



The Swinger

Publication of Hartford Jazz Society
A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION --- MEMBER OF THE GREATER HARTFORD ARTS COUNCIL

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A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

As an observer of the jazz scene for many years, watching the popularity of this music ebb and flow, I was an active participant in the different phases jazz went thru for the past four decades.

For the past twenty years we stood by and watched the steady decline in the popularity of jazz music by the general public. However, finally I believe a revolution is taking place. It is a very subtle thing, as far as HJS is concerned because of the average age of the members of our organization. This age barrier has tended to hide the meanings of this revolution from our sights.

But, harken closely to the evidence I now present. In the March 28th issue of "Down Beat" magazine, publisher Charles Suber points out in an article that of the 384,000 persons who read each issue, the average age is 22, plus with most clustered in the 18 to 24 bracket. Also, 95% play or have played some instrument. 52% of these are high school and college students.

Again, in the April 11, 1974 issue of "Down Beat" Siber wrote about a Chicago Disc Jockey named Joe McClurg. McClurg broadcasts jazz music 38 hours a week in prime time on radio station WMM-FM. Joe asked his listeners to write to him to show support for his programs and to give him some pertinent information about themselves. Who's listening to Joe? He says, from data supplied by the writers and as many as 200 callers an hour, that the majority are in the 18-24 bracket and describe themselves mostly as students.

Further, in an article by Terese Karmal in one of Hartford's local newspapers recently, she reports as follows: "For years, jazz has been at home in the small night spot and on the large concert stage. But more and more, jazz has found a new home: the music rooms and lecture halls of major universities. The state's colleges are no exceptions. A handful of major jazz musicians, composers and arrangers teach their music at the state's major institutions.

Hale Smith, performer and composer, has been on the University of Connecticut music faculty about four years. Dwiki Mitchell and Willie Ruff, of the piano-bass Mitchell-Ruff duo, teach and play at Yale University. Alto sax man, Jackie McLean, has an appointment at the University of Hartford, and jazz trumpet great, Clifford Thornton, is at Wesleyan University.

This week jazz hit the U. Conn. campus in a big way as more than a dozen top-rate jazz musicians flocked to Storrs for a special student organized jazz workshop which included seminars, lectures and concerts.



Also, sax player, Frank Foster, a faculty member at the State University of New York's Buffalo campus, said more and more jazz giants such as Benny Carter and Dizzy Gillespie join college faculties because of student demands for relevancy in their music courses.

Young progressive faculty members, whose specialties are classical music, also have seen the need to include jazz musicians on the faculties, he said. Smith, who is also a modern classical composer and arranger, said he is inundated with students. Ruff claims his Afro-American music class is one of the most popular at Yale, and Foster said his courses have healthy enrollments.

But acceptance of jazz on the campus apparently doesn't reflect its status in society at large, says tenor saxophonist Billy Mitchell, director of music for Nassau County, L. I. public schools. Mitchell believes the public is lagging behind high school and college students' interest in jazz.

Students will provide a renaissance for jazz, he predicted. Foster says being on the campus has given jazz a respectability many persons have tried to deny it.

Glenn A. Cassis, a U. Conn. graduate student in arts administration, and one of the workshop organizers, said he has noticed his audience has become more sophisticated during the four years he has hosted a jazz record show for the student radio station, WHUS-FM.

Jazz, or as he prefers, "black classical music", can't compete with rock music for exposure, but it is making some inroads, said Cassis, who cited attendance of more than 700 students at a lecture and performance by pianist Ahmad Jamal at U. Conn. last week".

Well, members, what do you think? I think we are in the midst of a revolution. And it's coming from our schools. It is so recent (the past eighteen months or so) that it is hard to recognize. However, it has been noticeable in our concerts this part year, especially ones with musicians like Richard Davis and Gary Burton.

It's time we, as members, recognize the trend and do something about it. What we should do, must be foremost in our thoughts in the coming months, and we must discuss it and make realistic decisions about the matter.

Hopefully, some of the younger members of the community will come forward and make themselves heard. We feel they would all be a welcome addition to HJS.