Jack Kleinsinger presents HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ

Thursday
May 4th, 1989
8:00 p.m.

In cooperation with N.Y.U. Program Board

BLUES 'N' BOOGIE

JAY McSHANN
PANAMA FRANCIS
HAROLD ASHBY
JACK LESBERG
GENE BERTONCINI
JOEY CAVASENO

JAY McSHANN

N.Y.U. Loeb Student Center
566 LaGuardia Pl. at Washington Sq. So. • Tel. 998-4999

Tickets: $9.00
Students: $6.50

Tickets Obtained at Box Office or by Mail Order to:
HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ
7 Peter Cooper Road • New York, N.Y. 10010
Make Checks Payable to Highlights in Jazz • Enclose a Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope

This event is made possible with funds from the New York State Council on the Arts and National Endowment for the Arts.
Swinging taste of Kansas City

McShann in town for a pair of one-nighters

By LEE JESKE

WHEN Jay McShann sits at the piano, shunts his eyes, stomps his foot, points an ear at the keys and begins shaking a jowl in time to the music... well, there are few jazz experiences more rewarding. For McShann — at the age of 73 (accord to him) or 80 (according to most reference books) — is a paradigm of rumbling, two-fisted, blues-drenched Southwestern swing piano playing. His style speaks of Kansas City, a jazz hotbed when McShann moved there from Oklahoma in the '30s.

"Kansas City was a melting pot," says McShann from his home there. "Somebody'd say, 'Man, there's a new cat in town come in here from the East, let's go see what he's doing.' Well, he's going to play different from the cats from the East, and the cats from the South are going to play different from the cats from the North. To me it was all just music."

"I was never exposed to boogie-woogie until I got to Kansas City and heard Pete Johnson," says McShann, who'll be playing a "Highlights in Jazz" concert tonight at N.Y.U. and a Roundabout Theater concert Monday with fellow Kansas City veteran Claude Williams. "And I wasn't much hip to the blues until I got to Kansas City and heard Joe Turner. And Joe Turner and Pete... oh, man! Joe would holler at Pete to roll 'em and Pete would roll 'em for about 20 minutes. And then Joe would sing for 20 minutes and he'd holler, 'Roll 'em,

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Sound Advice — STUART TROUP

Among the engagements this week are:

- Highpoints in Jazz, presenting blues and boogie with Jay McShann, Panama Francis, Harold Ashby, Jack Lesberg and others, at 8 tonight in the NYU Loeb Student Center, 566 LaGuardia Pk., at Washington Square South.

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Jay McShann
Two-fisted blues

Pete," and Pete would roll 'em again for another 5 or 10 minutes. Joe would sing again for another 5 or 10 minutes — intermission. One number!"

Despite a distinguished career — he led one of the great Kansas City big bands, had an enormous hit with "Confessin' the Blues" (later covered by the Rolling Stones) and was the source for Alvin Alley's recent "Opus McShann" — McShann is most often mentioned in one context: he hired Charlie Parker for his big band, where Parker made his first recordings.

"That was 50 years ago and even today it's, 'Jay McShann, the man that so-and-so Charlie Parker... You get tired of that. The way I see it, people will do that, but at the time when Bird was struggling, when he was coming along, when he was really doing it, they didn't give him what he was doing a thought."

Since World War II rang the death knell for big bands, McShann has been performing in a variety of contexts, from solo to the odd big band guest spot. But whatever the setting, McShann's music always radiates joy.

"I like to play," he says. "Not that I'm playing all that damn much, but I enjoy it. I guess that's why you play, because you enjoy it. Yeah."
It's May! It's May! The lusty month of May! No, I didn't make that up, but it keeps running through my mind year after year when May comes around every since I first saw "Camelot." Remember Guinivere singing it as she romped on the green in that wonderful show? Let's do a little romping around the Big Apple as we check the nightlife scene.

Comedy legend Mort Sahl, America's top political comedian for over 30 years, will be appearing at Club 1407 (1407 Broadway, 575-1407) May 2nd-May 7th. Mort appeared at the club in January and was wildly successful, so he's back.

There's some great music this week at one of the city's best jazz venues, Fortune Garden Pavilion (209 E. 49th St., 753-0101). On May 1st you can enjoy the multi-talented Dick Hyman. He's a musician, composer, conductor and innovator, a joy to behold. Hilton Ruiz with Jimmy Rowser take over May 2nd-May 7th. A super lady, Daryl Sherman, appears every Friday and Saturday.

There are a couple of unusual events in town this week that I think you might enjoy. Another in Jack Kleinsinger's "Highlights in Jazz" concert series will take place Thursday, May 4th with an all-star lineup—Jay McShann, Panama Francis, Harold Ashby, Jack Lesberg, Gene Bertoncini and Joey Cavaseno. The concert will be at Loeb Student Center of N.Y.U. (566 LaGuardia Place, at Washington Square South, 998-4999).

Put on your dancin' shoes 'cause there's a big dance floor and a great band awaiting you on Sunday, April 30th, from 8pm till midnight at the Cat Club (76 E. 13th St., 713-5148). The event is part of the spring series sponsored by the New York Swing Dance Society. The band is the Bob January Orchestra, with 17 pieces, and they are great.

Here's an idea for you if you're staying downtown and want to meet a friend for a drink and some good music. Drop into the Stage Door Canteen in the Milford Plaza Hotel (45th St. & Eighth Ave., 354-4414) and say hello to Mike Coss who sings and plays Tuesday through Saturday nights.

Just Along for the Stride

"Blues and Boogie," the last "Highlights in Jazz" presentation of the season, will feature pianist Jay McShann, drummer Panama Francis, saxman Harold Ashby, bassist Jack Lesberg, reedman Joey Cavaseno and guitarist Gene Bertoncini. It begins at 8 at the NYU Loeb Student Center (566 LaGuardia Pl.; 998-4999).
To Jack
Best Wishes
Harold Ashley
May 26, 1989

Jack:
Thanks for the opportunity to participate in the program.
Do call me again.

Sincerely,

Jay M. Starnes
JAZZTIMES PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, APRIL 30, 1989

ARTS AND LEISURE GUIDE

Jazz

In Concert

HARRY CONNICK, JR — Pianist/singer. Alice Tully Hall, Sat. 8.


MOODY WOOD — Tribute to Duke Ellington and Paul Robeson. Harlem School of the Arts, St. Nicholas Ave. at 141st St. Sun., 2.


Gene Bertolcini, guitar. Lex. Ave. at 54th St.

MUSIC

‘Highlights in Jazz’: The program is called “Blues ‘n Boogie,” and the guests include the last great Savoy swing trumpeter, Panama Francis; the mightiest soloist to join Ellington in the last years, Harold Ashby; and Jay McShann, who as pianist and singer has become a genre unto himself. May 4, Loeb Center, 566 LaGuardia Place, 998-4999. (Giddins)

Jay McShann, Harold Ashby and Co. at Highlights in Jazz, NYC


McShann is an authoritative player who can convey such a strong blues feeling in just his opening notes as to set the tone for the entire group. And it’s a rare pleasure to hear McShann in a septet setting. The economics of the recording industry are such that when he does get to make a record, it is either by himself or perhaps in a trio setting. And clubs cannot afford a septet of this caliber, either.

Bringing together McShann, Ashby, and Francis was inspired. McShann may be nine years older than Ashby, but they both emerged from the Kansas City jazz scene, and they fit together beautifully. Standing to one side, while McShann played Georgia on My Mind, Ashby could offer the briefest wisp of interjections, but with such a foreboding feeling — his sound touches you — as to really add something to McShann’s work. Francis’ playing is as satisfyingly solid as McShann’s, and it swings. (Someone ought to make a record of McShann using those two sidemen.) The other musicians all fell into the groove — even 21-year-old Cavaseno, who in the night’s first two numbers played too progressively for the group, but then seemed to get caught up in the prevailing currents, his zesty solos taking up right where Ashby left off. Among the numbers played by the band were Jumping the Blues, Kansas City, and an unusually laid-back Take the A Train.

What was frustrating was that we had to wait nearly an hour before McShann came onstage. One can understand a producer making his audience wait a bit for the star attraction, but this was too long, and the band didn’t completely gel until McShann joined it. Then, after, the full band played a couple of numbers, it broke into smaller units, so that each player got his own featured spot. It seemed a shame to use precious time to showcase players whom we could hear individually in so many other venues, when the chance to hear them together comes so rarely.

CHIP DEFFAA