

FROM THE EDITOR

This is my swan song as editor of PAJA's *Jazz Buff*. I've been doing this job for 16 years and age and physical infirmities have finally caught up with me. I have enjoyed producing the bimonthly *Buff* and I hope you have found it interesting and timely reading. I don't know who will succeed me as editor, but I certainly wish him or her the best.

This is a crossroads period for PAJA. We have lost our venerated leader in April when Stuart Brewster suddenly passed away. That was a huge blow, as Stuart had chaired our little organization for more than twenty years. And PAJA faces several challenges that I hope we'll devise wise solutions for as we near our 30th year of providing good music to Peninsula jazz fans while furthering our mission of supporting jazz education locally.

New Key Officers. With Stuart's passing, we had to find a new Chair ASAP. Fortunately Harvey Mittler has consented to be the acting Chairperson. And new Board member Tyler Cobbitt will be the new Treasurer. Shirley Douglas who has been our membership administrator for more than two decades is also leaving that job, but fortunately wonderful Leslie Marks who has been sharing the job with Shirley will now do the whole thing. Some changes in store are no more membership cards and renewal reminders by email only. That will save some shekels and time. A new Newsletter Editor is needed.

New Board Members Needed. In addition to the key officers, we need some new Board members to revitalize the organization. We have been operating with just seven Board members, several of whom, shall I say, are no longer in their youthful—or even middle-aged—prime. New blood and fresh ideas are needed to keep PAJA relevant. We recently welcomed Tyler Cobbitt to the Board and Brian Ho has been invited to join.

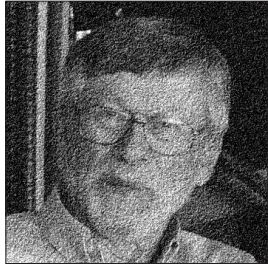
Membership Numbers Must Improve. In the last Buff Michael Griffin talked about the days when PAJA had more than 500 active members, and enthusiasm and participation were high. But membership is currently at a low ebb, and at this rate unsustainable. It's also an aging group, and we need ways to attract younger fans.

We Need to Find a Way to Make Our Concerts Profitable. In the last 10 years we have presented some of the best jazz musicians on the planet, from Benny Green and Greg Abate to Tamir Hendelman and Tierney Sutton to Clairdee and Peter and Will Anderson. But attendance at our concerts has often been disappointing and very few of our concerts lately have been profitable. This affects our ability to support jazz education, as historically it's been profits from our concerts which have enabled us to make strong donations to the Stanford Jazz Workshop, KCSM and other organizations. A major problem is the cost of producing and promoting such concerts effectively. Costs of musicians and of venues keep rising.

These are some of the issues we face. I am encouraged by the enthusiasm and ability of friends of PAJA, Brian Ho and Tyler Cobbitt, both of whom are musicians with ideas and energy whom we hope will recruit others of similar talents and interests. We are counting on you, gentlemen, to keep the flame of jazz on the Peninsula burning. Anyone interested in joining the board and/or possibly filling one of our key vacant positions should contact Harvey Mittler at Harvey.mittler@gmail.com / Ed Fox



Jackson Bryman brought his jazz ensemble to Palo Alto and the result was a hugely entertaining member concert.



LOOKING BACK

By Ed Fox

Heroes of the Alto Sax

The first alto sax jazzman I became aware of was the great Johnny Hodges who crafted so many beautiful sweet and sour solos for the Duke Ellington Orchestra, a band he played with for more than 20 years. Benny Carter was another great alto player of that era.

Then Charlie Parker turned the music upside down in the fifties, as Bird and Dizzy and others spearheaded the bebop era. I was late to embrace Mr. Parker, but as I later read his biography and started listening more to his records, I was seduced and bebop became my favorite jazz sub-genre. If I had been a vanity plate guy, I would have ordered REBOP 88 for my license plate.

But I most want to talk about my three favorite post-Bird altoists—my alto demigods, in no particular order: Paul Desmond, Art Pepper and Lee Konitz. I've always admired these three for their sound—smooth and mellow, never grating, their control of the instrument, and their inventiveness.

Paul Desmond of course was the co-bellwether of the Dave Brubeck Quartet. Desmond's real name was Paul Breitenfeld; his attendance at San Francisco State was brief, as service in WWII interrupted. When he returned to San Francisco after the war, he reconnected with Brubeck with whom he had played off and on in the late 1940s and they started an historic 16-year collaboration, 1951-1967. After Brubeck he had several successful recordings with the likes of Gerry Mulligan, Jim Hall, and Chet Baker. But it's with Brubeck of course that he is best remembered. There were so many memorable Brubeck Quartet tracks, but my favorite, as I've mentioned previously, was "The Way You Look Tonight" from the Jazz at Oberlin album. A heavy smoker and a hard liver, Desmond died of lung cancer at age 53, in 1977.



In his early 20s, **Lee Konitz** performed on the famed Birth of the Cool album, but he was best known in those days as a collaborator with the envelope-pushing jazz pianist Lennie Tristano, and they recorded a number of albums together, and with the younger saxophonist Warne Marsh. I next heard of Konitz when he surprisingly turned up as a member of the Stan Kenton's or-

chestra. That band also had Zoot Sims, Frank Rosolino, Richie Kamuca, Maynard Ferguson and Conte Candoli, and the album produced—New Concepts in Artistry in Rhythm—was one of my favorites. Kenton, at the time, was trying to accommodate the



newer elements of jazz, and Gerry Mulligan did some arranging for the band (Young Blood, Swing House). Konitz's long ethereal solo on "My Lady" on that recording is exquisite. Another album with Konitz in his prime is "Konitz Meets Mulligan" (1953) Listen, for instance to "Lover Man" and, to my mind, you'll hear the heights of purity and beauty an alto sax in the hands of a master can achieve. Altoists of today, it seems to me, just do not have the same aesthetic. I did catch Lee Konitz in the early 2000s at New York City's Iridium club, but unfortunately he was somewhat past it. Lee died in 2020 at age 92.

Art Pepper was a stalwart of the West Coast Jazz scene. He made a big splash with the Stan Kenton band which he joined in the '40s at age 17; after a stint in the army he rejoined the Kenton band and became one of the most popular altoists in jazz. Unfortunately he became a serious drug addict early on, and served more than one jail term. His biography tells of the lengths an addict will go to to get money to support his habit, and also reveals how he survived life in prison—harrowing. His addiction never seemed to affect his playing however and he could get right back on the horse (unfortunate metaphor) when released from prison. He was the featured altoist with Shorty Rogers and the Giants, and produced a beautiful rendition of "Over the Rainbow" on the 1951 album "Modern Sounds" (under the name Art Salt!). He managed to get clean near the end of his life and I saw him at Bach's probably in the late 70's. . . he sounded great. Michael Burman reminded me of the 1957 album—"Art Pepper Meets the Rhythm Section," a wonderful connection with Red Garland, Paul Chambers and Philly Joe Jones.



I certainly understand if your alto heroes are different from mine. Phil Woods obviously was one of the greats. I also thought a lot of Charlie Mariano, Lennie Niehaus, and Cannonball, of course, but the three above forever remain in my personal alto pantheon. Listen to their records and you'll understand why.

Reach Ed Fox at chezfox@mindspring.com

A VERY ENJOYABLE AFTERNOON

By Harvey Mittler

I am still basking in the sun, music, and fun which shone upon all present at the annual Membership Concert on Sunday afternoon, June 14, at the stylishly remodeled Courtyard of the First Congregational Church of Palo Alto. All present vociferously expressed their pleasure at being together on a beautiful day and being treated to such an entertaining jazz program.

This event focused on the two keystones of PAJA's nonprofit purposes. First, we brought enjoyable LIVE jazz to our audience in Palo Alto. Second, we supported jazz education by featuring the **Jackson Bryman Ensemble**. Four of the five players in the group attend UC Santa Cruz. (Their regular drummer was unavailable and professional Rob Gibson was recruited to fill in.). Jackson Bryman, pianist and vocalist, seems to have inherited his musical genes and love of the music from his grandad, Dave Miller—pianist and PAJA Board member, and from his mother, vocalist Rebecca DuMaine. Others in the group were Josh Deepak on saxophone, Mathai Mathews on bass, and vocalist Tristan Lamina Lee..

Perhaps like others present, I was struck by how much the music we heard was similar to the music that attracted me growing up (Yardbird Suite, Green Dolphin Street, etc.), and I was particularly thrilled to hear Jackson's versions of Tom Lehrer's Poisoning Pigeons in the Park and I Hold Your Hand in Mine. Tristan's rendition of I'm Hip, with Jackson's sensitive accompaniment was a charming nod to Blossom Dearie, who said at a concert I once attended: "The music was composed by Bob (Dorough) with lyrics by Dave (Frishberg), but I am the one who made it famous."

The ensemble's spirited instrumental playing, often with Tristan's splendid vocals, drew from the Great American Songbook and jazz classics (Freddie Hubbard's Up Jumped Spring, etc.) Tristan also entertained us with a couple of Bossa Nova tunes—in Portuguese!

The only negative was the sparse attendance. I am confident that anyone who was interested enough to join PAJA would have enjoyed this afternoon immensely. Maybe next time?

Tristan Lamina Lee was the charming vocalist with the Jackson Bryman Ensemble at our Member Party on June 14



PHOTOS by
BEBES MILLER.

