

File Photo

The Junior Mance Trio

May/June 2000

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Topeka Jazz Festival promises great moments

By Tom Ineck

Topeka Jazz Festival founder and artistic director Jim Monroe has booked another top-flight bill of jazz artists for year three of the Memorial Day weekend bash, May 27-29 at the Topeka Performing Arts Center.

Now, all that Monroe wants is the growing audience of mainstream jazz devotees it will require to sustain the festival well into the future.

A no-nonsense organizer, Monroe has tinkered very little with the successful format of the festival's first two years. More than 30 regional, national and international jazz artists will be in town, nearly all of them for the entire weekend. They will rotate on and off the stage during 11 scheduled sessions spread out over the three-day festival.

As always, the availability and flexibility of the visiting artists allows for some very interesting combinations for Monroe, who singlehandedly maps out the sequence in which musicians will take the stage.

As usual, several working groups also will be featured. This year it's the Jeff Hamilton Trio, the Junior Mance Trio and Kansas City's innovative quartet Interstring. Drummer Hamilton will be accompanied by relative unknown Tamir Hendelman on piano and veteran Lynn Seaton on bass, while Mance will be joined by bassist Keter Betts and drummer Jackie Williams. Interstring consists of guitarists Rod Fleeman and Danny Embrey, bassist Bob Bowman and drummer Todd Strait.

Another highlight is the first-time festival appearance by renowned vibraphonist and legendary bandleader Terry Gibbs.

"He will be in several configurations, a salute to Benny Goodman on one, and maybe one to Birdland," Monroe said in a recent phone interview. "So, crazy Terry will be in about five different configurations." One of those settings will feature the Hamilton trio, while others will draw on many of the other visiting greats.

Trumpeter Marvin Stamm should fit nicely with the rest of the mainstream players on his first visit to the festival. "He's one of the major trumpet players," Monroe said. "Maybe a little bit modern, but not too much for our group. He plays with a lot of people."

The other major addition this year is an appearance by the unique vocal stylist Rebecca Parris, who appeared with vibraphonist Gary Burton at Lincoln's Lied Center for Performing Arts in the early 1990s.

(Topeka continued on page 9)

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Prez Sez: Topeka or Bust

By Butch Berman



Hi Folks,

Surprise! An extra issue of Jazz on your doorstep to welcome in spring, prepare for the annual too-fab, not-to-be-missed Topeka Jazz Fest over

Memorial Weekend, and some other real-life sojourns to bring you up to what's haps.

Before I (see Tom Ineck's cover story) whet your jazz tastebuds with my personal overview of Topeka's knock-out lineup I must bring you some rather unpleasant news via trombone legend and friend of mine Benny Powell – seems my darling Jane Jarvis fell recently and hurt her hip. In her 80s – this may slow her down a bit...but she'll be back with a vengeance joining Benny and my earliest jazz sidekick, bassist Earl May, in the very near future, if I know Jane. Drop her a line at Dewitt Rehabilitation Center, 211 E. 79th St., Rm. 1505, New York, NY 10012, and tell her Butch sent ya.

Haven't signed the dotted line as of this moment but, with everybody's word cool, the BMF is sponsoring a great Latin jazz double bill featuring New York's barrio best Jerry Gonzalez and the Fort Apache Band with the ever-so-very-special guest star opener Norman Hedman's Tropique, debuting their new CD "Taken by Surprise." The date is March 24 at the Lied Center in Lincoln.

Now, onward to Topeka as visions of numerous Jazz luminaries cross my mind-- Remembering vibe master Terry Gibbs jamming with Dinah Washington in famed film "Jazz on a Summer's Day," then realizing the only piano trio that could rival last year's headliner-- Monty Alexander--is this year's choice, The Junior Mance Trio with old friend Jackie Williams on drums and on bass, the immortal Keter Betts. Junior swings, stomps and soars merging jazz n' blues in a glorious mix. Wow! Speaking of pianists--try on Ella's original accompanist Paul Smith, or arranger and dynamite player, Frank Mantooth plus the splendid Alan Broadbent, etc., etc., etc. And throw in Jeff Hamilton's wonderful trio with old acquaintance from Jamey Aebersold's jazz camp-- superb bassist Lynn Seaton. Hey, this is just a mere sampling, and if you haven't made any plans for Memorial Day, and you dig jazz, and you know how to get to Topeka, don't just think about it, join us for a grand affair and a ball to be had by all. Enjoy.

Until later, stay real,

Butch Berman

Butch Berman

P.S. Coming in after the wire is a tentative confirmation of a lovely Valentine's Day show we're putting on at the Seventh Street Loft in Lincoln featuring the return of New York songstress/chanteuse Kendra Shank paired with the cofounder of New York's Jazz Composer's Workshop and pianist extraordinaire – Frank Kimbrough. This looks good – more next issue.

P.P.S. Even further after deadline is this very cool piece of news. John Lee, East Coast bassist very committed to obtaining funding to transcribe Dizzy Gillespie's marvelous compositions for big band arrangements and for educational purposes, met with Norman Hedman to discuss potential investors. Norman mentioned me and we decided to pop for \$750 to transcribe one of my favorites, "I Can't Get Started." Little did I know that subbing for regular bassist Ben Brown with the Gregory Hines show that bowled them over at the Lied two nights straight in Lincoln, was the same John Lee, who called to see if we could hook up. So along with pal/BMF consultant Dan Demuth we lunched, hung out, helped the cause and even jammed for a most Dizzifying experience and the making of a new friendship. Thanx Norman – jazz biz rules!

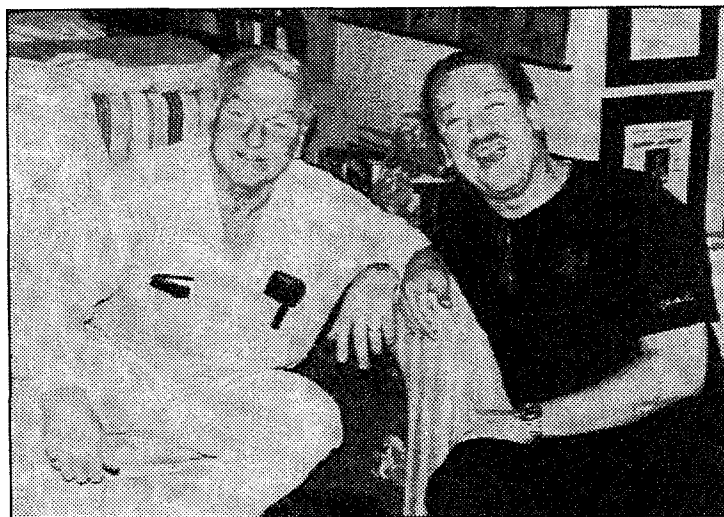


Photo By Butch Berman

BMF consultant Dan Demuth with John Lee in Butch Berman's basement.

Jazz in the Venues

By Dave Hughes

Monday Night Big Band continues

The Monday Night Big Band is still playing every Monday night at P.O. Pears, 322 S. 9th St. in Lincoln.

Every week features a different music director that leads the group in three sets from 7:30 to 10 p.m. Audience members are still encouraged to bring their own instruments and sit in with the band during the second and third sets. The cover charge is still \$4, \$3 for students.

For more information, call 402-477-8008.

Brazilian music jam

On the second Tuesday of every month, there is an informal Brazilian music jam in Lincoln. The jam will be held in the lower level of 4 Friends (formerly Ebenezer's and Miscellanea), 2110 Winthrop Road (31st & South streets) starting at 8:30 p.m.

It's a chance to play some great Brazilian music just for the fun of it, to socialize, to drink a few beers, and have a good time. This isn't a performance, it's a chance to hang out and play some music together.

It's also very informal, and is open to all interested musicians. Whoever shows up plays. If you have some music, bring it along, otherwise some lead sheets will be provided.

For more information, call Randy Morse at 402-421-2160, or e-mail him at <LindenProd@AOL.com>.

Jazz at The Oven

On Thursday and Sunday evenings at The Oven, 201 N. 8th St. in Lincoln, you can still hear the duos of either: Dave Novak & Dennis Taylor; Steve Hanson & Nancy Marshall; John Carlini & Andy Hall; or Peter Bouffard & John Carlini.

Call 402-475-6118 for more information.

Jazz at The Five Reasons

On Friday and Saturday evenings from 7 to 11 p.m. at The Five Reasons Lounge in the Cornhusker Hotel, 333 S. 13th St. in Lincoln, pianist John Carlini (occasionally with saxophonist Bill Wimmer) continues to play.

Call 402-474-7474 for more information.



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Editor: Dave Hughes

Newsletter and computer consultant: Rebecca Kaiser

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Trustee: Butch Berman

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

NJO finale spotlights versatile Vicroy

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN – The Nebraska Jazz Orchestra completed its 24th season April 28 at the Pla Mor Ballroom with a dual spotlight on one of its veteran reed players and on a promising young trombone player.

Scott Vicroy, who usually holds down a tenor saxophone seat in the 17-piece big band, was featured on his second instrument, the larger and more robust baritone sax. He also displayed his rare talent on the bassoon, a contraption seldom seen anywhere in the vicinity of a jazz band.

Most of the first half of the concert was given over to the emerging talent of University of Nebraska-Lincoln sophomore trombonist Bryant Scott, the NJO's Young Jazz Artist of the Year. Along with the band's entire trombone section, Scott was featured on the bluesy "Back Bone," a showpiece for the instrument's versatility and vocal-like tonal quality.

Randy Snyder's "Eohippi," a Paleolithic waltz that lumbers along with the antic glee of a Charles Mingus composition, challenged the whole band, to good results. Scott's trombone took the lead melody on a Bill Russo arrangement of Harold Arlen's "Over the Rainbow" from the Kenton songbook. On Johnny Mandel's lilting, mid-tempo "Emily," the young trombonist showed a fluency, imagination and articulation beyond his years.

Dave Sharp's Basie-style "Up for the Count" began with a Peter Bouffard guitar solo with solid support from the rhythm section, leading to a stunning trumpet solo by Vito Speranza and some guttural, burred-edged baritone playing by Vicroy.

Vicroy's authority, humor and team spirit were evident on "Three and One," on which his lead baritone was joined with Dennis Schneider's flugelhorn and Cory Biggerstaff's bass in a sterling three-way harmony. "Bop Goes the Weasel" was a blues for bassoon that set up some imaginative improvising by Vicroy, Bouffard on guitar synthesizer, Snyder on piano, Biggerstaff on bass and Greg Ahl on drums.

Vicroy returned to the baritone sax for the more serious "My Funny Valentine," displaying a warm, burnished tone perfect for the romantic classic. For "The Nasty," Vicroy revived the dormant Group Sax (also comprised of tenor saxophonist Ed Love and alto

saxophonists Dave Sharp and Mark Benson) for some astounding ensemble precision and solo statements.

An impromptu rendition of Ellington's "C Jam Blues" brought Vicroy back on bassoon to join forces with trombonists Scott and Derek Molacek of Omaha Northwest High School, second-place winner of the young artist competition. The silliness quickly escalated to include Love on a piccolo solo.

Tomfoolery On the cusp of a long summer

By Tom Ineck

Well, here we are on the cusp of summer, once again counting the few blessings that jazz fans have to look forward to during the dog days ahead.

Of course, the Topeka Jazz Festival will be the highlight of the season, if you consider the May 27-29 Memorial Day weekend part of summer. With the demise of the Kansas City International Jazz Festival due to financial trouble, every other jazz event in the Midwest will pale by comparison, so make plans now to travel south for the holiday.

Jazz in June has very few surprises in store for the four Tuesday evening concerts in the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery sculpture garden. There will be return appearances by the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra June 13, saxophonist Matt Wallace June 20 and singer Angela Hagenbach and pianist Joe Cartwright (as part of the Angela Hagenbach Sextet) on June 27. The opening concert June 6 will feature the UNL Jazz Quintet, led by longtime Lincoln pianist and jazz history instructor Tom Larson. As much as we love them, it sure would be nice to hear something completely new during the annual event sponsored by the Nebraska Art Association and the Sheldon at Six booster organization.

At July Jamm 2000, the Energy Square music schedule has been trimmed back considerably, but several area jazz artists will be featured there on Friday July 28 and Saturday July 29. There will be no performances on the indoor stage Thursday evening, but the renowned Latin jazz group Rumba Club will take the main stage for a 90-minute set that evening.

Guitarist and KZUM deejay Randy Morse (host of "Som do Brazil") will front a Brazilian jazz combo from 5-6 p.m. July 28 on the Energy Square stage. (On the second Tuesday of each month, Morse leads the Brazilian jam sessions at 4 Friends, a restaurant at 2110 Winthrop

Road. I had hoped to write about the April 11 session in this column, but fate and the taxman intervened.)

On the evening of July 28, trumpeter Darryl White will lead a quartet for a set from 8-9 p.m. White's new CD, "Ancient Memories," is a winner that also features pianist Jeff Jenkins, a Nebraska native now living in Denver, White's former residence before he was hired to teach trumpet at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

On July 29 from 2-3 p.m., multi-reed player Scott Vicroy will front a trio featuring pianist Tom Harvill and bassist Cory Biggerstaff. Vicroy has been known to blow fervently on anything from a tenor sax to a baritone sax to a bassoon. From 6:30-7:30 p.m. that evening, bassist Rusty White also will lead a trio at Energy Square, in a surprisingly intimate atrium setting that seats about 80 people.

This will be the first summer in several years without weekly live jazz at Inn Harms Way seafood restaurant, which recently closed after 10 years in the Historic Haymarket District. Unless something emerges soon, it may be a long, long summer.



Jazz on the radio

By Dave Hughes

Jazz on Nebraska Public Radio

Nebraska Public Radio, KUCV at 90.9 FM in Lincoln and at other frequencies around the state (except Omaha), offers two nights of jazz each week.

At 11 p.m. on Friday you can still hear National Public Radio's "Jazz Profiles," an audio biography of jazz artists. At midnight Graham House presents "Round Midnight" a program that still features some locally programmed jazz.

On Saturday nights Don Gill hosts "Big Band Spotlight" at 8 p.m., followed by two NPR programs, "Piano Jazz," with by Marian McPartland at 9 p.m. and "Jazzset," with by Branford Marsalis, at 10 p.m. Then at 11 p.m., "Late in the Evening" with host Dave Hughes, gives you a set of jazz, then a mix of blues, roots rock, cajun, zydeco, reggae, and world music.

For a free copy of NPRN's program guide "Choice," call 472-2200, or 1-800-290-6850.

Jazz on KZUM

KZUM Community Radio, at 89.3 FM in Lincoln, offers some jazz programs Monday-Wednesday afternoons from 1 to 3 p.m., Thursday afternoons from 1 to 4 p.m. and some other days and times.

The weekday afternoon schedule goes like this: on Mon-

days, Ed Rumbaugh hosts "The Art of Jazz;" on Tuesdays, Herb Thomas guides "Zero Street;" on Wednesdays, Randy Morse hosts "Som do Brazil;" on Thursdays, Butch Berman, does "Re-boppin'" from 1 to 2:30 p.m., and Rachel Principato, programs "Rachel's Jazz" from 2:30 to 4 p.m.

There are other jazz programs scattered throughout the schedule, including: "Dance Bands: When Melody was King," with Con Good from 8 to 10 a.m., "Jazz Journey," hosted by jazz musician Bill Wimmer, and "Hotter Than That" with Warren "Rude Dog" Rudolph from 8:30 to 10 p.m. on Mondays; "NightTown," with Tom Ineck from 8:30-10 p.m. on Thursdays; and, some western swing on the "KZUM Heyride" on Fridays from 7:30 to 9 p.m. with long time host John Schmitz.

If you would like detailed information about the jazz programs on KZUM, or would like to receive a current copy of their program guide, give them a call at 474-5086.

Jazz and blues on KIOS

KIOS at 91.5 in Omaha has jazz (and some blues) every weekday from 1 p.m. until 3:30 pm.

On Mondays at 1 p.m., "Riverwalk: Live from the Landing" starts off the week, then at 2 p.m. is "Blues in the Afternoon" hosted by Mike Jacobs. On Tuesdays, it's the "Brazilian Hour" at 1 p.m., followed by "Jazz in the Afternoon" with Chris Cooke from 2-3:30 p.m. On Wednesdays at 1 p.m. it's "Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz," then 90 minutes of "Jazz in the Afternoon" hosted by Mike Jacobs. On Thursdays, "One Night Stand" with host Chris Nielsen kicks off the afternoon of jazz at 1 p.m., followed by "Jazz Junction" at 2 with Rick Erben. On Fridays "Jazz From Studio 1" starts it off at 1 p.m., followed by another "Jazz in the Afternoon" with Jacobs again that lasts until 3:30 p.m.

On Saturdays: "Marian McPartland" airs again at 8 p.m. on Saturday followed by "Jazz Junction" with Erben again at 9 p.m. and "Last Call" with Cooke again at 11 p.m.

For a free copy of the KIOS program guide, give them a call at 402-557-2777 in Omaha.

Jazz on KVNO

KVNO at 90.7 in Omaha has brought back locally programmed jazz after ditching it for an all classical music format after the previous host, Bill Watts, died a few years ago.

KVNO has brought in Duff Gainey, previously with other Omaha area public radio stations KIOS and KIWR, to host the early portions of the programs that run Fridays from 7 p.m. to 2 a.m., and Saturdays from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.



Jazz on Disc

By Tom Ineck

DALE BRUNING & MICHAEL MOORE

Conference Call

Jazz Link Enterprises



The most intimate – and most fruitful – form of jazz interplay is that developed between two sensitive artists at the top of their game.

A time-honored setting that yields immediate dividends for players and listeners alike, the jazz duo is

musical conversation in every sense of the word. It can be a simple exchange of passing thoughts and feelings, a question-and-answer session or a dazzling display of witty repartee.

“Conference Call” is all that and more. It is guitarist Dale Bruning deeply engaged in an hour-long conversation with bassist Michael Moore during a 1998 live performance at the Front Range Theatre in the Conference Center of the Raintree Plaza Hotel in Longmont, Colo. It is two extremely talented instrumentalists. It is also two finely tuned listeners with receptive ears and generous hearts.

For this special gig, Moore traveled from his home in New York City to Longmont, where Bruning lives. But never mind the miles that separate them. From the opener, “Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams (and Dream Your Troubles Away),” they play with the easy familiarity of next-door neighbors.

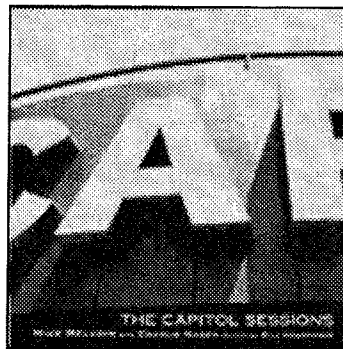
The pace and excitement level escalate with “While You’re Young,” setting the two head-to-head in heated musical debate. Moore masterfully takes the lyrical lead on “How Long Has This Been Going On?” then dives into an astounding solo passage with Bruning expertly comping behind him. Bruning, this time on acoustic guitar, confidently attacks the rumba rhythms of Xavier Cugat’s “Nightingale,” embellishing his solo with sweeping octave chords. “Too Late Now” is a showcase for the duo’s winning way with a ballad.

What is captured here is a very intimate, lively and brilliant conversation between two masters of their instruments. “Conference Call” is available from Jazz Link Enterprises, 3721 Columbia Drive, Longmont, CO 80503.

MICHAEL MELVOIN WITH CHARLIE HADEN featuring BILL HENDERSON

The Capitol Sessions

Naim Records




Bassist Charlie Haden has practically made a cottage industry of great duo recordings, waxing superb discs with pianists Hank Jones, Kenny Barron and Chris Anderson and with guitarist Pat Metheny.

Here he teams up with pianist Michael Melvoin, whose extensive recording career includes playing Hammond organ on the Beach Boys’ classic “Pet Sounds” and piano contributions on John Lennon’s “Stand By Me,” The Jackson 5’s “ABC,” and Tom Waits’ great 1975 live recording “Nighthawks at the Diner.”

In these sessions recorded last August at Capitol Studios in Los Angeles, Melvoin’s abilities as a balladeer are put to the test in lush, romantic arrangements of Haden’s “Here’s Looking at You,” the Dietz-Schwartz standard “Haunted Heart,” and Johnny Mandel’s “I Never Told You,” as well as Melvoin’s own “I Think You Know” and “You Won’t Hear Me Say Goodbye.”

The latter tune is one of three selections on which the wonderful singer Bill Henderson adds a vocal dimension. The others are Haden’s ode to his wife, “Ruth’s Waltz,” and Mandel’s “Living Without You.” Henderson also has a large presence on “The Art of the Song,” the latest release by Haden’s Quartet West.

Along with his sure sense of rhythm and melodic invention, Melvoin displays an imaginative pen on such originals as “Monday,” the bop paeon “52nd Street” and “La Luna Negra,” which Kansas City pianist Joe Cartwright chose as the title track for his current trio recording (*reviewed in the last issue of Jazz*). 

Ten Jazzy Questions with Jim Monroe

By Butch Berman

(Editor's Note: This time we ask ten jazzy questions to the artistic director of the Topeka Jazz Festival, Jim Monroe.)

1. *Q: When I first encountered you, I was a bit taken aback by your no-nonsense, gruff demeanor. Later on, I realized that I, too, have been perceived as such and immediately warmed to your honest approach. So...tell me, Jim, where did you develop your style? A military background perhaps? To whom do you attribute your take-charge attitude?*

A: I was a CIC agent for two years in the Army, but don't think that had anything to do with my take-charge attitude. I've been involved with civic organizations and philanthropy for many years, and have found out, due to inefficiency, stupidity or procrastination, that people who mean well, often fail in their task. I consequently have learned and have adopted an unwritten practice of doing it myself (if I can), so that I know it will be done - right or wrong!

2. *Q: Where did your passion for music, especially jazz, originate, and at what age?*

A: My passion for jazz started at a junior high school age, and by the time I entered Wyandotte High School in Kansas City, Kansas, I was hooked. It was 1943 and all the big bands were on the road doing one-nighters. I frequented the Pla Mor Ballroom in Kansas City, MO many Saturday and Sunday nights hearing ALL of the big bands. Got hooked on the arrangements and the soloists. Later the ballrooms closed across the country, and the big bands were too expensive to move for a single date or two. Hence the small group and individual artist bookings.

3. *Q: If you were to teach jazz to an alien through one specific artist, who would that be and which LP/CD would you utilize?*

A: Who would I use to teach an alien about jazz?? I would use two big bands to demonstrate composition and arrangements (Duke Ellington) and I would use to demon-

strate both of these plus the best hard-swinging band ever (Count Basie). To demonstrate the finest "Jazz" vocalists, of course, Ella and Mel.

4. *Q: Fave moments as a jazz promoter (i.e., most electrifying performance)?*

A: My favorite moments as a jazz promoter come each Memorial Day Weekend, when because of YOU "sponsors", I am able to hire 28 of the world's great jazz musicians to perform some 28 hours of the world's greatest music. They make me look good!!

5. *Q: Is there any special LP/CD and/or song you play daily or at least weekly, and if so, what is it?*

A: I suppose I play a Monty Alexander CD weekly (often "The River") and I like to play Karrin Allyson or Diana Krall for vocalists.

6. *Q: Last CD bought?*

A: Bud Shank "After You, Jeru" with Mike Wofford, Bob Magnusson, and Joe LaBarbera.

7. *Q: Last movie attended?*

A: "Rules of Engagement"


8. *Q: Last book read?*

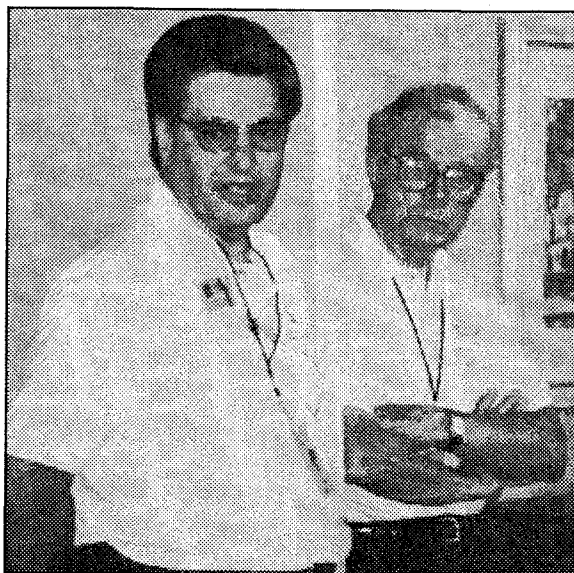
A: A book on Egypt and one on Jordan.

9. *Q: If the future of jazz was in your hands, and could be represented by your artist deserving wider recognition, who would it be?*

A: Karrin Allyson

10. *Q: Epitaph on tombstone?*

A: "He enjoyed life" 



Jim Monroe (at right) with TPAC head Harold Hansen at a recent Topeka Jazz Festival.

Photo By Butch Berman

Discorama

By Butch Berman



DENNIS MITCHELTREE

Brooklyn
Dengor Music



DENNIS MITCHELTREE

Transformation
Altenburgh Jazz

When I first heard of Dennis Mitcheltree I got his name wrong thinking it was Dennis Mitchell – hmmm, ya know like Dennis the Menace – but after briefly meeting him via the telly – his demeanor was certainly not menacing – but his music – yes – there was a tad bit of mischief there, as well as a menagerie of other emotions let loose within the grooves present in the three CDs sent to me (including a new one, “Union,” yet unreleased). The ’96 Dengor release “Brooklyn” showcases his bold compositions – all penned by himself and backed masterfully by his taut trio – Jesse Crawford on bass, Bill McClellan on drums, and Andy Milne on piano. Quirky, moody, and ever so infectious, “Brooklyn” grows on you with each repeated spin.

The ’98 release “Transformation” – featuring two different rhythm sections – explores another array of originals plus three well chosen covers, including a unique version of “Caravan” – which exposes the magic of what jazz is all about and the exciting chances musicians take within the amazing realm of improvisation. Dennis’s ability as a leader is evident as the other cats listed – pianists Johannes Wallmann and Brian Sharron, bassists Jesse Crawford and Jeff Hamann, and drummers Bill McClellan and Andy Algire all take their talents to the limit as all tracks were challenging to the listener and serve a definitive future for this rising star.

Rush out and find both “Brooklyn” and “Transformation,” I’m not sure about the distribution and the availability, but here’s the numbers for each of the labels: Dengor Music, 718-399-3407; Altenburgh Jazz, 715-693-2230. These releases, along with the upcoming “Union” (when it finds a permanent home), will all be welcome to additions to any jazz aficionado’s collection.



SUSIE THORNE

Love For Sale
Triple Seven Productions

Suzie Thorne is an Omaha singer who has pursued jazz for the last few years. Her debut CD offers a mixed bag of standards and jazz tunes featuring a wealth of some of the finest jazz players in the area. In the past, singers like Aretha, Joni Mitchell and even Debby Harry have brought their own personal sound and feeling to the music with good results, keeping their own sound but fitting in well with the music.

The record opens up with the ballad “More Than You Know,” and a bossa treatment of “It Might As Well Be Spring,” both of which highlight Tom Larson’s tasteful accompaniment and soloing. The band gets into a “Killer Joe” type groove for “A Foggy Day,” which feature nice work by trumpeter Vito Speranza in solo and in exchanges with the singer. “Some Other Time” follows with cello and harp backup and “One Note Samba” features the band at a medium tempo with good soloing from Speranza and Mitch Towne, the other pianist on the date, who does a fine job throughout the record.

Porter’s “Love For Sale” is given a funk backbeat with a swinging bridge, and “Clear Day” again features Speranza with chops to spare. “Sweet Georgia Brown” is an Anita O’Day version from the ’50s. Let’s just say that there is only one Anita O’Day. “Nature Boy” is blended with “Take Five” for a wonderful romp for the band, with ringer Jeff Newell on alto and drummer Greg Ahl making the most of their solos. This is the hottest song on the record. “Wee Small Hours” is pretty standard ballad fare, while “Ain’t No Sunshine,” a duet with bassist Andy Hall, is seriously flawed by some studio effect on the singer’s voice.

All in all, this record showcases some very good musicians on some good, decent arrangements. It also highlights a voice that sounds good but does not really rise to the level of the talent or the material presented. Ms. Thorne seems to have a hard time rising above a thin, almost raspy quality in her voice that doesn’t quite let the notes really ring, or sing out. She also has a tendency to drop off of every note without embellishing with much vibrato or vibrancy. This is an OK first effort at jazz but without the distinctive quality or the respect that the afore mentioned pop singers have brought to the proceedings. *By Bill Wimmer*

(Topeka continued from page 1)

"She's got a wonderful quality," Monroe said. "And, she's a good scat-singer. I booked her because she is a good jazz singer. She's not a ballad singer or a cabaret singer or a pop singer. She's a jazz singer, like Karrin Allyson." A conversation that Monroe had last year with bassists John Clayton and Jay Leonhart led to another promising format – six bassists performing special arrangements by Clayton and Leonhart, who have become festival regulars. "The Six Bass Hit thing is different, and I'm really anxious to hear that," Monroe said.

A couple of other popular instrument-specific settings will be reprised this year, a set of piano solos and a meeting of guitarists Bucky Pizzarelli and Danny Embrey.



Photo By Peter Brunner

Ken Peplowski

But one clever match that Monroe could not pull off is "Paul Smith meets Paul Smith," a meeting of the two pianists from California and Kansas City, respectively.

"The Kansas City Paul Smith was terrified. He absolutely refused to do it," Monroe said. "He said, 'I cannot even be on the same stage with that man.'" Apparently, his modesty and overwhelming respect for the West Coast Smith prevents him from sharing such a billing.

Monroe wisely mixes popular returning guests with a few new surprises. Among headliners who will make their first festival appearance are vibraphonist Gibbs, trumpeter Stamm, pianists Mance, Smith (from California), Hendelman and Frank Mantooth, bassists Betts and Seaton, drummers Butch Miles and Joe Ascione and vocalist Parris.

Returning headliners include reed players Ken Peplowski, Bob Kindred and Gary Foster, trombonist Dan Barrett, guitarist Pizzarelli, pianist Alan Broadbent, bassists Clayton and Leonhart, drummers Hamilton and Williams and always-popular vocalist Karrin Allyson, who will be joined by pianist Paul Smith and other Kansas City friends for a Sunday evening session that will include at least one two-voice number with Parris.

Despite great word-of-mouth reports praising the festival and despite running ads in major jazz publications like Jazz Times magazine and The Jazz Journal in England, the audience is still well below where Monroe would like to see it. Last year's event drew about 325 people with three-day passes.

"It's growing slightly. If we could get it up to 400 or 450, we wouldn't have to depend so heavily on the sponsors," Monroe said. "We get very poor support from Topeka. We're still a small town. People don't like to put a nickel in the parking meter, and they don't like to pay five dollars for a movie. They just haven't grown up yet."

But, with support from 38 major \$1,000 sponsors – including the Berman Music Foundation – Monroe is confident enough in the festival's future that he already has booked the Ray Brown Trio, the Monty Alexander Trio and the Frank Capp Juggernaut for next year's event, which has become the best jazz party in the Midwest.

Sessions begin at 11:30 a.m., 2:15 p.m., 7 p.m. and 9:45 p.m. Saturday, 11:30 a.m., 1:45 p.m., 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. Sunday, and 11:30 a.m., 2:15 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday. All sessions are at the Topeka Performing Arts Center, 214 SE 8th St. in downtown Topeka.

Tickets are \$180 for a reserved seat at all sessions and your name listed in the festival program. Special group and student rates also are available. For tickets, call (785) 234-2787 or fax (785) 234-2307. Visit the Performing Arts Center's website at www.tpactix.org.



Photo By Rich Hoover

Jay Leonhart

Blues on Disc

By Rich Hoover

DARRELL NULISCH

I Like it That Way
Severn Records



I first met and worked with Darrell in the early '70s at the Zoo Bar while he was playing with Anson Funderburgh & the Rockets based in Dallas/Fort Worth. It was easy to see that Darrell

was going to be a stalwart in the blues industry. Great craftsmanship in both his vocal and harmonica artistry coupled with a great spirit and endearing personality are the main ingredients he possessed then and now to form his own version of blues/soul stew.

Following are some excerpts from his bio on the severn records webpage, www.severnrecords.com:

Darrell grew up in Dallas, surrounded by blues and soul music. When his grandparents threw house parties, one of their turntable favorites was Jimmy McCracklin's shuffling "The Walk." "My dad and mom used to take me to these honky tonks sometimes, when there would be live bands on Sunday afternoons," recalls Darrell, whose neighbor Jimmie Vaughan was then just getting his feet wet on guitar. "One of his first bands, the Chessmen, they used to practice down in the park about three blocks from my house. I would ride my bicycle down and watch those guys play.

"Freddie King was always one of my favorites. He had such an authoritative way of delivery. He just mesmerized me," says Nulisch. "After I was in my teenage years in high school, he used to play around Dallas a lot, and Austin, too. We used to take road trips when I was in high school down to Austin, and go to the Armadillo World Headquarters."

Darrell began singing full-time in 1978 as one of the founding members of Anson Funderburgh & the Rockets, who cut the first album in the catalog of New Or-

leans-based Black Top Records, 1980's "Talk/To You By Hand." He spent seven years as front man for guitarist extraordinaire Funderburgh and the Rockets, touring extensively and waxing an encore for Black Top ("She Knocks Me Out!") before exiting.

After a year with Mike Morgan & the Crawl, Nulisch joined forces with Boston-based Ronnie Earl & the Broadcasters (renowned harpist Jerry Portnoy was also a featured member) in 1987, cutting two albums as their vocalist for Black Top ("Soul Searchin'" and "Peace Of Mind") and touring Europe before leaving in 1990 to do his own thing with Texas Heat. His last CD, "Bluesoul", emerged under his own name on Higher Plane Records.

Nulisch has been categorized as a "blue-eyed soul" singer, but the overused term isn't too accurate. "People say that all the time. I'm not particularly fond of that," he says. "I never thought about whether these cats were black or white, or any of that. It never was a concern. I just liked the music. I can't help what I like, and the stuff I like happens to be black music."

The production and arrangements are excellent and many kudos to the boys in the band: Jon Moeller, guitar; Benje Porecki, keyboards; Steve Gomes, bass; Robb Stupka, drums. Also for the extended rhythm section: Alejandro Lucini, percussion; Scott Young, sax; Scott Silbert, sax; Tommy Williams, trumpet; Chris Walker, trumpet; John Jensen, trombone; and Joe Maher, Jessie Yawn, backup vocals.

Blues Corner

By Rich Hoover

Don't forget our own local blues activities.

The Zoo Bar keeps puttin' it out with some of the finest blues stuff in the area, plus a nice mix of other popular music styles.

July Jamm is slated for July 27-29 and is always chocked full of music, arts, food and culture. Check with the Updowntowners for more info at www.lincolnguide.com

Also a note on the local band scene: The award winning Little Slim and the Back Alley Blues Band is playin' regularly in and around town and has a mighty fine CD available.

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- Chuck Berg, Reviewer
Jazz Times

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Guitar: Bucky Pizzarelli, Danny Embrey, Rod Fleeman
Vibes: Terry Gibbs
Alto Sax: Gary Foster
Tenor Sax & Clarinet: Ken Peplowski, Bob Kindred
Trombone: Dan Barrett
Trumpet: Marvin Stamm
Vocals: Rebecca Parris



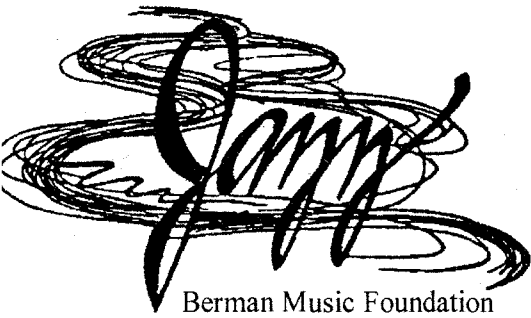
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Photo By Rich Hoover

Get well soon, Jane!!

How can you help the foundation?

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

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