

March 2018

PO BOX 60397, PALO ALTO, CA 94306

Ed Fox, Editor

FROM THE CHAIR

The Palo Alto Jazz Alliance was established with the mission of doing whatever we could to support jazz education in the schools. Your membership dues and contributions have funded concerts designed to please local jazz fans and to raise funds to be used to support our education mission. I recently came to appreciate that there is another avenue here that has not received much attention, namely attending student concerts and showing support for their efforts.

A few weeks back, the student jazz bands from Paly and Gunn High Schools of the Palo Alto Unified School District held a joint concert at the new magnificent Performing Arts Center on the Paly campus. Such public performances are part and parcel of their educational experience. I was able to attend and greatly enjoyed seeing these young people of varied backgrounds and skill levels having the joy of playing before a live audience. The guest artist, Dmitri Matheny, joined them with his warm-sounding flugelhorn.

It was a pleasurable experience for me, but the concert was very much lacking in attendees. We should be supporting such events the way football and basketball teams are supported, with a strong community presence. After all, these whippersnappers are the audience of the future. Without them, where will jazz be down the road?

On another note, I want to pay tribute to Ron Sax, PAJA's Board secretary for more than 20 years. All volunteer entities such as PAJA rely upon the commitment of dedicated individuals to carry out various yet necessary operations in order to function as a nonprofit should. So what does a secretary do? In our case, the most important role means preparing the official meeting minutes that serve as a formal records of the organization's activities. Thank you, Ron, for all that you have contributed as you now move off into other directions. You have carried out this responsibility with humor and dispatch. Doris Harry now assumes the role of Board secretary.

Speaking of volunteers, PAJA is in need of someone to manage our computer information system, maintaining the PAJA member data base, printing mailing labels, etc. Larry Lovercheck has been handling this effort and finds that he needs to be relieved. Do get in touch with me (webowl@aol.com, or 650/326-7836) or any Board member if you'd be willing to come onto the Board and take over this function. It involves no more than an hour or two per week, if that. The only requirement is that you have some degree of comfort with computers and are able to devote a bit/byte of time to keep our membership data collection effort functioning smoothly.

In continued appreciation of your support,

C. Stuart Brewster
Chair, Palo Alto Jazz Alliance



Houston Person is a fixture on The Jazz Cruise.
See report starting on next page.

Neil Gordon

THE JAZZ CRUISE 2018

Photos by Neil Gordon

There were about a dozen PAJAns and PAJA affiliates on this year's The Jazz Cruise, the full week of jazz immersion and travel offered by Entertainment Cruise Productions of St. Louis, MO, a company that has organized jazz cruises since the 1970s. This year's cruise, February 3-10, stopped in New Orleans for the first time, and Cozumel, Mexico. The New Orleans stop was great, but for most passengers, it's the music that's the draw—a hundred plus of the best jazz artists on the planet, from Arturo Sandoval to John Pizzarelli to Houston Person to John Clayton, Benny Green, Jeff Hamilton, and many, many more. Here are some comments from PAJA folks aboard.

■ **Mary Alice Copp, Aptos.** [Mary Alice also went on ECP's Blue Note cruise the week before.] I go into orbit every year at jazz cruise time and this year was twice the high because the music lasted two weeks. Never have I seen such satisfied passengers and I have gone on 26 (!) jazz cruises. The level of musicianship was extraordinary. Watching the musicians inspire each other and excel in each other's company, seeing the passengers reveling in the commonality of their love of jazz, and feeling part of a community that brings all of us together is a transcendent experience. There was more music than anyone could possibly absorb, and of great variety. Artistically, spiritually, and communally, this is an experience not to be missed. It is in my marriage contract: Mary Alice goes on the jazz cruise every year.

■ **Doris Harry, Menlo Park.** This was my first jazz cruise. I went expecting a lot of great jazz and was not

disappointed. John Pizzarelli and Anne Hampton Calloway are great musicians, and also know how to entertain and touch base with the audience. 23-year-old Veronica Swift has some real chops and singing ability, and with experience will develop a better stage presence. Emmet Cohen, Benny Green and Tamir Hendelman were consistently good. The gospel hour was moving; and, thanks to a PAJA friend, I got to dance to Houston Person. A few disappointments: I would have liked a better vocal ensemble and affordable internet. . . but who could ask for more than good music, fun people—all that jazz.

■ **Linda Scarborough.** [Former PAJA member and volunteer, having moved away in 2001] Of course one of the highlights of The Jazz Cruise was seeing a few PAJA members I remember. As far as the music went, it all lived up to my expectations. Monty Alexander was outstanding. During his last set on Friday he invited 12-year-old jazz pianist Brandon Goldberg from Florida to the stage for a couple of numbers. Brandon is studying with Shelly Berg and will be a name to watch, much like Taylor Eigsti was in the late 90s. I won't wait another dozen years to attend another jazz cruise.

■ **Harvey and Claire Mittler, San Mateo.** There were so many high points in a week of music each day from 11am to 1:30am by 140 musicians in assorted styles and combinations: a great opening jam, the hilarious banter between John Pizzarelli, Ken Peplowski, and others, Wycliffe Gordon's gospel hour, personal favorite Anat Cohen, the many featured vocalists including Anne Hampton Callo-



Hot vocalist Veronica Swift



Amazing multi-instrumentalist James Morrison

way, Kurt Elling and Roberta Gambarini, and especially 23-year-old newcomer Veronica Swift, who was backed by the outstanding Emmet Cohen Trio, with Benny Green sometimes sitting in. Claire mused that there is so much good music happening that it was easy to stay awake. We agreed there were surprisingly few women and West Coast musicians.

■ **Ed Fox, Palo Alto.** New York pianist Emmet Cohen was the star of the week. The concerts with his excellent trio were packed; he plays everything, from Fats Waller to hard bop. Many of the keyboarders on the ship attended his gigs (He'll be at Café Pink House in Saratoga on April 24). John Pizzarelli's concerts were also packed (I don't think I ever got a seat for one); he's a good singer and great guitarist, but it's the hilarious patter that seals the deal with John, particularly when he and Ken Peplowski are trading barbs. Also enjoyed Benny Green (always great) and a little ad hoc trio of saxman Rickey Woodard, guitarist Graham Dechter and bassist Martin Wind. Pure jazz that I wanted to go on forever. There's so much more—the Clayton Brothers, James Morrison, Sandoval, a women in jazz special with Anat Cohen, Renee Rosnes and Nicki Parrott—the goodies never end on the jazz cruise.

■ **Linda Knipe, Watsonville.** I felt the musicianship and programming this year was over the top! And of course the camaraderie among everyone on board was a love fest. It's impossible to pick out just one, or even two performances, as there were so many special moments. The biggest discovery however was the young vocalist Veronica Swift—what a voice and phrasing, and combined with Emmet Cohen's trio, every performance was top-notch. Herlin Riley's set was special, with the addition of Nicholas Payton an unexpected pleasure. Another very special set was the tribute to Horace Silver—and what a band: Jeff Clayton on alto, Sean Jones trumpet, Benny Green pi-



Arturo Sandoval

ano, John Clayton bass, and the one and only Lewis Nash on drums. That was a wonderful trip down nostalgia lane. And I can't say enough about Benny Green, Monty Alexander, and the Clayton Brothers (always a fantastic show full of surprises).

■ **Ex-PAJAn Michael Flicker, NYC.** Herlin Riley's set, while we were docked in New Orleans—Riley is an extraordinary drummer/entertainer (to quote Jeff Hamilton: "No one plays the tambourine like Herlin!"). We first heard Herlin over 30 years ago when he sat in with a Danish quartet unannounced one Sunday in a small club opposite our Copenhagen apartment (Mike Griffin and Stuart Brewster have been there). I also heard three of Marcus Miller's sets and each was completely different. In the most memorable, he performed Miles Davis tunes from five decades. All of his sidemen were outstanding, especially Alex Han (sax) and Brett Williams (piano). We sat next to Brett's mother who recorded the set on her iPhone.

OUTSTANDING SPRING SERIES AT THE BEACH HOUSE

The Bach Dancing & Dynamite Society management has put together a superb spring series that will have Bay Area fans spending a lot of time at the seaside El Granada jazz haunt. All shows are Sunday afternoon at 4:30pm.

- 3/25 Katie Thiroux Trio
- 4/8 Benny Golson Quartet
- 4/15 Josh Nelson Group, featuring Anthony Wilson and Kathleen Grace
- 4/22 Terence Blanchard and the E-Collective
- 4/29 Vijay Iyer Trio
- 5/6 Brubeck Brothers
- 5/13 Arturo O'Farrill and the Afro-Latin Octet
- 5/27 Tony Lindsay Presents Soul Soldiers

CLARK TERRY ON MILES DAVIS

"Miles' teacher, Elwood Buchanan, was an old buddy of mine. We used to drink beer together in a couple of our favorite watering holes, and he always used to be telling me, 'Man, you've got to come over to school and hear this little cat, Dewey Davis, man; he's fantastic.' Elwood taught over in East St. Louis. So I went over one day and sure enough there was this little skinny cat about two inches wide all the way down and very, very shy and timid. When he played you could tell then that he was a very talented person. At this time he wanted to use vibrato and every time he would shake a note, Buchanan would slap his wrist and I'm sure this was one of the determining factors in the puritanical straight sound which Miles developed." From "Clark Terry Interview With Steve Voce," published in *The Note*, Spring/Summer 2017.

NOODLING

Thoughts on jazz By Michael Burman

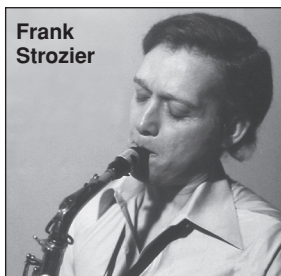
It's been over 50 years since I first heard alto saxophonist Frank Strozier, and was captivated. At the time I was a teenager, with time listening to jazz measured only in months, so the only alto players I knew of were Johnny Hodges, Charlie Parker and Paul Desmond. But somehow, I did know that Strozier was something special, and the intervening half-century has done nothing to change my opinion. His tone was pure, his attack clean, and his ideas exciting.

That first exposure was to a self-titled recording by a group called the MJT+3, whose 15 minutes of fame was spread over a few years in the late 1950s in Chicago. "MJT+3" stands for "Modern Jazz Two Plus Three." The two were drummer Walter Perkins and bassist Bob Cranshaw, both Chicago natives then in their mid-twenties. The group's first recording was on Argo in 1958 under the title "Daddy-O Presents MJT+3". (Daddy-O was the nickname of Chicago DJ Holmes Daylie, immortalized by Nat Adderley via the tune "One for Daddy-O" which debuted on brother Cannonball's "Somethin' Else".) Of the original "three" on that recording only pianist Richard Abrams (then not yet "Muhal") is known today.

By the time MJT+3 made their remaining recordings, all done for Vee Jay in 1959 and 1960, the "three" had become Strozier on alto saxophone, Willie Thomas on trumpet, and Harold Mabern on piano. Thomas, whose 87th birthday falls as I write this, was a brassy player in the mold of Clifford Brown, and, like Strozier, never achieved the fame he deserves. Mabern, of course, is well known today, and only he and Cranshaw have current name recognition.

Strozier's "breakthrough" came in 1959 with a United Artists LP, "Down Home Reunion". Each of the "Young Men From Memphis," as the credit had it, is worthy of an article in his own right: trumpeters Booker Little, age 18 (who would not live to see age 24) and Louis Smith (27), saxophonists Strozier (21) and George Coleman (23), the brothers Newborn—guitarist Calvin (25) and pianist Phineas (27), bassist George Joyner (26) and drummer Charles Crosby (27). Joyner was already known through sessions with Red Garland, Phineas Newborn, Gene Ammons and Herbie Mann, and Crosby would later record with Roland Kirk—notably on "Here Comes The Whistlerman".

Following the first of at least two LPs called "MJT+3" (the one that had got my attention in the first place), Strozier made the first of his recordings as a



leader, also for Vee Jay. Strozier and the precociously brilliant Booker Little are accompanied by Wynton Kelly, Paul Chambers and Jimmy Cobb (then all members of the Miles Davis Quintet). The title—"The Fantastic Frank Strozier"—isn't braggadocio: Strozier was the real deal. Here's an extract from Ralph Gleason's sleevenotes to "MJT+3" made six months earlier.

"There's still nothing to beat the thrill you get when you're there and the band is swinging. But records can come pretty close now and in one department they have actually supplanted the old way. That's in the special thrill you get when you hear somebody who is absolutely new to you, of whom you have never heard before and who simply knocks you out. . . What shattered me, racked me up and made me play it over and over was the work of a man I had never heard of, of whose existence I hadn't dreamt, but whose music hit me with exceptional force. His name is Frank Strozier and he plays the alto saxophone. . . We've all been waiting for something past Bird to happen on the alto. . . He rips into his solos with the agonized wail that Coltrane has made a specialty of; he packs each long line, breathtaking in its searing irregularity, with high-voltage emotion."

Strozier went on to make excellent recordings as a leader and sideman for some 20 years. In 1960 he was part of the Vee Jay "Young Lions" LP with Lee Morgan, Wayne Shorter, Bobby Timmons and Bob Cranshaw, and with Louis Hayes alternating with Tootie Heath. He was a sideman on records with Johnny Griffin, Cannonball Adderley, Sam Jones, Booker Ervin, Roy Haynes, and McCoy Tyner, and out in the West Coast Chet Baker and Shelly Manne, and in the bands of Oliver Nelson (check out "I Remember Bird" from "Live from Los Angeles") and Don Ellis. Probably his highest-profile gig was as a member of Miles Davis's quintet at some time around 1962, following the departure of Hank Mobley in 1961 and the arrival of George Coleman in 1963. There are Miles recordings from this period with tenor man Sam Rivers, but none with Strozier—more's the pity.

Despite his brilliance, Strozier struggled in the music business—as did many others. I haven't mentioned his excellent flute playing, nor his greater ability on piano (his first instrument), on which he performed with at least some success as late as 1990. It seems that he left music pretty much in the 1980s, and became a

Continued on next page

teacher of mathematics and/or science in Westchester County, NY. (Now 80 years old, he'd be long retired.) As legendary record producer Orrin Keepnews said in 1991, "Disassociate success from talent. They have nothing to do with each other."

If you've never heard Frank Strozier play, do yourself a favor and search for him at YouTube, and be prepared for a long and enjoyable session. If that's not your thing, then just imagine Jackie McLean, but with more accurate intonation.

What is Strozier's influence today? The following,

attributed to low-instrument specialist Howard Johnson, who recorded with him, says it best. "No one was ever really up to the task of playing with that much technical proficiency, deep harmonic expression and all the while keeping a foot deeply in the blues. For me, Frank is joined by Harry Carney, Benny Golson, Sonny Red and Paul Gonsalves in the league of players who were never imitated because their way was too hard to figure out, much less execute. And at the same time they were as deeply inspirational as some of the widely acknowledged innovators."

Michael Burman hosts "The Weekend Jazz Oasis" Saturday evenings on KCSM Jazz 91.1

LATIN JAZZ AND JOHN SANTOS AT STANFORD

Master percussionist John Santos appears Saturday evening, March 10, with the Stanford Afro-Latin Jazz ensemble at Dinkelspiel Auditorium: Latin Jazz, Jazz Latin. Tickets are \$15 in advance (\$10 seniors and students), \$20 at the door. The day before, March 9, John will give a free public lecture, 1:30-3pm, at Dinkelspiel G10 (downstairs), exploring the intimate connection between Latin American music and North American jazz.

SMALL TALK AT BREAKFAST

"I spotted bassist 'Red' Mitchell and saxophonist Frank Wess from the Basie band sitting in a booth. They motioned to me to join them. After a little small talk, I learned that Frank also had recent surgery, and as I had just recovered from open-heart surgery, we began talking about the medical procedures that we both had encountered. After a few minutes of listening to our medical dissertation regarding body parts and hospitals, 'Red' said, 'Just what I like. . . starting breakfast with an organ recital.'" From *Drumming Up Business: My Life In Music*, by Frankie Capp.



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THE JAZZ PERISCOPE

Selected gigs for March and April 2018

YOSHI'S OAKLAND www.yoshi.com/oakland

3/27, 4/18	Tommy Igoe.	8pm
3/30-4/1	Rachelle Ferrell	
4/3	Joey DeFrancesco	8pm
4/6, 7	Lee Ritenour, with Dave Grusin.	
4/11	Karrin Allyson.	8pm



SF JAZZ CENTER www.sfjazz.org/center

3/11	Bria Skonberg	6, 7:30pm
3/15-18	Lavay Smith & Skillet Lickers	
3/23	Dave Holland, with Kenny Barron	7:30pm
3/29	Mary Stallings, with Russell Malone, Warren Wolf.	7:30pm
3/30	Mary Stallings, with Bill Charlap Trio.	7:30pm
4/20	Paula West	7:30pm

BACH'S DANCING & DYNAMITE SOCIETY, EL GRANADA www.bachddsoc.org

3/4	Veronica Swith, with Benny Green Trio	4:30pm
3/25	Katie Thiroux Trio.	4:30pm
4/8	Benny Golson Quartet	4:30pm
4/15	Josh Nelson Group, with guitarist Anthony Wilson	4:30pm
4/22	Terence Blanchard, E-Collective.	4:30pm
4/29	Vijay Iyer Trio	4:30pm

KUUMBWA JAZZ CENTER, SANTA CRUZ www.kuumbwajazz.org

3/19	Lavay Smith & Skillet Lickers.	7pm
3/26	Jazzmeia Horn.	7pm
4/2	Joey DeFrancesco	7pm
4/13	Dianne Reeves.	7, 9pm
4/23	Willie Jones III Quintet, with E. Reed, J. Pelt	7pm
4/30	Terence Blanchard.	7, 9pm

SAN JOSE JAZZ www.sanjozejazz.org

3/6	Oscar Pangilinan Trio	At Five Points	9pm
3/13	Amy Dabalos Trio	At Five Points	9pm
3/25	Rick Vandivier Trio	At Five Points	9pm

ANGELICA'S 863 Main St., Redwood City www.angelicasllc.com

3/24	Rebecca DuMaine, with Dave Miller Trio.	8:30pm
3/25, 4/29	Mike Galisatus Big Band	7pm

CAFÉ STRITCH 374 S. First St., San Jose www.cafestritch.com

CAFÉ PINK HOUSE 14577 Big Basin Way, Saratoga 408/647-2273 www.cafepinkhouse.com

3/30	None Too Soon	7:30pm
4/13	Le Jazz Hot Quartet	7:30pm
4/20	Kristen Strom Quartet	7:30pm
4/24	Emmet Cohen Trio	7:30pm
4/25	Primary Colors	7:30pm

SAVANNA JAZZ 1189 Laurel St., San Carlos 415/624-4549 www.savannajazz.com

STANFORD UNIVERSITY D inkelspiel Auditorium

3/9	Latin Jazz, Jazz Latin, featuring John Santos Lecture 1:30pm Dink G10	
3/10	Latin Jazz, Jazz Latin	Concert 7:30pm \$20 at the door