Highlights in Jazz

Monday, July 16th, 8:00 PM

JPJ Quartet

Budd Johnson
Oliver Jackson
Bill Pemberton
Benny Aronov

Meet the Countsmen

Vic Dickenson
Doc Cheatham
Earle Warren

The Ultimate Jam Session

At the Astor Place Theatre
434 Lafayette St
N.Y.C.
Tel. 254-4370
Tickets $4.50

By Mail and Phone Reservation
Highlights in JAZZ
JACK KLEINSINGER

While it has always been the view of this column that Jazz, to be most fully appreciated, should be heard live, there have nevertheless been a number of new record releases of such uncommon interest that they merit consideration by all serious aficionados of Jazz music. All the albums recommended have been released by small record labels who select the musicians with care, furnish informative and intelligent liner notes (often written by the artists themselves), and extremely fine engineering.

Richard Davis—Epistoprophy & Now’s the Time (MUSE 5002)

This is “avant garde” Jazz at its most exciting. The music is free, unpredictable, gutsy and sometimes inspiring. Davis is unquestionably the most acclaimed bassist on the Jazz scene and the other musicians on the record help create what the drummer Freddie Waits termed “a consistent joint interchange of music, love and understanding”. Waits’ dynamic drumming and Marvin Peterson’s trumpet deserve special mention. While the tunes played are Jazz classics dating from the ‘40’s, the music is basically devoid of superimposed form and structure. Not for everyone’s taste, but definitely music of today (and probably the day after tomorrow as well).

Dick Wellstood and His Hot Potatoes (Seeds 3)

Don’t let the hokey title fool you. This is not a tinny revival band, but four talented thinking musicians who combine an appreciation of the past with a keen awareness of the present. Wellstood, a pianist best known for his ragtime and “stride” solos breathes new life into old standards like “Blues My Naughty Sweety Gave to Me”, Ellington’s “In A Mellow Tone” and shows his more contemporary side in “Geo. Sanders”, an original blues written a day or so after George Sanders committed suicide. Dick’s chief collaborator is the gifted soprano saxophonist Kenny Davern who has never sounded better on records. Kenny is another creative giant whose playing defies the convenient Jazz categories (Dixieland, Swing, Modern). A highly recommended album.

“A Flower For All Seasons”—Eddie Daniels and Bucky Pizzarelli (Choice CRS 1002)

Just two musicians, Daniels on flute, alto flute, clarinet, base clarinet and Pizzarelli on electric and acoustic guitar in a range of feelings and moods from straight ahead Jazz to Bossa Nova, ballads, a Chopin etude and original compositions by Jazz composers Les McCann, Keny Dorham and Roland Hanna. Especially noteworthy is “Afterthought”, a mood piece in two sections, both of them totally improvised on the spot. Daniels is magnificent throughout and Bucky has long been this reviewer’s favorite guitarist. Listen to this album and you’ll know why.

NOTE: In addition to the much publicized Newport Festival concerts, we would like to mention a concert to be held on July 16 at the Astor Palace Theatre — “The Ultimate Jam Session” — which will feature veterans from the Count Basie Band, Doc Cheatham, Earl Warren, Vic Dickenson and the popular JPP Quartet featuring Bud Johnson, Oliver Jackson, Bill Pemberton and Benny Aronov. Tickets can be purchased at the Astor Palace Theatre, 434 Lafayette Street, New York City by mail order. All seats are $4.50.
GOING OUT

DISNEYLAND  It’s not enough that they are showing the great Walt Disney movies over at Lincoln Center’s Tully Hall, now there’s a new slate of Disney creations being showcased at the Lincoln Center Library just across the way at 64th Street, at the Amsterdam Avenue end of the center. Three times, all free, are developing there.

First, free films in the auditorium at 3 P.M. today, tomorrow, Saturday and Monday through Thursday next week. These are not the same as the ones you pay to see at Tully, but are Disney works made for TV, films made during World War II and the company’s productions for commercial clients. There is a panel discussion that goes along with each showing.

Second, seminars this Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at 10 and 2, open to college and professional level art, film, writing, music students and others interested in “The Secret of Animation” as discussed by Disney animators; also in the auditorium.

Public may have leftover seats, but better phone 765-5100 ext. 315, first (for information on everything else in library, 792-2200).

Third, in the Amsterdam Avenue gallery, an exhibit of drawings and animation sketches will be on view through the summer (open 10 to 9 Mondays through Thursdays; 10 to 6 Fridays, Saturdays). Here are pencil drawings of the first Mickey Mouse, in “Steamboat Willie,” story sketches of “Cinderella” and “Snow White,” illustrations that show animators how to keep the subjects all down to size and how to prevent one drawer from making a character look different from his co-worker’s creation. It’s colorful, and interesting.

NATURE’S OLDIES  They may be stretching a point here and there at the New York Antiques Center, 962 Third Avenue, at 86th Street (688-2293), but they are calling their new special show “Artifacts of Nature: Ecological Antiques.” An ecological antique, it turns out, is an old stone, fossil or shell, nonetheless interesting for the fact that it was there long before Louis Quatorze got into chairs, or, for that matter, before Noah got into the ark.

The free display in the common hall on the basement level of the two-floor center consists of wares of four dealers in nature’s picturesque leftovers. There are rectangles of sandstone that make lovely abstract art.

TOMB OF YOUR LIFE  Here is something that you might try your hand at if you’re feeling creative and want to do it outside. It’s taking place outside Grant’s Tomb, in the Memorial Plaza at Riverside Drive and 122nd Street. Last year, Pedro Silva, a Chilean artist, with the backing of the National Park Service and the City Arts Workshop, which works with community groups, designed and built about 3,500 square feet of bench-high forms to commemorate, somehow, the founding of Yellowstone, the world’s first national park, in 1872 by President Grant.

Here’s where you come in: the forms are to be laid over with tiles, and everyone is invited to come up and put down tiles, each according to his own design (the tiles may be broken up and put in however you feel they may look most exciting). You may draw a design and get equipment and materials to do this free, on the spot. It’s done, they say, every day from 8 to 8, but better telephone ahead first: 264-7600 or 66-1640.

FINALS  The last of Jack Kleinsinger’s Jazz series takes place tonight at 8 at the Astor Place Theater, 434 Lafayette Street, opposite the New York Shakespeare Festival’s Public Theater. The swing songs will be performed by the Countsmen, five alumni from Count Basie’s band, and by the JSP Quartet, led by Odd Johnson on tenor and soprano sax. They will not be playing swing by group, but swinging together. The music goes round and round and out. Admission: $4.50. Information: 254-4370.

For Sports Today, see Page 49.

RICHARD F. SHEPPARD

JAZZAMATAZZ: Two of the most popular combos in jazz will lock horns tomorrow night at the Astor Place Theater, bringing to a close the "Highlights in Jazz" series presented by Jack Kleinsinger. The program will feature the JSP Quartet and the Countsmen. The JSP Quartet are known for the versatility and musicianship while the Countsmen are all former members of the Basie Orchestra... The world’s greatest jazz band of Yank Lawson and Bob Haggart begin a two-week engagement tomorrow at the Halfnote. The Ray and Mousie Alexander Quartet will be co-featured during the first week... Jim Connolly and His Gang, a jazz group of executive businessmen, jam together Tuesday evenings at Nell Gwyn’s Bottom on 42d St. Their salary for the guys: A nickel!
A CONCERT WAS HELD on July 16 at the Astor Place Theatre, billed as the “Ultimate Jam Session.” The JPJ Quartet with Budd Johnson, saxes, Oliver Jackson, drums, Bill Pemberton, bass, and Benny Aranov, piano, played with ex-Basieites (“The Countsmen”) Vic Dickenson, trumpet, and Earle Warren, alto sax.

The audience seemed to consist largely of hard-core jazz fanatics, and they would probably dispute me on this, perhaps shoot me, but mostly the concert was a pleasant assortment of old chestnuts such as “Undecided,” “April in Paris,” and “Yesterday.” No real surprises, but none were expected.

Dickenson plays a very humorous, understated trombone. Cheatham’s trumpet is soft and very clean. Originally a swing player, he can’t seem to decide on a “bag,” but it doesn’t matter since he is always striving to create something. Warren plays a very smooth, syrupy alto sax.

The parts of the concert I enjoyed most were the ones with just the JPJ quartet. They had a unity and understanding developed through many nights of playing together. Budd Johnson started out in the ’30s and has since absorbed much of Lester Young, Charlie Parker, and John Coltrane. With a high sound and taste to boot, Johnson is a very well-grounded, satisfying player.

But the monster of the group is Oliver Jackson. Jackson’s inventive drum work is so subtle as to be usually unnoticeable, but he is continually commenting on the music and interacting with the soloists. His own solos are models of non-exhibitionistic drum music.

“Surprise guests” were singers Jim Bartow and Maxine Sullivan. Bartow is more a “legitimate” folk singer than a jazz man. His time is very straight and his diction is really overly clear for a jazz context. He does have a pleasing voice though. His version of “St. Louis Blues” had some moving trumpet work by Cheatham. Maxine Sullivan was a much looser, funkier singer and more in tune with the style of the musicians.
Budd Johnson

Thank you Jack for what you are doing for music.
To Jack
Best Wishes always - Jim