by beginning at mid-tempo, shifting upward and back down in a free-flowing performance.

Jensen performed at least two compositions by her sister. On "Red Roads," Jensen stated the melody on flugelhorn. "Harrell's Mirror," dedicated to trumpeter Tom Harrell, was a fast blues featuring trumpeter Darryl White of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Music as guest soloist, doubling with Jensen. Everyone got a solo spotlight. White's own statement soared, but with great control.

It should be emphasized that drummer Clarence Penn held this very adventurous unit together with some astounding playing. It is no accident that he has worked with some of today's most skillful and renowned leaders, including saxophonist Joshua Redman and David Sanchez, trumpeters Dave Douglas, Jon Faddis and Randy



Gary Versace

Brecker, vibraphonist Stefon Harris, pianists Joey Calderazzo, Cyrus Chestnut and Makoto Ozone, bassist Christian McBride and singers Betty Carter, Jimmy Scott and Kevin Mahogany.

Not easy listening music or background music for casual conversation, Jensen's music demands attention as it develops, slowly metamorphosing into a thing of beauty. It is unfortunate that few in the Jazz in June audience of several thousand are willing to devote that attention to such challenging music. Jensen, like all serious jazz artists, deserves more.



Clarence Penn



## Concert Review

# NJO plays to 13-year record audience of 6,000

By Tom Ineck

The five-week 2004 Jazz in June concert series was brought to a roaring conclusion June 29 with the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra, a local favorite for nearly 30 years. Ideal weather and the special appearance of guest vocalist Annette Murrell helped boost attendance to an estimated 6,000 people, a new record for the 13-year-old outdoor performance series.

The NJO kicked things off with a challenging Dave Sharp arrangement of Cole Porter's "Easy to Love" that gave the ensemble something on which to sharpen its wits for the evening ahead. Musical Director Ed Love took a nice soprano sax solo on a reinterpretation of the classic "Dinah." New to the NJO songbook is Fred Rogers' familiar ditty "Won't You Be My Neighbor," with Love taking a playful tenor solo.

Murrell took the stage for three numbers in the first set, beginning with a mid-tempo rendition of Gershwin's "Our Love is Here to Stay" and continuing with another Gershwin favorite, the ballad "The Man I Love." Murrell demonstrated her innate ability to turn a jazz standard into a soul excursion, playing very loose with the original melody and immediately improvising with sliding, blues-tinged harmonies.

An added treat in the NJO lineup was the inclusion of Dennis Schneider in the trumpet section and taking a solo on "The Man I Love." Schneider, retired professor of trumpet at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, is too seldom heard in the Capital City these days.

Murrell completed her first appearance with the band by taking "All of Me" uptempo, a performance capped by an outstanding Bob Krueger



Dave Sharp takes a solo.

trumpet solo.

The NJO continued the set with Don Menza's "Gravy," a funky blues tune that was given a nice piano introduction by Dan Cerveny. Chris Acker followed with a trombone solo before Love, on tenor sax, traded fours with alto saxophonist Mark Benson.

The highlight of the first set was its concluding number, "Moanin'," a fast and furious composition by Charles Mingus. It was baritone saxophonist Scott Vicroy who excelled here, blaz-

Photo by Tom Ineck



Nebraska Jazz Orchestra plays to record crowd of 6,000 people.

ing through the opening statement and setting up subsequent solos by Sharp on alto sax and Darren Pettit on tenor sax.

It was unfortunate that I had to leave halfway through the concert for a previous engagement. It is, however, comforting to know that I will likely have other opportunities to hear Nebraska's most talented jazz ensemble when it resumes its regular season of performances this fall. Stay tuned here for later developments.



Scott Vicroy

Photo by Tom Ineck

## Claude Williams selected discography

**Below is an abbreviated discography of the late Claude "Fiddler" Williams. For more information visit [www.hotjazznyc.com](http://www.hotjazznyc.com)**

"Swingin' the Blues" (Bullseye Blues & Jazz division of Rounder, 2000, recorded 1999)

"King of Kansas City" (Progressive Records, 1997, recorded 1996)

"SwingTime in New York" (Progressive Records, 1995, recorded 1994)

"Live at J's, Volumes 1 & 2" (Arhoolie, 1993, recorded 1989)

"Call for the Fiddler" (SteepleChase, 1976. CD released 1994)

"Fiddler's Dream" (Classic Jazz 135, 1980, recorded 1977)

"Claude Williams' Kansas City Giants" (Big Bear Records, Bear 25, 1980, recorded 1979)

**Editor's Note: A tribute to Williams begins on the following page.**

*Memorial***Claude “Fiddler” Williams dies at age 96***Personal notes on a humble hero and friend**By Russ Dantzler*

*Claude “Fiddler” Williams died April 25 at the age of 96. Russ Dantzler was a longtime friend and professional colleague. In the following article, he shares some of his memories of the jazz legend.*

Claude Williams entered my life when I was turning 20. It was astounding that this vibrant man over 40 years my senior, now the last known active musician to have recorded jazz in the 1920s, was always so open minded and curious, so completely alive. Until recently, I had always thought of him as younger than me.

I first heard him in 1972 at the Legionnaire Club in my hometown, Lincoln, Nebraska, where he was tripling on violin, electric guitar and electric bass with pianist Jay McShann and drummer Paul Gunther. Days later, he was having lunch at a favorite long-gone hole-in-the wall called the Soul Food Kitchen. I introduced myself, and was warmly and graciously received, even though it didn't seem we had anything in common but a love for music and perhaps good greens. In the following years, I found that he was warm and gracious to nearly anyone who wanted to speak with him. He never failed to be surprised if someone he didn't know knew who he was, an indication of a humble man.

Claude and Jay came to my Lincoln home in 1972 to tape some song lyrics Jay wanted to re-learn from records. I was nervous and excited, as I considered them both to be nothing less than walking jazz history books. I picked them both up, Claude first, and found he wasn't staying in a very nice place. They shocked me by being cool,



Photo by Russ Dantzler

*The man knew how to relax! Claude “Fiddler” Williams at home in Hell’s Kitchen, New York City, in 1989.*

calm, and so much *fun* it was hard to believe. Soon Claude stayed with me whenever he played Lincoln, and I got to visit him on many memorable weekends in Kansas City. In KC, we'd often hear the Frank Smith Trio at the Phillips house, The Fabulous Five Scamps at the Sni-Blue Lounge, or whoever was jamming at The Mutual Musicians Foundation. He'd sit in, never failing to raise the level of the music a couple of notches.

Wherever Claude was, he would, any and every time he felt like it, play a 4-hour-or-more club gig, then come home and play until all the musicians who came by were worn out. One night, after one of those long Zoo Bar gigs in Lincoln, he went through three young guitar players in my living room into the wee hours, not even considering packing up his instrument until all other musicians had done so.

For six months of 1989 we were roommates in a little 4th floor walkup

apartment in New York City, my home since late 1987, where we packed in a capacity crowd for his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. This was just one of many times that Blanche cooked up enough mouth-watering beans, rice and cornbread to feed an army. On that evening, with pianist Sir Roland Hanna, vocalist Carrie Smith and bassist Al McKibbon among the guests, the food had to be relayed from the stove to the living area, as it was not possible to move in that space.

Claude's time in New York City was the result of his signing on with “Black and Blue, a Musical Revue.” This major Broadway production was a celebration of the greatest Black dancers, musicians and singers available, including vocalists Ruth Brown and Carrie Smith, very young hooper Savion Glover, and Claude as the senior member in the big band. With spectacular musicians, some from other cities, and Mondays off, an opportunity presented itself. On three consecutive Monday

nights, Claude was able to make his first recordings as a leader since the 1970s, and the first to be released as CDs.

Claude's relaxed endurance on the road was impressive. He traveled light, and didn't seem to understand what jet-lag was, even when flying as far as Australia and Japan. He would happily work any number of consecutive days in a row, working more than one job each of those days! The lesson I still wish I could have learned from him was his ability to remain relaxed under nearly any circumstances. He seemed to let things that would disturb me just roll off his back. I believe his lack of perceived stress was a genuine key to his healthy and long life. He was repeatedly asked his secret, and his answer was not at all complicated. "Don't worry 'bout nothing."

He gave me, and I know many others, some wonderful moments. Claude came to my mother's hospital bedside in Lincoln with his violin in 1982 when she was in bad shape in an intensive care unit. We snuck in that fiddle, knowing it would be against hospital rules to do so. Claude had a mute on his instrument, and asked my mom for a request. As he softly played "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head," a nurse parted the curtain to speak to us. Busted, we thought. The nurse smiled and asked Claude if he could please play louder, so patients and staff could hear him better. My mom recovered, and went on to proudly tell this story to just about every person she ever knew. Both of my sisters wanted him to play at their weddings. A swinging entertainer off stage as well as on, he once, in his 80s at the time, swung upside down from a clothesline pole just to get Blanche, his host Bruce Cudly and myself laughing.

Claude was not being hired often as a bandleader in the 70s and 80s, and this was a frustration. When possible, bands were hired and gigs created for him to front in Lincoln, most often he played the Zoo Bar. Preceding one such engagement in 1992,

some Lincoln friends voiced frustration that their young sons never had an opportunity to hear Claude. I told them that if they brought steaks and Courvoisier to the place he was staying, we might work something out. The result was a memorable, spontaneous, children's music workshop. My niece played a song for Claude on her violin, and he then asked if he might borrow it. When he played, the rapt attention of even the youngest of the children there was something to behold.

Each musician lucky enough to have played with him under *any* circumstances was given a lesson, often none of it spoken. In the form of the most inviting challenge, he'd get the very best out of everyone he played with. When first approached about teaching lessons, he told me that with little formal training, he wasn't qualified, again displaying his modesty. He eventually allowed me to bring him students anyway. We set the format that they would play something for him first, and he would answer. Before you knew it, they were jamming together and getting the education of a lifetime. Matt Glaser, String Department head of the Berklee School of Music and an important supporter of Claude's, told me he has at least 200 students who can play Fiddler's arrangement of "You've Got to See Your Mama, Ev'ry Night, or You Can't See Mama At All." Claude also admired Matt, once proudly telling me that his violin "sounds more like me than me."

It was such a pleasure to not just hear Claude work with his esteemed peers, but to witness their amazement at his spontaneous inventions as they shared stages. I think in particular of pianists Roland Hanna and Barry Harris, bassists Earl May and Keter Betts, saxophonists Bill Easley and Kim Park, guitarists Gray Sargent, Joe Cohn and Bucky Pizzarelli, every vocalist he worked

with, including Etta Jones, and drummer Jimmy Lovelace. Off stage, it was equally gratifying to see his first private meeting and jam with violinist Regina Carter in mid-1997, and countless students, including cellist Akua Dixon and violinist John Intrator of France.

Touring Japan briefly in 1997 with The Statesmen of Jazz was fascinating. Not only did fans typically know more about his history than Americans ever will, but they also revere age as we never have. Claude was treated like royalty, yet remained as unassuming as ever.

Fiddler went to Washington, DC, and the White House to accept a National Heritage Fellowship Award in 1998, along with "Pops" Staples of the Staples Singers. It was a delight to witness Pops' first sighting of Claude in the lobby of the Willard Hotel. His first words were, "How old are you?" Fiddler was a very young 90 at that time. Pops looked Claude over for a moment and then asked, "And you don't *hurt* or nothin'?"

To Claude Williams, each performance was more than music, it was being respectful to an audience. He always presented himself to his audience well-groomed, smiling, and on time. In the smallest of joints he might play, he dressed as if to meet heads of state. It was part of the job of his sidemen to have shined shoes.

By the late 1980s, Claude may have had a thousand people in Lincoln who considered themselves to be his friend – and who he honored by treating them as his friends. By the late 1990s, he had the same sort of family of friends in New York City.

Claude played his accessible swing and entertained in a way that made his fortunate audiences grin and tap their feet — he would often say he didn't like to play music "over people's heads." Sorry Claude – we can still hear you, and you are definitely over our heads now.

## Jazz on Disc

# Allyson revels in her love of modern pop classics

By Tom Ineck



**KARRIN ALLYSON**  
**Wild for You**  
 Concord Records

As Karrin Allyson notes in her message to listeners contained herein, her penchant for pop tunes is nothing new to fans who have been paying attention to her recording career, dating back to her first Concord release in 1992. Here, however, it comes to fruition with a complete collection of songs more often linked with folk, rock and soul artists than with an accomplished jazz stylist like Allyson.

The concept of “Wild for You” works only if you free your mind long enough to abandon preconceptions of what constitutes jazz and jazz interpretation. Like Allyson, my musical interests have extensive roots in the popular music of my youth and adolescence, so while I don’t think “Wild for You” ranks with her two previous masterpieces, 2001’s “Ballads: Remembering John Coltrane” and 2002’s “In Blue,” it works for me.

Thanks to Allyson’s adventurous spirit and the imaginative arrangements of Gil Goldstein, many of these tunes transcend their non-jazz origins. Joni Mitchell’s “All I Want” gets a lively Jamaican treatment and “Wild World” swings with a jazz sensibility missing from the

Cat Stevens recording of 1970. Rod Fleeman’s moaning guitar fills and Todd Strait’s “death march” snare drumming build in intensity on “(Goin’) Wild For You Baby,” which Allyson executes with bluesy desperation in her voice.

Allyson’s voice floats freely over and around the rising and falling lines of Mitchell’s “Help Me,” which is further aided by Goldstein’s piano solo and Fleeman’s on electric guitar, a revelation for listeners used to hearing him on an acoustic instrument only. Goldstein on accordion, Danny Embrey on guitar and Bob Bowman on bass elevate Elton John’s “Sorry Seems to be the Hardest Word,” as does Embrey’s guitar solo on Melissa Manchester’s “I Got Eyes,” which gets a spirited interpretation by Allyson.

I must confess to a soft spot in my heart for Jimmy Webb’s poetic ballad “The Moon is a Harsh Mistress.” Allyson has a true gift for walking that thin line between the richly romantic and the merely maudlin, a balancing act she also accomplished with aplomb on her rendition of “That Day,” based on the love theme from the film “Cinema Paradiso,” on her 1999 release “From Paris to Rio.”

Fleeman’s inspired guitar solo drives Carole King’s “It’s Too Late,” as does Embrey’s on the funky “Feel Like Makin’ Love.” Allyson’s yearning voice blends beautifully with her own piano playing and Embrey’s sinuous guitar lines on the closer, the “The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face.”



**GIACOMO GATES**  
**Centerpiece**  
 Origin Records

Giacomo Gates didn’t decide to make a career of music until 1990, at age 40, and his debut recording appeared five years later. Since then he has established himself as a member in excellent standing of the ever-so-exclusive club of male jazz singers.

With “Centerpiece,” Gates takes another leap forward, with a wide-ranging repertoire demonstrating his many vocal skills and the natural appeal of his deeply resonant baritone instrument.

On Gershwin’s “Summertime,” he playfully expands on the staid DuBose Heyward lyric and improvises a whistling “flute” solo with solid support from bassist Ray Drummond. A born storyteller, he introduces “I Told You I Love You, Now Get Out” by relating a personal experience, and later responds with a horn-like scat solo as pianist Harold Danko expertly comps. Guitarist Vic Juris comps and solos through the bluesy title track, as Gates impressively stretches the Jon Hendricks lyric a few beats ahead.

“How High the Moon/Ornithology” gets a mid-tempo bop workout featuring an undulating scat solo and an alto sax statement by Vincent Herring. Gates shows his romantic incli-

nations and delivers a convincing “trombone” solo on the ballad “You’d Be So Nice to Come Home To.” His brilliant take on “All of Me” is actually a King Pleasure lyric inspired by an Illinois Jacquet tenor sax solo.

Herring and Danko shine in their solo spots on the swinging Tadd Dameron tune “Ladybird.” The great lyric by Stanley Cornfield is given a breezy, rubato rendering by Gates. The storyteller returns with a narrative introduction that sets the ideal mood for his very hip rendition of Bobby Troup’s classic “Route 66.” The mood is languorous and loungey, wistful and warm on “Scotch & Soda.”

The tempo accelerates again on “Lester Leaps In/I Got the Blues,” with a lyric by Eddie Jefferson based on a James Moody tenor solo and incorporating a verse from “I Got Rhythm.” Gates own lyrical skills come into play on Miles Davis’ “Milestones,” which he imagines as a commentary on living in the moment:

Gates bids a bluesy farewell with “Hittin’ the Jug/Swan Song,” emphasizing the Gene “Jug” Ammons tenor solo over the King Pleasure lyric. Here’s hoping that Gates and his musical gifts won’t be away too long.



**THE FRANK & JOE SHOW**  
**“33 1/3”**  
**Hyena Records**

As the name implies, The Frank and Joe Show is a flashy entertainment package chockfull of musical thrills and chills, courtesy of guitarist Frank Vignola and drum-

mer Joe Ascione. The energy is irrepressible, the virtuosity mind-boggling. Come one, come all! This is no sideshow; it’s the center ring of the carnival—with jugglers, fire-eaters, tight-rope walkers and a little clowning around.

Vignola and Ascione, well-known for their neo-swing tendencies and monster technique, are perfectly compatible as they romp through this recording of largely retro compositions that is also forward-looking in its imaginative arrangements and performances.

Many of the tunes are brief and taken at a furious clip. Cole Porter’s “Begin the Beguine” starts things off swinging at mid-tempo before segueing into “Caravan,” with Vignola doubling on lead and rhythm guitars, harkening back to the heady days of Django Reinhardt and the Hot Club of Paris. The first of three guest vocalists, Janis Siegel, steps up with Porter’s stodgy “Don’t Fence Me In,” but it has never sounded so hip as when Vignola and Ascione multiply the tempo and everyone races home.

Even “Tico Tico” sounds fresh, with violin accompaniment and assorted percussion undergirding Vignola’s sprightly fretwork. Mozart’s “Turkish Dance” is transformed into the “Mozart Jam” at a frantic tempo. Dr. John lends his sassy N’awlins drawl to a seductive “Sheik of Araby.” The original “Sweet Rhythm” creates a churning rhythm mix for Vignola’s soaring guitar lines.

Jane Monheit’s overdubbed vocals harmonize romantically on “Besame Mucho,” which contains another Djangoesque Vignola solo. A locomotive motif jump-starts the “Spiderman” theme, with Ascione displaying high-speed brushwork behind Vignola’s runaway-train guitar licks. Of course, the brief “Flight of the Bumblebee” also gets the

barn-burning treatment at an incredible tempo.

The big surprise is a funky take on the Doobie Brothers’ “Long Train Runnin’.” One of the set’s few weak tracks is the straight interpretation of the mediocre ballad “Alone Again Naturally.” On the other hand, the ballad treatment of “Stardust” is exquisite.

Despite the fact that many of these tunes date from the era of the 78 rpm recording, the CD purposely evokes the era of the LP, from its title to the cover art to the pretense of Side One and Side Two listings and its total length, which is less than 40 minutes.



**HERBIE MANN & PHIL WOODS**  
**Beyond Brooklyn**  
**MCG Jazz**

Herbie Mann’s final recording is a lasting testament to his individuality and his ability to adapt to different musical settings. For the first time in nearly 50 years, he is rejoined with fellow Brooklyn native alto saxophone giant Phil Woods for a collection of tunes running the gamut from blues and ballads to bebop classics and Mann’s beloved Brazilian melodies. It is “Beyond Brooklyn,” indeed.

Recorded a few months before his death at age 73 on July 1, 2003, “Beyond Brooklyn” begins with Mann’s Latin treatment of the lovely Bill Evans ballad “We Will Meet Again,” also featuring the sensitive

*Continued on page 30*

guitar work of Marty Ashby. Woods enters briefly, and only after Mann has established the gently swinging mood to perfection. Throughout this set, Woods is in peak form.

Woods' composition "Alvin G." is arranged for a three-horn front line, adding Jay Ashby on trombone to great effect. He returns for a Latin take on Duke Ellington's "Azure." Bop makes a dramatic entrance on the lively Oscar Pettiford tune "Bohemia After Dark," on which Mann and Woods cut their teeth in the early 1950s, while playing together in a Brooklyn "joint" named Tony's.

Woods sits out Mann's arrangement of Jobim's "Caminhos Cruzados," performed on deeply resonant alto flute. A short interpretation of Charlie Parker's "Au Privave" gets things moving briskly again. Woods switches to clarinet and Gill Goldstein enters on accordion for Mann's wistful composition "Another Shade of Blues." Woods and Mann, again on alto flute, both shine on Mann's Latin-tinged "Sir Charles Duke."

Woods' profound rendering of Billy Strayhorn's funereal "Blood Count" might almost be considered a personal tribute to the terminally ill Mann, who sits this one out. But most poignant of all is the bonus track, a moving version of "Time After Time" recorded in Phoenix just weeks before Mann's death, on which the flutist is accompanied only by guitarist Ashby and trombonist Ashby.

It must be mentioned that all of the supporting musicians show exemplary restraint and compatibility with their co-leaders, not surprising considering their wealth of experience and past associations. Bassist Paul Socolow, drummer Ricky Sebastian and accordion master Gil Goldstein all worked with Mann, and pianist Alain Mallet, bassist Dwayne Dolphin and drummer Roger Humphries also make valuable contributions.



### MOACIR SANTOS Ouro Negro Adventure Music

"Ouro Negro," or "Black Gold," is a generous double disc that amounts to a long-overdue monument to Brazilian composer Moacir Santos, one of his country's leading composers and arrangers for nearly 50 years, although he was largely forgotten there after moving to the United States in 1967.

Beginning as a saxophone player in the style of Ben Webster and Coleman Hawkins, Santos quickly progressed as conductor, arranger and composer. In 1967, he wrote the soundtrack of the film "Love in the Pacific."

For this tribute to the master, the original Santos compositions—many of them dating to his classic 1965 solo debut "Coisas (Things)," as well as 1972's "Maestro" and 1974's "Saudade"—were transcribed and re-recorded in Rio de Janeiro in 2001. The result is a rich treasure trove of 28 pieces lovingly performed by great musicians. Among the featured Brazilian artists are Milton Nascimento, João Bosco, Joyce, João Donato,

Djavan, Gilberto Gil, Ed Motta and Santos himself.

While adhering pretty closely to the traditional Brazilian music forms of samba and bossa nova, the music here is a jazzier, more complex amalgam with arrangements emphasizing lush harmonies and unusual time signatures. The orchestral palette is broad, with significant contributions from the lower-pitched horns (trombone and bass trombone, tenor and baritone saxes, flugelhorn) often in contrast with such instruments as flute, clarinet, alto sax, trumpet, vibraphone, electric and acoustic guitars, organ, piano, and, of course, drums, congas and other percussion.

For example, the opener ("Coisa No. 5—Nana") begins with congas and pulsing saxes, then trumpets and trombones enter in contrapuntal opposition. There are solo statements by flute and baritone sax before the full ensemble returns. "Coisa No. 6" is a brassy workout with brief solos on tenor sax, baritone sax, trumpet and piano, all accompanied by various percussion and hand claps.

These moments, and so many more, make "Ouro Negro" a joy to listen to time and again. "Black Gold," indeed.

The 40-page booklet enclosed contains session photos, background on the music and personal notes on each tune by Santos. With this mammoth project and other impressive recent releases, Adventure Music is helping to document the irresistible and influential sound of Brazil.

### Breaking News

Just as *Jazz* went to "press," we found out that jazz vocalist Teraesa Vinson's debut CD, "Opportunity Please Knock," has been released.

The **Berman Music Foundation** will review the recording and

post it soon on the BMF website at [www.bermanmusicfoundation.org](http://www.bermanmusicfoundation.org).

The CD features Ron Blake, sax; Tom Dempsey, guitar; Carlton Holmes, piano; Nicki Parrott, bass; and Dion Parson, drums.

Vinson's own website is at [www.teraesavinson.com](http://www.teraesavinson.com).

*Discorama***The latest works by two pianists recommended**By *Butch Berman*

**FRANK KIMBROUGH**  
**Lullabluebye**  
 Palmetto Records



**MARC SEALES**  
**Live: A Time, A Place, A Journey**  
 Origin Records

I'm a pretty good rock 'n' roll piano thumper, an OK rhythm 'n' blues stylist, and an average blues shuffler, but when it comes to my current fave genre—jazz—unfortunately, I'm just a hack with good ears, style and panache.

I enrolled in Jamie Aebersold's Jazz Summer Workshops outside of Chicago a few years ago thinking, "I've been in the rockin' trenches for years. This should be a snap." Well, I was in for a major-league ego deflation experience as my years of 1-4-5s didn't translate overnight to 2-5-1, and here were dozens of 14-year-old, junior Bill Evanses already knowing Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage" by heart, and they didn't give a damn about Jerry Lee Lewis or Fats Domino.

I drove back home realizing what

a long, hard self-sacrificing road of constant study and practice, practice, practice it takes to become a professional jazz musician and, in the case of this article, a piano player. Compared to what I'd observed at jazz camp, getting good at r 'n' r was a snap, and it renewed my respect for the true masters of the field such as Marc Seales and Frank Kimbrough, to name two and preamble the reviews of their fine, recently recorded efforts.

Based in New York City is my new friend Frank Kimbrough, well-schooled in a wide variety of techniques as a bebop practitioner who reintroduced us all to the brilliance of Herbie Nichols. He is an astute accompanist now backing another dear compadre of mine, songstress Kendra Shank, who turned me on to Frank several years ago. Palmetto has a lot to be proud of signing Frank, and putting out his gorgeous endeavor entitled "Lullabluebye."

Marc Seales, with Origin as the "house" pianist with the wonderful group New Stories, is also a very heavy cat I first discovered backing a dear friend who passed recently, the late, great sax man Don Lanphere. Marc, whose versatile style can hush a room with a lush ballad, then take off on an interstellar New Age-like epic jazz adventure, is vastly gaining more deserved national recognition as the Origin catalogue grows. This live CD, "A Time, a Place, a Journey," is no exception..

These two geniuses from different backgrounds have sent me their newest creations within the past few months. They both are repeatedly played on my stereo system and I recommend them all as remarkable pieces of work guaranteed to catch your ear and turn your head.

My foundation and the Jazz Col-

lective that Frank and partner bassist Ben Allison have put together have been around for about the same amount of time (approaching a decade). Obviously, I've compiled a large collection of his recorded works—all killer, no filler. I'm a bone fide purveyor of his art. However, I feel "Lullabluebye" may be his definitive masterpiece. Backed to perfection by Allison on bass and drummer Matt Wilson, they're as tight as if they were born Siamese triplets (no disrespect intended).

Marc's band, too, is an awesome, powerful unit. He is augmented by the electric guitar prowess of Fred Hamilton; the rugged, but snappy, tight rhythm section consisting of Steve Korn on drums and bassist Phil Sparks; and percussion man Lary Barilleau adding to the mix with flair and gusto as Mark Taylor rounds out this unit nicely with his inventive reed work on alto and soprano saxes. Whether Weather Report was an inspiration or not, their majestic aura and deep groove frame similarities and keep the listener locked in for the entire ride. It's very expansive and moving at the same time.

Equally compelling, but in a more subtle, acoustic trio performance, Frank gets to the zone in a flash, enticing his bandmates and audience to step inside his amazing brain and feel the same spirits that transcend his energy to music in such a high level of delivery. The clever choice of "You Only Live Twice" makes you yearn for more Bondish jazzy excursions. "Ben's Tune," penned by Allison, is the only other number not written by Kimbrough, who proves his mettle as a songwriter of contention.

Pick up these new creations by a couple of cats who make the "job" of jazz reviewing a sublime pleasure.

*Jazz on Disc, Part 2***Stiernberg & Carlini create refreshing “string jazz”**

By Ted Eschliman



**DON STIERNBERG & JOHN CARLINI**  
**Angel Eyes**  
**Blue Night Records**

From the new master of mandolin swing, Don Stiernberg and East Coast ace architect of the new acoustic, guitarist John Carlini, comes Blue Night Records release, “Angel Eyes,” a collection of some of the 20th century’s inarguably greatest jazz standards. From their strings to your ears, this is one of the most refreshing acoustic “string jazz” releases of the year.

Known already to the local area from last year’s Jazz in June appearance, Lincoln had the fortune of a repeat performance of Don Stiernberg in the 2004 J in J series with the John Carlini Quartet. Backed by two of Chicago’s hottest rhythm players, bassist Jim Cox and drummer Phillip Gratteau (stalwart sidemen with Marian McPartland) and recorded in all its acoustic purity in the studio of Chicago ace producer Steve Rashid, this project breaks new ground in string swing. Familiar music that never overstays its welcome, these 11 songs are performed in refreshing new radiance.

Carlini, having earned his stripes touring eight seasons with the Ice Capades as musical director and con-

ductor, is no stranger to a good recognizable tune. Combine his composing skills with the working “tuxedo musician” sensibilities of mandolinist Stiernberg, you get such familiar tunes as a toe-tapping “The Way You Look Tonight,” a soul-stirring ballad, “My One and Only Love,” and a bossa-inflected version of Hammerstein/Kern’s “All the Things You Are.”

The magic of these two is the way they banter these standards on two entirely different levels—the clever alternate changes of late 20<sup>th</sup> century harmony that engage the “musician’s musician” without betraying an audience that just wants to hear a recognizable song. “How About You” introduces the listener from free cadenza solo guitar right into a finger-snapping statement of the tune, and the two proceed through a complementary thematic journey, volleying clever licks, seamlessly trading solo and supporting roles like two instruments, one brain. One would never know their physical homes are

geographically separated by a thousand plus miles.

Balance the light-hearted “They Can’t Take That Away from Me” with some slow ballad versions of Thelonious Monk’s “Round Midnight” and the enduring “Tenderly,” and we get the full range of an acoustic string’s potential. Texturally easy on the ears, but tickling to the brain, the two melody instruments make just enough notes to fool us into thinking there are more players. This aural illusion still manages to fill the sonic plate, or should I say “palate.”

Like a final spoon of delicious dessert, we leave the CD spinning with the timeless classic “Secret Love,” and we know we are satiated. Talk from the two about a future collaboration, perhaps an all-Gershwin collection, is all too much to anticipate. For fans, this is like a five-year-old on Christmas Eve.

Get back in the studio, boys. The world could use more acoustic string jazz like this!

**Letter to the Editor**  
**Drummer Parson appreciates review**

Hi Butch,

I’m just getting back to you, thanking you for the wonderful review of our CD “People Music” (reviewed in the Spring 2004 issue of *Jazz*). I was on tour in Europe and didn’t check my e-mail, so now I’m back. With your permission, I would like to use some of your quotes for my press kit and pro-

motion. Butch, I know you’re very busy and I appreciate your taking time to review our CD. I will stay in touch and keep you posted on any upcoming events that we are doing. Thank you for caring.

Best regards,

D (Dion Parson)



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- Guitar: Danny Embrey, Rod Fleeman, Paul Mehling
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**BMF and TPAC in Lincoln**



Photo by Rich Hoover

*The BMF met again with Topeka Jazz Festival representatives in Lincoln to discuss the future of the TJF. From left, they are Pamela Hatfield of the Topeka Performing Arts Center (TPAC), Butch Berman, TPAC's Rob Seitz, TPAC's Mark Radziejewski and Tom Ineck.*

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