

FROM THE CHAIR

PAJA has started the year 2024 with a very rewarding evening of live jazz. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend the January 27th concert due to a family complication, but based on all accounts, it is clear that I missed an exceptional event. Kudos to Harvey Mittler and Dave Miller, along with Akira Tana, for making it all happen.

The concept of combining the student jazz band from Menlo-Atherton High School along with the main attractions of songstress Clairdee and the fine quartet put together by drummer Akira Tana (a Paly High graduate, by the way) all worked in a warm and satisfying way. All the band members are Bay Area-based.

We have received a nice thank you message from Akira commenting on how the enthusiasm of the audience stimulated the performers. An important point to keep in mind—how your mere presence can enhance the performers' efforts.

Special recognition and appreciation to Grace and Michael Griffin and to John Richardson, whose donations helped underwrite this event and contribute to the financial health of our organization. Michael is the founding editor of *The Jazz Buff* and still contributes to its pages (see page 4, this issue). John Richardson is an original (founding) Board member.

Thank you for your continued support,
C. Stuart Brewster
Chair, Palo Alto Jazz Alliance

*Michael Griffin and saxophonist Patrick Bartley.
See Michael's report of The Jazz Cruise starting
on page 4./Harvey Mittler photo.*

JOEY ALEXANDER AT BING

Joey Alexander, the jazz piano prodigy now age 20, entertained an enthusiastic audience of young and old fans at Bing Auditorium on January 17. His trio included two major artists: Kendrick Scott on drums and Larry Grenadier on bass. Now that's a trio!

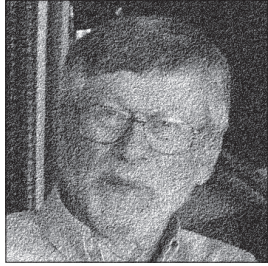


It was great to see so many young adults present (jazz may have a chance going forward!). The trio played all original tunes, but the pieces offered variety in style, mood and tempo, from fast-forward tunes to more mellow sounds. Although I missed the standards, some of the themes seemed somewhat familiar—everything from the theme from "Friends" to Beethoven.

Scott on drums was strong and creative without dominating. Grenadier on bass was fabulous, as usual—interesting backgrounds and great improvisations.

And watch those fingers fly! Joey Alexander is a super-talented pianist, and he delivered all the leads and inventions. From my seat I could see how connected the musicians were to each other. A very entertaining evening./Doris Harry





LOOKING BACK *By Ed Fox*

Maybe it dates to my college days when I actually performed with a kind of barbershop group (Good-bye, My Coney Island Baby) and a semi gospel choir (Keep Your Hand on that Plow, Hold on), but I do love vocal groups, particularly jazz vocal groups: Lambert, Hendricks and Ross; Manhattan Transfer; The Four Freshmen; Singers Unlimited, with the exquisite voice of Bonnie Herman; Take Five; New York Voices; Les Double Six; Rare Silk, and more.

I only caught **LHR** on records, but they set the standard, and the genius of Jon Hendricks—singing and writing lyrics to jazz standards—I feel is not celebrated as much as it should be. I saw **Manhattan Transfer** three times—once at the Mountain Winery in Saratoga, once at the Blue Note in New York, and once on The Jazz Cruise. Their harmonies, arrangements and Janis Siegel's versatility are always impressive.

PAJA Board member Shirley Douglas and I are big fans of the **Four Freshmen**. We check their website often and bemoan the fact that their performance itinerary once again does not include the Bay Area (is Livermore in the Bay Area?). I've seen them two or three times on The Jazz Cruise, and once even winged my way to Las Vegas to catch their show at an off-Strip hotel.

Somebody on The Cruise once asked them: "Are you sure you are the Four Freshmen? Where's Flanagan?" Bob Ferreira, who's been the group's linchpin all these years, replied: "If you went to see the Boston Red Sox in Fenway Park this year, you wouldn't expect to see Ted Williams in left field, would you?" Good answer, Bob.

The group has changed three of the four members since I first saw them about 2009; only Ferreira remains. Tommy Boynton is the current No. 1 singer; he's important, since the No. 1 singer in this group carries the melody, not the tenor; and that's what gives the Freshmen their unique sound.

Les Double Six was a brilliant jazz vocal group in France, founded by their lead singer Mimi Per-

rin. She wrote lyrics in French to jazz standards like Boplicity, Early Autumn, and Naima. The Double Six was the ticket if you like your jazz with a bit of French dressing.

The group didn't last too long, stopping in 1966. About 2000, I was curious as to what happened to Mimi Perrin after her singing career was over, and I was bemused to have the Internet tell me that she had become a successful translator of English-language novels into French, dealing with such novelists as Hemingway, Faulkner, and John The Square. "John The Square"?? Ah, my high school French kicked in and I thought—Le Vieux Carré, In New Orleans and Montreal—"The Old Square." So—John LeCarré. It must have been a machine translation. Mimi died in 2010.

I recall the days—60s and 70s?—when Foothill and DeAnza Colleges had jazz vocal groups and would put on very entertaining annual or semi-annual concerts. Phil Mattson was behind things at Foothill and he went on to teach, perform and compose at various educational establishments. At DeAnza, I recall the singer Daryl Rowe performing with their ensemble, and he has gone on to a professional career as a jazz vocalist. I also remember Gene Puerling being introduced in the audience at one of these concerts. Puerling was a founding member of the Hi-Lo's and Singers Unlimited—a kind of guru of jazzy vocal group singing.

Those schools also had jazz orchestras comprised of students and local retired and semi-retired musicians, and I always enjoyed their concerts. What happened to those programs?

Five or six years ago when Angelica's in Redwood City was doing jazz, they presented three local singers: Alexa Weber Morales, Bryan Dyer, and Juliet Green in a program entitled "The Hottest New Group in Jazz." They replicated that Lambert, Hendricks and Ross album, with tunes like "Cloudburst," "Moanin'" and "Twisted" and they sounded quite a bit like the originals. It was great. Unfortunately, there were only a half dozen fans in the audience. I believe this group did the LHR tribute only a few times. Pity.

Comments? Questions? Email: chezfox@mindspring.com

A WONDERFUL EVENING WITH TANA & FRIENDS

PAJA's January 27th concert was a winning combination of new and old, large ensemble and small group, instrumentals and vocals. Kicking off the evening at Menlo-Atherton HS's Center for the Performing Arts was the school's own jazz ensemble, directed by Bill Flaherty. It was delight to hear those old chestnuts, "Bernie's Tune," "Sidewinder," and "Jumpin' at the Woodside," played competently and with great verve. What a special treat for the audience.

Then Akira Tana & Friends took over, with Tana on drums, Doug Miller on bass and Ken French on piano. And James Mahone on tenor sax; it was the first time PAJA has showcased Mahone and he was great, carrying the melodies and improvising in a very appealing manner.

And then it was featured vocalist Clairdee's turn, and she brought the evening to a new level. Clairdee has a special way with ballads, but the audience responded even more to her uptempo numbers: "I'm Beginning to See the Light," "Fascinating Rhythm," and "There'll Never Be Another You."

As the headline says, it was a wonderful evening, another unique jazz offering from the Palo Alto Jazz Alliance, and we thank Akira Tana for putting the band together.



Clairdee with M-A HS ensemble vocalist Kealy Bryman.



M-A HS jazz ensemble sax section



Clairdee



Doug Miller on bass

*Photos
by Bebes
Miller*



Our fearless leader Akira Tana

NOTES FROM THE JAZZ CRUISE

By Michael Griffin — With comments from Harvey Mittler

This 2024 version should be known as “the Emmet Cohen Cruise” because he owned it! Emmet was simply everywhere on the boat, and his playing was over-the-top wonderful. For example, there were two performances tied for first place as the most popular with cruisers and both gigs featured Emmet and superstar Christian McBride, who were Cruise-designated co-hosts.



The Cruise Welcome show

Few fans have ever heard Emmet play a Hammond B3, and this resulted in a venue packed to the max an hour ahead of time. A fire marshal would not have been pleased. But the risk was worth it because when EC sat down at the organ, he just blew the top off the room. The B3 is a very percussive instrument when playing blues tunes, and that’s what EC gave his fans. It was as if he were feeding raw meat to the lions, since the audience went wild! Emmet has clearly now inherited the B3 crown from the recently departed (sigh) Joey DeFrancesco.

Benny Bernack III. Emmet Cohen’s buddy showed both his trumpet and vocal chops. A bit of a showboat entertainer, Benny dosed the trio (with Cohen and McBride) with his own



Benny Green, Ada Rovatti and James Morrison.

brand of spice. This standing room gig was so popular (it was the talk of the boat) cruise management immediately scheduled an extra B3 performance for the next day to satisfy the demand.

Another popular choice was **Christian McBride’s “Tip City” Band**, with Emmet on piano, McBride on bass, and guitar phenom Dan Wilson. Amazing synergy between piano, bass and guitar, like listening to six hands playing terrific jazz while connected to the same brain. Cohen and Wilson traded fours with the speed of light, no gaps between hand-offs. Wilson is an alum of McBride’s “Inside Straight” ensemble and played several years with Joey D’s group. He was a new name for me and one to remember.

Chucho Valdes and Paquito D’Rivera Reunion Sextet. Both these Cuban aces are vets of the famous Latin jazz fusion Irakere band of the ‘80s and ‘90s. Chucho plays a classical music-influenced piano, while Paquito is a killer clarinet and sax player, who added significant spark to the ensemble.

Taylor Eigsti is back on the Cruise after being away for more than a decade. Back when he was a teen prodigy, he was a regular. He was accompanied this year by power drummer Matt Wilson. Taylor played some very approachable originals from his new album “Tree Fall.” His trio’s final number was a stunning version of “Caravan.” Wow. Be sure to catch Taylor this summer at the Stanford Fest. *Harvey Mittler says he talked with Taylor quite a bit on the cruise. Taylor has purchased a home in North Carolina to be near his (now late) mom and his brother. Taylor wore a 49er jersey on the boat*



Vocalist Niki Haris, with Taylor Eigsti at the piano.

when the Niners played Green Bay in their first playoff game this year, and he still has fond thoughts of the Peninsula. Taylor played in many situations on the Cruise and will be back on the 2025 trip.

The Jeff Hamilton Trio. The epitome of straight-ahead jazz—calm, cool and connected. The piano, bass and the inventive drums of leader Hamilton chart a steady course through the genre, as the magnificent Tamir Hendelman crafts sumptuous mel-

Photos by Harvey Mittler

odies on the piano. The trio is a top draw on board, deservedly so.

Patrick Bartley, new to the Cruise, was on fire with his alto. Familiar to viewers of "Emmet's Place" on You Tube, Bartley is a Charley Parker stylist. He now lives in Tokyo, where there are plenty of rabid jazz fans for him to amaze with his lightning riffs.

John Pizzarelli and Ken Peplowski. These two popular Cruise regulars were back for more of their jammin' on American Songbook tunes and treating us to their very entertaining repartee. Pizzarelli's hilarious stories of his famous curmudgeon father Bucky have amused Cruise goers for years. We love it, even when we've heard them before. The John & Ken Show puts on some fine swinging music that makes them favorite performers on the Cruise's manifest. Crosby and Hope playing jazz? *Harvey recalls Peplowski saying he and Pizzarelli are longtime good friends who live near*

each other in New York City, but they are so busy that the Cruise is the only time they can get together.

Warren Wolf on vibes is another member of McBride's "Inside Straight" band. He is just a monster in the class of Milt Jackson and Bobby Hutchinson. His deft mallet maneuvers exceed the speed limit—he is fabulously quick. Make sure you see him when he comes back to the Bay Area. He is now a member of the SF JAZZ Collective.

Harvey Mittler mentions his appreciation of Ada Rovatti, the Italian-born tenor saxophonist (who is married to trumpeter Randy Brecker). She was given a lot more to do on this year's Cruise, holding a tenor chair in the big band and playing with small groups. James Morrison asked her if her first name was pronounced Aada or Odda. She said she really didn't mind how people pronounced her name and she was once introduced as Ada Ravioli.

THE PERIPATETIC MR. COBB

Our jazz pal Kenneth Cobb had one of his typical jazz immersions over the holidays. In 11 days, December 23rd through January 2nd, he hit jazz venues in Baltimore (Keystone Korner, Caton Castle, and Jazzy 6004), New York (Dizzy's, Smoke, Village Vanguard, Mezzrow, Smalls), Washington DC (Little Havana and the Kennedy Center), and Philadelphia (Chris' Jazz). That's 11 different venues in four cities, and these are some of the artists he saw: Christian Sands, Kenny Barron, Brent Birkhead, Miki Yamanaka, Joe Farnsworth, Herb Scott, Bobby Watson, Curtis Lundy. The gig I'd really like to have been at was Jazzmeia Horn and Her Noble Force Big Band at the Kennedy Center. That would have been a great way to spend New Year's Eve.

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THE JAZZ PERISCOPE *Selected gigs for March and April 2024*

YOSHI'S OAKLAND www.yoshi.com/oakland

3/8	Glenn Miller Orchestra	8, 10pm
3/16, 17	Lee Ritenour and Dave Grusin	
3/24	Delfeayo Marsalis and Uptown Jazz Orchestra	7pm
4/21	Veronica Swift	7, 9pm

SF JAZZ CENTER www.sfjazz.org/center

3/14-17	Marcus Miller
3/22-24	Jacqui Naylor
3/28-31	Ravi Coltrane
3/30-31	Ethan Iverson Trio
4/11-14	Hiromi's Sonic Wonder

Ravi
Coltrane



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

3/24	Larry Vuckovich Sextet	4:30pm
4/7	Kate McGarry & Keith Ganz Trio	4:30pm
4/14	Danny McCaslin	4:30pm
4/21	Calvin Keys Quintet	4:30pm
4/28	Gerald Clayton and Elena Pinderhughes	4:30pm

MEYHOUSE RESTUARANT, PALO ALTO meyhouserestaurant.com

3/1	Kai Lyons, with Larry Vuckovich	7, 9pm
3/7	Darryl Rowe, with Michael O'Neill	
3/14	Pamela Rose, with Michael O'Neill	
3/21	Jenna Mammana, with Michael O'Neill	
3/22	George Cole Band	7, 9pm
3/28	Fay Carol, with Michael O'Neill	

KEYS JAZZ BISTRO 498 Broadway, SF www.keysjazzbistro.com

SAN JOSE JAZZ www.sanjosejazz.org

3/1	Marcus Shelby All gigs at SJZ Breakroom	9pm
3/8	Akiko Tsuruga Trio, with Akira Tana and Bruce Forman	8pm
3/21	Faye Carol	8pm
4/25	Billy Hart and Friends	8pm

STANFORD—BING CONCERT HALL AND STUDIO live.stanford.edu/venues-thestudio

3/9	Stanford Afro-Latin Jazz Ensemble Dinkelspiel	7:30pm
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EARTHWISE, Palo Alto Google "Mark Weiss dba Earthwise Events"

4/1	Ethan Iverson and Marta Sanchez Mitchell Park CC	1pm
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WOMAN'S CLUB OF Palo Alto 475 Homer Ave. www.buytickets.at/thewomansclubofpaloalto/1137417

4/12	Jazz at Club 475, with the Jame Conelly Quartet. Doors open 7:30pm. \$50 (incl. 2 free drinks)	
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