

Berman Music Foundation

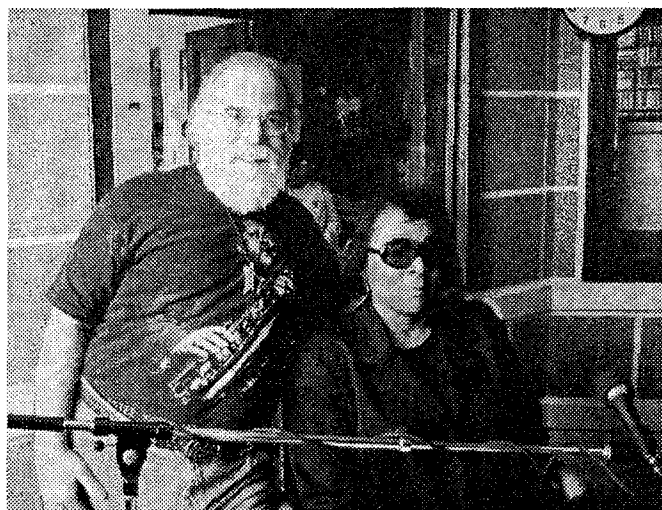


Photo By Rich Hoover

Butch Berman and Valerie Capers at KZUM.

March/April 2000

Volume 5, Number 4

BMF Holds Annual Meeting

By Tony Rager

Attendees: Butch Berman, Dave Hughes, Tom Ineck, Rich Hoover, Dan Demuth, Norman Hedman, Rebecca Kaiser, Carter Van Pelt, Dan Stogsdill, John Miles, Tony Rager

The last meeting for the Berman Music Foundation was held on June 29, 1999.

Butch Berman opened this meeting by welcoming everyone in attendance and commenting on the general status of the Foundation.

The "lion's share" of the meeting was devoted to discussion surrounding Norman Hedman and his current CD project, *Taken by Surprise*. Norman discussed promotional strategies for this second CD project including various tour options. Norman discussed possible April tour dates in South Carolina and also a west coast tour including Seattle, California and possibly Hawaii in late spring or early summer. John Miles joined the discussion to elaborate on his negotiations with Arabesque for a final contract related to the *Taken by Surprise* CD project. A great deal of discussion then followed regarding Arabesque Records' promotional techniques with regard to Norman's previous project (*One Step Closer*) and their promotion planned for this current CD project. Discussion took place regarding the possibility of finding another record label who may provide more support and promotion. Norman agreed to look into a few additional com-

panies. The Foundation intends to reach a final decision some time in March regarding its continued relationship with Arabesque Records.

The next discussion topic centered around BMF's 1999 expenses and year 2000 budget and project planning as well as the Foundation's funding and investment planning strategy. The Foundation consultants and advisors all agreed to work more diligently to stay within budget and to continue focusing resources this year primarily on the Foundation newsletter and the Norman Hedman CD project.

The meeting then proceeded to discussions re-

(Meeting continued on page 3, column 1)

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Prez Sez: Millennium Magic Ahead

By Butch Berman



Dear Jazz Fanciers,

You know - Nebraska weather, thanx to La Nina, is a lot like jazz. Often gorgeous and serene, sometimes dangerous and powerful and always - like improvisation, unpredictable. Parkas to shorts in 24 hours. Hmmm - good album title...

Anyway back to jazz, and I must say for our "off" season - it's been pretty jazzy as of late - plus a lil' dash of rock and roll is where I will start today.

Nebraska Rocks - NE Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

Sharing the board of directors with six members, two of them absent - Norfolk resident Mel Sanders and Hall of Fame founder (now residing in Nashville) Jim Casey, in attendance besides myself was former SmokeRing now Fremont banker Pinky Semrad and my former/but still annual bandmates (Nebraska Rocks All-Stars) Bob and Judi Letheby - we commenced at Judi's day-job office (thanks to the American Cancer Society) last February.

Next really big show will be August 5th at Lincoln's Pla-Mor Ballroom with sound by Steve Watts. Headliner, Charlie Burton, has confirmed and all his pre-Texas bands will be reformed to celebrate his induction - the Star Spangled Wranglers, Megatones, Rock Therapy, and Cut-Outs. To note, drummer Dave Robel pounded the beat for all four bands as well as with the Nebraska Rocks All-Stars (the Nebraska Rock and Roll Hall of Fame House Band) and I played mostly piano with the Megatones, guitar with Rock Therapy, and a little of both with the All-Stars.

Other inductee confirmed is my first bandmate (The Exploits), now residing in Seattle and still playing the blues--Mark Dalton (also a brilliant free lance writer in his own right). More complete coverage next issue.

The Sweet and Lowdown

Another fun collaboration with the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater and ole pal Dan Ladeley, their director, brought Woody Allen's new '30s jazz tinged flick "Sweet and Lowdown," based on a Django Reinhardt character portrayed by Oscar-nominee Sean Penn. Samantha Morton's best supporting nomination is also richly deserved. Great soundtrack by Dick Hyman, Howard Alden, Bucky Pizzarelli, Ken Peplowski, and others (see Tom Ineck's more indepth review on page 6). Dan does a terrific job with the Ross Film Theater and it is always a pleasure to co-sponsor an event with him and his fine concern.

Berman Foundation Annual Meeting

Our BMF just celebrated five years on the scene and had our annual meeting at the Cornhusker Hotel private dining area on February 18th (see Tony Rager's view from a "suit" on page 1). Our staff - minus Wade Wright (who runs San Francisco's coolest record store Jack's Record Cellar at 254 Scott Street), who just couldn't get away - was in full attendance with honored special guest/artist in residence Norman Hedman, whose upcoming CD "Taken by Surprise" and subsequent promotional tour were are main concerns were brainstormed in a fabulous four-hour think tank.

Had a ball with Norman, including doing our interview on my weekly show *Reboppin'* (KZUM, 89.3 FM). Saxophone master and dear friend to us both Ahmad Alaadeen with manager/partner Fanny Scott from KC, joined us for the next couple of days. 24 hour music, music, music. Talk of Norman being at this year's KC Jazz and Blues Festival is a possibility, as sadly our other pals Jo Boehr, Steve Irwin, and John Jessup have decided to pull the plug on their incredible Kansas City International Jazz Festival, whose soaring budget coupled with bad weather snafus made continuing, for at least this year, impossible. We wish them all "good luck" for providing five years of top notch jazz entertainment and for being wonderful to work with and for. Any changes on this situation - you all will be the first to know.

Dr. Valerie Capers

Norman Hedman had barely left town when our next project unfolded with the arrival of another extremely talented musician/educator and friend - Dr. Valerie Capers - from the Bronx with her superb band consisting of drummer Earl "Boom Boom" Williams, John Robinson on bass, and Alan Givens on reeds spent a whole week on the Doane College campus in Crete, Nebraska doing workshops under the tutelage of jazz director Jay Gilbert and performed two concerts.

Val is a complete genius with the most amazing mind of anyone I know in show business. Anyone who heard her interview with me on KZUM - one week following Norman - will testify to that. The BMF also helped support the show and her Sunday night concert at McCormick Hall goes on my all-time top ten lists of musical moments. Check out Tom Ineck's review on page 4.

The usual, "too bad we don't have a regular venue in town" to house the occasional array of talent that crosses our BMF doors sure rang true this time. Lincoln - are you listening???

Well, I guess I've carried on enuff. Gearing up for Topeka and all of the aforementioned jazzy stuff promises a potential for some cool shit ahead this upcoming spring/summer. Stay tuned.

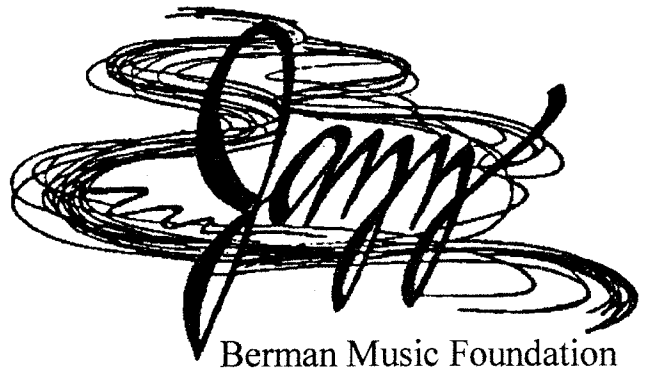
Keep swinging,

Butch Berman
Butch Berman

(Meeting, continued from page 1)

garding Foundation consultants and their various roles. Agreement was reached to remove any Foundation consultant who did not significantly participate in Foundation activities.

Finally, the Foundation discussed various other matters including progress on updates to the newsletter using the new Foundation computer hardware and software, finalization of the Foundation's web page and the possibility of coordinating a luncheon meeting with representatives of BMF and various individuals involved in the July Jamm and the Jazz in June organizations. At this point, the meeting was adjourned with heartfelt congratulations for the highly successful first five years of the Berman Music Foundation.



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Newsletter and computer consultant: Rebecca Kaiser

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Photographer: Rich Hoover

For inclusion of any jazz or blues related events, letters to the editor, or suggested articles, you can either mail them to the office, phone us at 402-476-3112, fax us at 402-475-3136, or e-mail us at: [<bermanmf@inetnebr.com>](mailto:bermanmf@inetnebr.com).

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Trustee: Butch Berman

Consultants: Dan Demuth, Norman Hedman, Dave Hughes, and Wade Wright

Valerie Capers takes the "A"

By Tom Ineck

CRETE, Neb. — Nineteen ninety-nine was the centenary year of Duke Ellington's birth, but jazz artists still are getting plenty of mileage from his profound legacy in 2000.

Pianist Valerie Capers and her quartet jumped aboard the proverbial "A Train" during their Feb. 26 concert at Heckman Auditorium on the Doane College campus.

Her appearance, sponsored and promoted in part by the Berman Music Foundation, drew a large and wildly enthusiastic audience of several hundred. Two years ago, the same foursome performed a similar show in the same venue to a much smaller audience.

The first of many ovations came as Capers and company launched into Ellington's familiar theme "Take the A Train," featuring a tenor sax lead by Alan Givens, a piano solo by Capers and a bass solo by John Robinson III, who

liberally spices his playing with clever musical quotes, deft harmonics and astounding rhythmic flourishes.

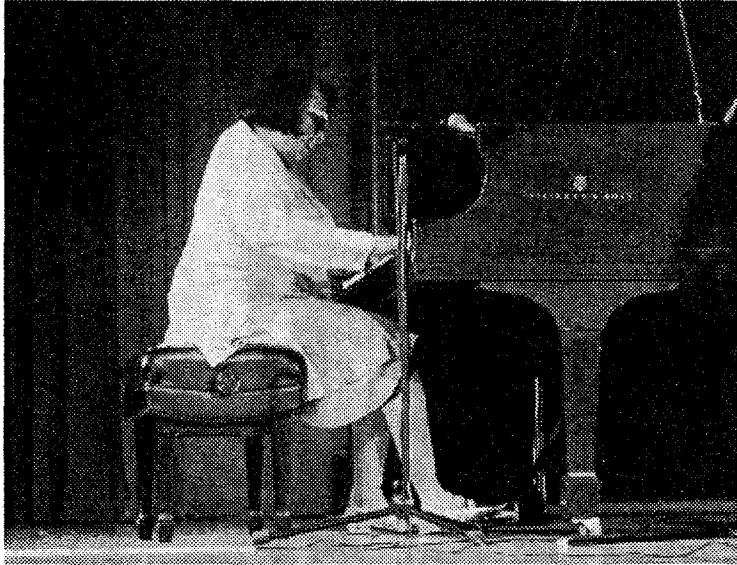


Photo By Rich Hoover

Valerie Capers onstage at Doane College's Heckman Auditorium, February 26.

Horace Silver's "Sister Sadie" got the bluesy, mid-tempo interpretation due the title's soulful lady. The classically trained Robinson again displayed his versatility and imagination in an extended solo, and Givens delivered a stunning tenor sax coda in tandem with Robinson's bowed bass lines.

In a performance

reminiscent of pianist-vocalist Shirley Horn, Capers sang and played the beautiful Frank Loesser ballad "I've Never Been in Love Before," from the musical "Guys and Dolls." With tasteful accompaniment by Robinson and drummer Earl Williams, she applied classical arpeggios and lush harmonies, alternately right-hand chords with left-hand trills. A final quote from "Luck Be A Lady Tonight" brought the piece to a symmetrical conclusion.

"Boom Boom" Williams got his spotlight on the exotic "Caravan," a favorite from the Ellington songbook written by Juan Tizol. The drummer used sticks, mallets, tom-toms, cymbals and bells to create a tapestry of rhythmic textures. The reprise of the melody was uptempo, as though the caravan had crested a peak and accelerated downhill. Capers exhibited some very rapid, and masterful, right-hand runs.

Givens' tenor sax playing on Ellington's "Sophisticated Lady" was breathily romantic. After a Capers solo, he returned to conclude the ballad with some guttural, hunt-and-peck phrases that squeezed a range of emotions from the horn, not



Photo By Rich Hoover

Alan Givens on soprano and alto sax.

Train" in Ellington tribute



Photo By Rich Hoover

John Rosinson, III, on bass.

unlike Sonny Rollins. Tizol's "Perdido" received an unusual reading, with a herky-jerky rhythm applied to the tune's racing tempo.

The second half of the show began with "I'm Beginning to See the Light," a lyric especially powerful when sung by Capers, who is blind. She also sang her own composition "Always You," a beautiful ballad that she astutely noted would be a great tune for singer Tony Bennett.

Again showing their versatility, the quartet performed Antonio Carlos Jobim's uptempo samba "Water to Drink," with Capers singing the lyric in the original Portuguese and Givens on soprano sax. From Ellington's rarely heard tribute to Shakespeare, "Such Sweet Thunder," came the short, rapid-fire "Circle of Fourths."

Returning again to Ellington's ballad form, Robinson performed a solo bass rendition of "Mood Indigo." Playing pizzicato, he enhanced the theme with full chords, ringing harmonics, a short blues break and even a sly quote from Thelonious Monk's "Monk's Mood."

The quartet illustrated the rhythmic flexibility of Gershwin's immortal "I Got Rhythm" with an arrangement that mixed straight bop with calypso, waltz and jungle rhythms. Capers delivered a blistering piano solo, taking an extra chorus when the inspiration struck her. Robinson's solo spot drew from the Stone Age with a humorous quote from "The Flintstones" theme and an unrestrained shout of "Yabba dabba doo!"

Throughout the evening, Capers and her long-time quartet repeatedly showed their talent for combining education and entertainment, with equal amounts of jazz history and undiluted humor.

The second Capers performance at the auditorium in a week, the Saturday night show was attended by hundreds of vocal Capers fanatics who bestowed standing ovations on each of the band members as they were featured during the


two-hour concert.

With undiminished applause, the crowd twice brought the quartet back to the stage for another bow. Finally, Capers



Photo By Rich Hoover

Earl Williams on drums.

thanked her listeners with a solo piano-vocal performance of Gershwin's "Embraceable You," a fitting finale to a weeklong love fest between Capers and her southeast Nebraska fans. 

Woody's labor of love is sweet and lowdown

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN - It is hard to fault Woody Allen for doing what he does best — mixing reality with pure fantasy in a story line that is largely carried by a superb cast of actors and a soundtrack of classic '30s-style jazz.

Allen used the timeless music of Gershwin to set the tone for "Manhattan," but in "Sweet and Lowdown" music is part and parcel of the whole. It is deeply integrated into every aspect of the movie, which recently completed a very successful two-weekend run co-sponsored by the Berman Music Foundation at the Ross Film Theater in Lincoln.

"Sweet and Lowdown" has all the elements of a classic Woody Allen comedy, with a heaping helping of pathos.

Sean Penn skillfully portrays Emmet Ray, who plays guitar like an angel, but conducts his life like a spoiled child. A kleptomaniac, one-time pimp and crude egotist, Ray is exactly the kind of compelling — and repulsive — genius to which Allen seems repeatedly drawn, perhaps because Allen himself is a mixed bag of conflicting character traits.

Ray reluctantly, and poignantly, admits that he is the "second best guitarist in the world," acknowledging his admiration for real-life gypsy great Django Reinhardt. In this tragicomedy, his drinking, carousing, unreliability and deep-seated insecurity make it impossible for him to ever achieve wider fame. As a result, his legend is known only to jazz scholars and historians (among them are Nat Hentoff, Douglas McGrath, Ben Duncan and Woody Allen, appearing as themselves).

It is British actress Samantha Morton, in her Oscar-nominated performance as the mute waif Hattie, who so sweetly and profoundly expresses our own conflicting responses to Ray's tragic and lowdown life, and she does it without the benefit of words or music.

But, in the final analysis, it is only the music that matters. According to historians, Django Reinhardt possessed many of the same character weaknesses as Ray, but still we remember him for his musical gift to the world, not for his human foibles.

Jazz fans who may not be convinced by Penn's guitar-playing prowess in "Sweet and Lowdown" can take heart. The soundtrack on Sony is a joy to listen to.

Howard Alden and Bucky Pizzarelli perform the guitar-playing duties, perfectly recreating the sound of '30s-era swing. Pianist Dick Hyman also acts as

arranger and conductor. Clarinetist Ken Peplowski, trumpeter Byron Stripling, trombonist Joel Helleny, bassist Kelly Friesen and drummer Ted Sommer also are featured.

They perform new renditions of "I'll See You in My Dreams," "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams (and Dream Your Troubles Away)," "Sweet Georgia Brown," "Old-Fashioned Love," "Limehouse Blues/Mystery Pacific," "Just a Gigolo," "All of Me/The Peanut Vendor," "It Don't Mean a Thing (If it Ain't Got that Swing)," "Shine," "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles" and "There'll Be Some Changes Made."

The original recordings of Bunny Berigan and His Orchestra performing "Caravan" and Noble Sissle's Swingsters performing "Viper Mad" are historic gems that lend credibility to the film and the soundtrack.

Carnegie Hall Jazz Band does Satchmo and Duke

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN - No one would dispute the claim that Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington were among the jazz geniuses of the 20th century.

And very few of the 1,950 people who attended the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band's tribute to Armstrong and Ellington Feb. 27 at the Lied Center for Performing Arts could find fault with the band's choice of repertoire or its stunning three-hour performance.

"Jazz Genius of the 20th Century: Ellington and Armstrong" featured selections associated with those jazz giants of the 1930s and 1940s. With trumpeter and music director Jon Faddis at the helm, the 17-piece ensemble delivered faithful renditions of Armstrong classics, right down to the raspy Armstrong-inspired vocals by Faddis. It also gave the audience a rare opportunity to hear Ellington's monumental "Black, Brown and Beige" suite in its entirety.

In the course of the evening, everyone in the all-star band got a chance to shine in the spotlight. Trumpeters Frank Green and Greg Gisbert joined Faddis for a three-trumpet unison attack on "Jubilee." Faddis took the lead trumpet and vocal roles on Hoagy Carmichael's "Stardust," singing with Armstrong's trademark gravelly slur and finishing on a typically impossible high note.

Faddis also sang "When You're Smiling," mugging it up like Armstrong. After getting the audience to sing a verse, he finished with a bravura trumpet solo, squeezing high notes out of the horn as only a

young Armstrong could match. Ellington's ballad "Aza-lea," as recorded by Armstrong, feature Gisbert on trumpet, and "Chinatown, My Chinatown" set Faddis against the saxophone section in a rapid-fire exchange.

In a brilliant arrangement by Manny Albam, "West End Blues" was a tour de force spotlighting trombonist John Fedchock, trumpeter Scott Wendholt, Dick Oatts on soprano sax and bassist Todd Coolman. Faddis ripped off a note-perfect trumpet solo on the difficult "Swing That Music" to close the first half of the concert.

The Ellington orchestra debuted the 45-minute tone poem "Black, Brown and Beige" at Carnegie Hall in 1943. Recently Maurice Peress painstakingly reconstructed the suite in its original form, for performance by the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band.

In this symbolic look at African-American history and culture, the band gradually revealed the individual colors of the entire Ellington palette.

For an encore, the whole ensemble sizzled through Randy Sandke's "Duke Takes a Train," featuring the Ellington train themes "Choo Choo," "Delta Bound," "Happy Go Lucky Local" and "That Old Circus Train."

Once a protégé of Dizzy Gillespie, the 46-year-old Faddis exhibited some of his mentor's style of mischief and irreverent stage patter, scolding a woman for arriving late, singing "Happy Birthday" to an audience member in the balcony and instructing others to dance in front of the stage.

Poncho Sanchez rides crest of Latin jazz popularity wave

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN — Latin jazz is enjoying a tidal wave of popularity, and Poncho Sanchez is riding the crest. His eight-piece band played to a near-capacity audience March 11 at the Lied Center for Performing Arts.

Born in Texas and raised in California, the 48-year-old conguero is no Juan-come-lately to the Latin music craze. He has led his own ensemble since 1982, and before that he spent his formative years playing congas with the legendary Cal Tjader, a West Coast pioneer of Anglo-Latin jazz. This year, Sanchez won his first Grammy, for a live recording entitled "Latin Soul."

While Sanchez and the band play a healthy dose

of original salsa tunes, they also are known for their Latinized versions of jazz standards.

As an opener, for example, they dusted off Jerome Kern's classic "Yesterdays," taking it at a comfortable medium tempo and using it as a perfect solo vehicle for trumpeter Sal Cracchiolo and a conga break by Sanchez.

With "El Sabroso," the band churned up the traditional salsa rhythms. Sanchez provided vocals, reedman Scott Martin turned in a nice flute solo, and Jose Rodriguez produced a torrent of polyrhythmic percussion from the bongos.

Sanchez tapped the Count Basie songbook for "Shiny Stockings," with the horns subtly stating the melody. Trombonist Francisco Torres and timbales player Ramon Banda had feature solos.

"Congo Blue" took a conventional blues pattern and turned it into a hot Latin tune featuring Sanchez on congas and Rodriguez on chekere. Eventually, three more of the versatile Latin percussion instruments were produced, leading to a rhythmic four-way finish.

The standard "Stella By Starlight" was the only ballad of the evening. It featured Cracchiolo on flugelhorn and David Torres on piano.

Most of the second half of the show was given to more traditional Latin melodies and rhythms. "Ven Pa Bailer" is a Sanchez original sung by the composer. Cracchiolo contributed a brilliant, bravura trumpet solo (even quoting "Stormy Weather"), and Martini delivered a stirring alto sax solo. Responding to an audience request, Sanchez launched into the buoyant "Besame Mama," capped by another brassy trumpet solo and a conga workout by Sanchez.

"Mama Guela" was a hot salsa number with horns trading licks as the tension rose. Congas, timbales and some very percussive piano followed, leading to a rhythmic chant of "Poncho Sanchez!" "Poncho Sanchez!" "Poncho Sanchez!"

At the band's coaxing, much of the audience spent the second half of the show on its feet, dancing in the aisles to the infectious sounds.

The core of this band has been together for more than a decade, and it shows in the tight ensemble sound they achieve and in the obvious on-stage camaraderie.

Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man" brought the two-hour performance to a perfectly festive conclusion. It was as much a dance party as it was a concert, a predictable turn of events considering the irresistible nature of the music.

NJO plays music to dance by

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN – Even before the spotlighted professional dancers took the floor, the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra's "Gotta Dance" concert March 14 had audience members tapping their feet in anticipation.

Ballroom dancers extraordinaire Rita and Bud Imlay displayed their terpsichorean talents later in the evening, as did a group of tap dancers led by Lincoln dance instructor Stephanie Chase. But first, the NJO warmed up with a few rhythmic numbers of their own.

Dave Sharp on soprano saxophone effortlessly negotiated the intricate changes of "Forgotten Dreams," which also included impressive solo spots for trumpeter Bob Krueger and drummer Greg Ahl. On Dizzy Gillespie's exotic classic "A Night in Tunisia," Krueger took the lead on trumpet and skipped lightly over the changes in an imaginative solo break. Pianist Tom Harvill contributed an inspired, urgent and typically quirky solo, followed by short tenor saxophone statements by Scott Vicroy and Ed Love.

From "The Nutcracker Suite" as interpreted by Duke Ellington, the band performed "Sugar Rum Cherry" (also known as "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies"). Ahl abandoned the sticks for some bare-hand percussion on the drums, while horns paired off to demonstrate Ellington's brilliant way with brass harmonies.

Randy Snyder's moody waltz "Amber Changes" featured Krueger with a bluesy trumpet lead and Sharp answering in kind on alto sax. Snyder's original voicing in the woodwinds had them exchanging flitting phrases and engaging in subtle changes of color (amber changes?).

In their first appearance on the boards, the Imlays expressed the sheer joy of dance in their every movement, whirling each other around with youthful abandon. But in every step, they were in time and in tune with the NJO's lively music, the mark of the professionals that they are.

"Newk Meets the Prezident," by Rich Lawn, combines Sonny "Newk" Rollins' calypso composition "St. Thomas" with Lester "Prez" Young's "Lester Leaps In" for a rollicking tune highlighted

by five saxophones – two tenors, alto, soprano and baritone – playing in unison.

Love and Vicroy traded tenor sax licks to set the blues groove on the freewheeling "Blues for Hire," on which bassist Cory Biggerstaff also excelled with a confident attack and a "presence" that marks a major leap forward for the young NJO protégé. Krueger, on plunger-muted trumpet, met the challenge and turned in a typically exciting solo.

The Imlays spun lightly through Mark Benson's "Dance for John," showing why the waltz is the most elegant and spellbinding of all dance steps.

For Billy Strayhorn's gorgeous ballad "Lush Life," Jeff Patton took the melody on flugelhorn and trombonist Todd Thatcher followed with a sensitive solo.

Chase and students Nicole Gottsch, Amie Hollins, Dee Dee Bowers and Con Creal did an energetic tap-dancing routine to Ellington's "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," even taking improvised "solos" as musicians would. As St. Patrick's Day approached, the evening ended with Peter Bouffard's arrangement of "Danny Boy," featuring Sharp on soprano sax and a beautiful brass chorale.

New Berman Website

By Rich Hoover

It's spring and the Berman Music Foundation has a new website that has just popped up and is ready to grow. The address is bermanmusicfoundation.org and we would like to see the website bloom into a useful resource for one and all.

The projected growth is in a section that will highlight the main articles of the newsletter, a broader photo gallery section, and a jukebox for archived cuts from the foundation's collection. If you can check it out and have any comments, please pass them along.



Tomfoolery

Another Lincoln jazz venue goes belly up

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN – In an important development that has gone unnoticed by the local news media, Inn Harms Way has closed its doors after 10 years as the anchor restaurant in the Historic Haymarket District.

A friend to jazz fans, jazz musicians and discriminating diners alike, the seafood eatery offered a wonderfully eclectic menu, excellent service, an award-winning wine list, attractive décor in the historic setting of the refurbished Lincoln Station railroad depot and live jazz in its seasonal outdoor café.

Apparently, it was too good to be true.

The space soon will be home to another Italian restaurant, just a block and a half from Vincenzo's. Already reproductions of Italian posters are going up on the walls, and most evidence that Inn Harms Way ever existed has been obliterated. All that remains are the depot's original oak benches, the bar and the large glass etching of a sailing vessel by Mark C. Harms with the (now ominous) trademark quote by seafaring commander John Paul Jones: "I wish to have no connection with any ship that does not sail fast for I intend to go in harm's way."

In today's increasingly competitive and cut-throat food-service market, one must sail very fast or risk being overtaken by someone with a better gimmick, deeper pockets or a lower-common-denominator concept. For a decade, owner Eileen Harms, daughter and manager Mary Lynn Harms and the Inn Harms Way staff dared to be different.

After opening the open-air platform café a few years ago, they became supporters of live jazz with local artists booked weekly during the milder seasons. Such special guest artists as saxophonist Jeff Newell and bassist Steve Doyle knew that when they were in town they could count on Inn Harms Way for a place to play.

I haven't yet had a chance to speak with the Harmses about their decision to close their doors after 10 years in Lincoln, but we at the Berman


Music Foundation are sad to see the end of the restaurant's tradition of quality, service and dedication to live music.

Inn Harms Way's courageous decision to create a consistent jazz policy was in refreshing contrast to the fickle attempts by Rogues Gallery and Stackwoods restaurant, two local venues that folded their jazz tents after a few months of disappointing results in revenue. The owners of Rogues Gallery even had the temerity to blame their own failure on Lincoln jazz fans, saying they will not support live music.

The jury is still out on that question, but several lights on the horizon suggest that at least limited success is possible.

The Oven continues to offer live jazz Sunday evenings at the Indian restaurant. The Nebraska Jazz Orchestra nears the completion of its 24th season of concerts with plans to release a live recording soon. (*Three NJO concert reviews are included in this issue of Jazz.*) The Monday Night Big Band continues to meet weekly at P.O. Pears with three sets of music from 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. Pianist John Carlini, with saxophonist Bill Wimmer occasionally sitting in, continues his twice-weekly Friday and Saturday night gig at the Five Reasons Lounge in the Cornhusker Hotel.

One of the most promising developments is the monthly Latin jam session at 4 Friends, a restaurant located at 2110 Winthrop Road, near 31st and South streets in the Rathbone Village area. It is the space once occupied by Ebenezer's, another eatery that failed for lack of a consistent live music policy.

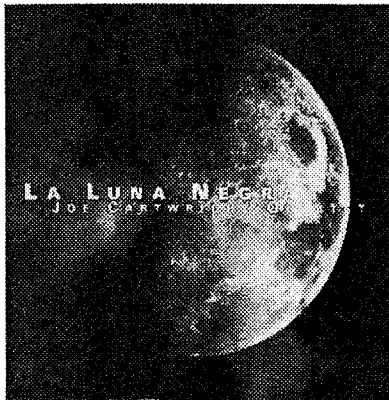
The sessions are held on the second Tuesday of the month beginning at 8:30 p.m. in the lower level. Guitarist Randy Morse, formerly of the band Braziliance, fronts the sessions, with Wimmer and others joining in. I will write about the sessions at more length in the next issue of *Jazz*. 

Jazz on Disc

By Tom Ineck

JOE CARTWRIGHT QUARTET

La Luna Negra
Amazon Records



I have long argued that Joe Cartwright is the most underrated, under-recorded pianist in Kansas City and that he is a strong contender for world-class honors.

"La Luna Negra" goes a con-

siderable distance in correcting Cartwright's tragic lack of recorded material. To my knowledge, the only other recording fronted by the pianist is "Triplicity," a trio date from the early 1990s available only on cassette (my copy is nearly worn out).

Reflecting his recent interest in Brazilian music, "La Luna Negra" is an energetic Latin-tinged session featuring Steve Rigazzi on bass, Doug Auwarter on drums and percussion and Gary Helm on additional percussion. As Cartwright writes in the liner notes, "La Luna Negra represents the fruit of my passion for Latin jazz."

This basket of passion fruit contains such sweet delights as Walter Booker's "Saudade," Dizzy Gillespie's "Manteca," Bill Cunliffe's "Samba Feliz" and Michel Camilo's "On Fire."

But my favorites are the 14-minute exploration of Cedar Walton's "Jacob's Ladder," the beautiful title track by Michael Melvoin and the soulful take on Eddie Harris' "Cold Duck Time," that finishes with an irresistible tension-and-release section.

Cartwright's two-fisted attack always has reminded me of Gene Harris. Like Harris, he has a sure sense of time, an appreciation for the blues and a confident, propulsive quality that heightens the excitement level of everything he plays.

Cartwright returns to Lincoln for a Jazz in June performance with Musa Nova, the Brazilian en-

semble he co-leads with vocalist Angela Hagenbach. Although he tends to remain in the accompaniment mode during Musa Nova gigs, it will give his Nebraska fans another opportunity to hear his gifted playing.

CLAUDE "FIDDLER" WILLIAMS

Swingin' the Blues
Bullseye Blues & Jazz



As Kansas City legend Claude "Fiddler" Williams crosses the threshold of a new century and marks his 92nd year, it should come as no surprise that his performances

have begun to suffer, even in the recording studio, where most weaknesses can be camouflaged.

Notoriously averse to practicing, Williams here sounds not only unprepared but uninspired, even listless, especially on ballads like "Over the Rainbow" and "These Foolish Things."

His failings are more obvious in the company of such outstanding musicians as pianist Henry Butler, guitarist Joe Cohn, bassist Keter Betts and drummer Jimmy Lovelace, with a special appearance by alto saxophonist Bobby Watson on "A Smooth One" and "These Foolish Things."

When Williams takes a breather, the rest of the crew is moved to greatness, especially Butler on "One for the Count" and Butler and Cohn during their solos on the 10-minute "I'm Just a Lucky So and So." In fact, Williams delivers his best work of the session in direct response to their solo statements.

Williams' repertoire has changed little over the years. Again, we hear him sing "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good to You" and resurrect the Kansas City chestnut "Moten Swing."

"Swingin' the Blues" lacks the overall compatibility of style and technique essential to the creative process in jazz. Unfortunately, the weak link here is the session leader.

Discorama

By Butch Berman

PAT HARBISON QUARTET

After All
Whole Tone



I was watching a Jack Sheldon video a few weeks ago and Pat Harbison came to mind. Lo and behold the next day his new CD arrived at my door. When I attended Jamey Aebersold's jazz camp several years ago the BMF was still a baby and Harbison, a fine trumpeter and instructor for Jamey, was our group leader. I remember besides his excellent chops, his enthusiasm and buoyancy and the way he carried himself projected through his horn. All these attributes are brought to full force with Pat's first solo effort *After All* on Whole Tone.

Backed by an enviable trio to any bandleader this lineup is no exception. The pianist, Lynne Arriale, herself a lead front woman for a fine trio of extra merit lends her unique brand of exquisiteness to a very strong debut CD. Entwining three originals with six well chosen and cleverly arranged selections by a wide variety of composers from Cole Porter to Joe Henderson. Even with some of the complex rhythms - this music feels danceable - due in part to Pat's choice of drummer. Steve Davis is one of the most stylistic and lyrical percussionists I've encountered and a delight to watch. The fact that he's Lynne's regular drummer only solidified the taut accompaniment this group provides. The former George Cable's bandmate, bassist Jay Anderson, whose rich intonation and deft phrasing makes *After All* a truly jazzy adventure.

All entrees kept my attention, with a prevalent dreamy feel embracing each track in subtle ways. Pat's rendition of "The Masquerade is Over," one of my personal faves - really sold me. Ask for *After All* at your local music outlet, after all these years Pat Harbison connects big time.

PETER LEITCH

Blues On The Corner
Reservoir



As I've stated in other articles - and even though my alter-ego has a pretty mean rep as a roots rock guitarist - for some reason as jazz listening goes I've never been "wired" to receive jazz guitarists as I do pia-

nists, reedman, and vocalists of either gender.

Yet...after just grooving on Peter Leitch's new Reservoir release *Blues On The Corner*, all I could mutter was, Wow! What a wonderful album from start to finish - plus with two of my best "jazz friends" (intimate acquaintances I only seem to hang with in reference to their gigs - or my infrequent forays outside of Lincoln these days) in the band, Kendra Shank and Bobby Watson.

Blues On The Corner, cut for cut, fairly well covers the waterfront with style and grace and a huge ability to swing you to death with a bebop sensibility woven into its complex weave of rhythm.

Renee Rosnes, as always, leaves her indelible mark of excellence on every note she plays. Rounding out this propulsive rhythm section with aplomb are young bassist Dwayne Burno and drum legend Billy Hart, who started his career great and continues to get even better with age.

Kendra uses her supple voice as a horn matching Bobby Watson's superb alto offerings seamlessly as a super-tight front line merging with Leitch's inexhaustible chops. From McCoy Tyner's blues shuffle and title track "Blues on the Corner" (makes you feel this jazz band could blow away the blues-minded stalwarts on our famed Zoo Bar stage)/then takes you back to Birdland in New York City with a Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross-style take on "From This Moment On."

A band of bandleaders makes the possibility of hearing this marvi - multi - mix of players live probably only on rare occasions - so pick up this CD today and you can enjoy this magical music in your home for like...always.

BMF

Ten Jazzy Questions with Bill Wimmer

By Butch Berman

(Editor's Note: This time we ask ten jazzy questions to Lincoln saxophonist and percussionist Bill Wimmer.)

1. Q: Your family has been in the food biz (Wimmer's Meats) for awhile. Was there any musical inspiration in your household growing up?

A: I had two brothers that were quite a bit older than I was and they listened to all kinds of things - everything from Bob Marley to Led Zeppelin to Muddy Waters to jazz. I was exposed to a lot at an early age, I guess. They knew I played sax already so I was encouraged to check out Charlie Parker and others that my older brother heard about in jazz history class. The first record I had borrowed from him was Sonny Stitt's "Constellation."

2. Q: Your new KZUM show, Jazz Journey, is gaining popularity due, of course, to your vast knowledge of jazz and your well stocked LP/CD collection. What one LP/CD would you take to a desert island?

A: I love doing the show on KZUM. To me, its like planning sets on a gig - you know - pacing things and playing a variety of tempos and moods within a set. As far as the desert island thing goes - I think to have only one thing to listen to for the rest of my life would be impossible to deal with. I like so many different things by so many different people that I can't really limit it, unless it was one of those huge box sets, maybe, with 20 CDs in it!

3. Q: You have two sons - if someday they ask you to explain jazz in a song - what song and by whom?

A: I don't try to cram it down their throats, if that's what you mean. My kids probably are surrounded by a lot of jazz - from old to brand new - but they are only 2 and 5 years old, respectively, so I don't want to overexpose them, either. I would say that they like "St. Thomas" by Sonny Rollins and they bang on my congas, percussion or the piano quite a lot.

4. Q: Your ability to improvise enables you to play with anybody even when charts are non-applicable or difficult to grasp on the spot - where can jazz fans here in Lincoln hear you in this context of sitting in and going for it?

A: These days most of the jobs I play are private

gigs, so the best way to hear me is to call me for a gig - seriously - the easiest way to hear me is to come down to the Cornhusker when John Carlini plays piano on the weekends. When I sit in with John at the hotel it is a fairly quiet situation, but the music is always fresh and intense. We take a lot of risks under the guise of a hotel lounge duo, as does John whenever he plays solo. John is an amazing musician who can go from stride, to swing, to bebop and classical or latin in the span of a solo, so its always a joy to play with him and he listens so well that we are able to try many things. He also has such a great sense of humor that is so rare in music these days. I also attend the Brazillian jam session at 4 Friends lounge every month.

5. Q: Fave live performance?

A: I don't know, I can't rank these things really. My wife and I saw Bobby Hutcherson play at Half Moon Bay years ago at the Douglas beach house. They have concerts on Sunday afternoons at this place. The sound, the crowd, the music, the sunset on the beach...every show I've ever seen there was fantastic over the years.

6. Q: If you have to pick one all inclusive artist most deserving recognition - who would it be?

A: I could do an article on an artist deserving more recognition for every newsletter for the next two years! But I'll throw out a few names from the end of the alphabet. Sam Yahel, the organ player and James Williams, the pianist.

7. Q: Last CD bought?

A: David Hazeltine: A World for Her (Criss Cross Jazz).

8. Q: Pick a different stage name for yourself, what would it be?

A: No clue, Butch. Make that Mr. No Clue, I guess.

9. Q: Fave jazz flick?

A: 'Round Midnight

10. Q: Epitaph on tombstone?

A: He loved his family, he loved life, and he played his own way.

Unsung Heroes James Williams

By Bill Wimmer



Bill Wimmer

(This column is aimed at shedding light on some of jazz's neglected heroes. These are the players who don't always win the polls or get the major label contracts with the big publicity, but people who have really distinguished themselves throughout their careers with an individual voice and contributions to the art form.)

James Williams is a brilliant pianist and composer who was born in Memphis, Tennessee on March 8, 1951. He began formal piano lessons at 13, and went on to be a church organist for six years as well as immersing himself in the rich Memphis tradition of jazz. The Memphis lineage of pianists runs from Phineas Newborne, Jr. to Harold Mabern, Donald Brown, Williams, Mulgrew Miller, and Geoff Keezer. Williams went on to earn an education degree from Memphis State University, as well as playing and hanging with many of Memphis' finest players, like Mabern, Jamil Nasser, George Coleman, and others.

In 1973, at the age of 22, Williams moved to Boston to teach at Berklee, and a year later he joined drummer Alan Dawson's group that played with many touring players like Art Farmer, Milt Jackson, Sonny Stitt, and others. In 1977 James recorded his first record as a leader and ran into a drummer named Art Blakey, who he joined along with Wynton Marsalis, Bobby Watson, Billy Pierce, and Charles Fambrough to become one of the great Jazz Messengers units, staying some four years.

Williams left the Messengers in 1981, staying in Boston as well as touring with the likes of Joe Henderson, Clark Terry, and Benny Carter. In 1984 he moved to New York where he now lives in Brooklyn, playing, composing, and producing as well as keeping his hands in educa-

tion as a teacher, artist-in-residence and clinician at many fine universities over the years.

Now, I'd like to focus on the sound and the feel of Williams' music. From the start of his career with Blakey and on all of his recorded output as a leader, James Williams has always had a very soulful, bluesy style that swings from note one. As well as being a great accompanist, he informs his solos with beautiful angular lines and rich, deep harmony. Williams also has the amazing ability to make very dramatic mood changes, stops and turns in the span of a single solo, and often he accomplishes what Art Pepper called "taking a trip" and taking the listener along with him.

I would recommend any of his early quartet records with Billy Pierce and Billy Hart, but they are out of print and hard to get hold of. There are two excellent trio albums on EMARCY called *Magical Trio 1* and *2*, and the sextets on Sunnyside, *Alter Ego* and *Progress Report*, are both very fine larger group efforts worth seeking out. AS far as accompaniment on other records goes, you really can't go wrong with any of the Art Farmer records on Contemporary, both *Blame It On My Youth* and *Something To Live For* are fantastic records that also feature Clifford Jordan. There have been some more recent DIW records featuring Clarke Terry and a saxophone summit, respectively that also display his talents as player and producer.

To sum things up, James Williams is one of the truly great pianists, but possibly because he is too old to get the attention as one of the "Young Lions," and too young to be considered a "Grand Master," he is probably not going to win the next Down Beat poll. I do think it is a safe bet that any time he graces a stage or a recording, you will experience all the heart and beauty of this fine artist, a real jazz hero.

Blues Corner

By Rich Hoover

There is the usual plethora of blues fests throughout the country. Here is a small collection of my choices:

4/28-5/7 - New Orleans Jazz Fest, New Orleans
LA - big party "easy" style - 504-522-4786;

5/20 - Iowa Blues Challenge 2000, Des Moines IA
- regional hot spot - 515-830-4213;

5/25 - 21st WC Handy Blues Awards Fest, Memphis, TN - blues hilite bash - 901-527-2583;

6/2-3 - Blues Fest 2000, Newton, KS - another regional delite - 316-837-4496;


6/8-11 - Chicago Blues Fest, Grant Park - blues apex - 312-744-3315;

6/30-7/2 - Mississippi Valley Blues Fest, Davenport IA - hot-hot-hot;

7/21-23 - Kansas City Jazz & Blues Fest, Penn Valley Park - great times - 800-530-5266.

This info and much more is located @ bluesfestivals.com

Don't forget the locally owned and operated Zoo Bar for plenty of local regional and national touring acts.

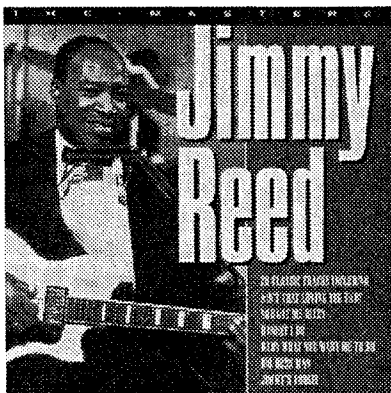
There are also several fine blues programs on KZUM radio at 89.3 FM. Check it out. 

Blues on Disc

By Rich Hoover

JIMMY REED

Jimmy Reed / Master
Eagle Records



Jimmy Reed (1925 - 1976) is one of the reasons that rhythm & blues is the way it is today, and this is an excellent collection of a master's work.

In the early '50s in Chicago, Jimmy and his solid boogie guitar style were instrumental

in starting the r & b sound. After signing with the new Vee-Jay records in '55 he soon started his string of hits with "You don't have to go," his first of 18 Billboard hits, and followed that up with 12 pop chart hits between '57 and '63. The cuts on this collection are all written by Jimmy except "Big Boss Man," which was written by Willie Dixon, and was a pop and country hit

for Jimmy in 1961.

Jimmy died in 1976 after battling epilepsy and alcoholism, and was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1991. However, Jimmy continues to influence lyricists and musicians to this day.

The CD is a good collection of tunes for those who have just started getting interested in Jimmy Reed, and it's well produced and arranged. Not a problem for any collector.

MEM SHANNON

Spend Some Time With Me
Shanachie



Mem Shannon is one of the glowing lyricists in the blues/southern soul genre. He proves this with lyrical comments like, "They say age ain't nothing but a number. Well I guess a pickle ain't nothing but an old

ass cucumber," from the CD's first cut "Who Are They," or words describing this blues scenario, "I was feelin' really good about the band. Then the bass player quit, sax player got sick and the drummer stole my van," from the tune "Paying My Dues." Then there are social stories such as the tune entitled "The Last Time I Was Here," which is a commentary about reincarnation, racism, and slavery.

The CD has a dozen tunes (11 of them penned by Mem), has about 60 minutes of playing time, and has a nice mix of tempos and arrangements to soothe the savage beast.


The group, called "the Membership," because they are strong and tight, are as follows: Mem Shannon - guitar & vocals; Johnny Ives - bass; Chuck Chaplin - keyboards; and Tony Seruntine - drums. Guests include: Jason Mingledorff - sax, clarinet; Jackie Banks - organ; Mark Mullins - trombone; Tracy Griffin - trumpet, flugelhorn; Dave Easley - pedal steel; and Pupi Menes - congas.

The CD is well produced by Dennis Walker and Mem Shannon.

I'm glad I got mine.

Music samples can be found on the web at:

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

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

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- Chuck Berg, Reviewer
Jazz Times

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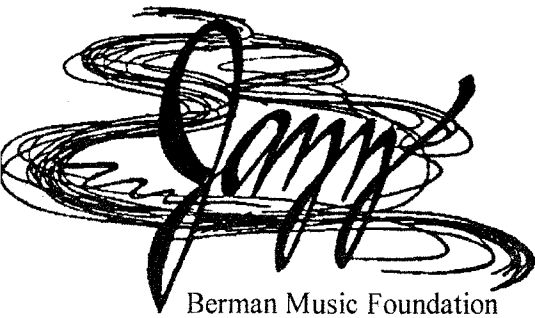
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