

JAZZ AT THE ZOO final three

Our 10th season of Jazz at the Zoo has become another record-breaker with crowds of 1200-1300 every Monday evening. The Grand Rapids Jazz Orchestra has been our closing act for most of the past 10 years, as they are again this year. Their history, however, goes back much farther. They have been one of the premier jazz ensembles of Michigan for more than 30 years, featuring some of the finest musicians in the area playing swinging original compositions and arrangements as well as your favorite standards. The musicians are some of the best soloists and sidemen in the entire state; many have their own jazz projects but dedicate time to keeping the performance of big band jazz alive.

Founded in 1977 by the late Bruce Early, Director of

Jazz Studies at Aquinas College, the band has evolved and changed personnel as well as its name over the years while performing for thousands at concerts, dances and festivals throughout the region. They perform at Founder's Brewery on Grandville Avenue, between Wealthy and Cherry Streets, every first and third Sunday from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., no cover charge.

Led by drummer Tim Froncek, whose performance of the famous Benny Goodman/Gene Krupa arrangement of "Sing, Sing, Sing" is more than outstanding, you can visit their website at www.GRJO.com for more information on live streaming, performances, and CDs. Their latest CD will be available for \$10 at their zoo date.



8/2 ... **Vocalist Michelle Covington** with the **Scott Bell Quartet**, plus vocalists and musicians from Circle Theater productions of "Men of Motown" and "Little Shop of Horrors"

8/9 ... **Claudia Schmidt Funtet**
Traverse City-based vocalist with Trio
8/16 . **The Grand Rapids Jazz
Orchestra** 16 piece big swing band



BIG BAND SWING

from "The World of Jazz" by Jim Godbolt (1990)

This book includes 200 illustrations as a guide to jazz ephemera (photos, playbills, critics columns, album covers, etc.) from the first jazz recording in 1917 of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band to big band swing, bebop and "free-form." This review covers the chapter on big bands entitled "Swing Fever."

The Casa Loma Orchestra, which debuted at the Greystone Ballroom in Detroit, was referred to as the first of the swing bands, shortly followed by Charlie Barnet who formed his first band in 1934, and maintained it for the next 20 years. The Dorsey Brothers each formed their own bands in 1935, becoming commercially successful with a standard mix of ballads and jazz. Tommy had a million best-seller in 1937 with "Marie" and Jimmy in 1941 with "Amapola."

The biggest success story of the swing era belongs to Chicago clarinetist Benny Goodman, who included room for lots of improvisation in his charts. He also made many records with his trio, quartet, and quintet that were all jazz, with pianist Teddy Wilson, Lionel Hampton on vibes, and guitarist Charlie Christian. His success inspired his former sidemen



Jazz at the Philharmonic played the Black & Silver Room at the Civic Auditorium in Grand Rapids Oct. 3, 1947

Gene Krupa and Harry James to form their own bands. James' trumpet skills scored him a million-selling hit in 1939 with "Ciribiribin."

Goodman's title as "King of Swing" was strongly challenged by Artie Shaw, while a host of black bands got plenty of work but didn't attract at the level of the white bands for several years. These included Earl Hines, Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Chick Webb



Above, the Cab Calloway Orchestra dressed to the nines. At left, Artie Shaw conducting his big band. Below, the Glenn Miller Orchestra.





Left, the Gene Krupa big band. Above, the Count Basie Orchestra.

individual players as well as inspiring the soloists. The rhythm flows as well as it swings; it builds with textures of energy, urgency, and relaxation. Asked what his music was about, Basie would rely, "Pat your foot."

When asked the above question, Grand Rapids Jazz Or-



Above, the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra.

chestra pianist Steve Talaga states that today's big band arrangements leave more room for improvisation than the big bands of the earlier years, where the dancing public's need was for a strong beat and the full energy of everyone wailing. Now there is more room left open for soloists, which makes it, in his opinion, more exciting. Jazz brings together all that music has to offer, both intellectually and emotionally. Nothing, in Steve's mind, compares to the sound and power of a full big band when it is really cooking!

By Betty Forrest



Above, the Benny Goodman Orchestra. Right, the Duke Ellington Orchestra.

encouraged them to express themselves in the most exciting way possible! For the next 13 years Granz formed groups that criss-crossed the USA and Europe playing concert halls, where the other big bands of the '30s to '50s mainly played dance halls, large supper clubs, and toured colleges. Their core audience was people who wanted to dance to big band music. The players inspired the dancers, and the dancers inspired the players, while a hard core gathered around the bandstand just listening intently.

What makes playing in a big swing band exciting? It's ensemble style and spirit have an exhilarating effect on the



CD Review: *We Like to Riff* by Paul Keller Trio

Reviewed by John Shea

Paul Keller has done it again! This is another marvelous CD from PKO Records. It will bring back fond memories of the Nat Cole Trio to everyone who loved them... and who didn't? It also reminds us that Diana Krall's first CD was dedicated to Nat Cole, and was Paul and Diana's spring board to international touring, culminating in an appearance on the David Letterman show. A good time was had by all, and we got to enjoy it, vicariously, right here in West Michigan, through Paul's emails from around the globe!

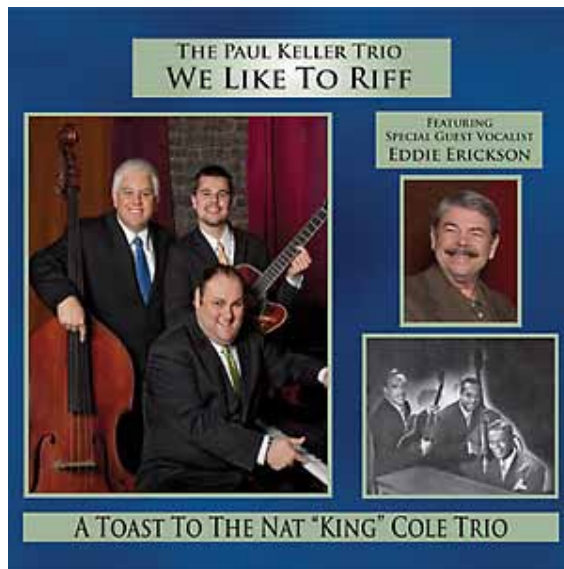
The immediate stand-out feature of this record is the huge talent of pianist Steve Richko. He is a natural swinger who's also a born accompanist. His enormous technical facility is always applied with taste, grace, and clarity. The double octave passages are especially exciting to hear. Another notable talent Steve has is the ease with which he executes whatever challenging arrangement Paul throws at him.

The next stand-out feature of this CD is Paul's fertile imagination as an arranger. There seems to be no end to it! Interludes, transitions, key changes, interesting harmonies, and references to other songs abound. I could say about Paul what he once said about Duke Ellington. He's just a man. Just a man whose resource of ideas is like a 50-foot deep well! My personal favorites are "The Man on the Little White Keys" and "Little Girl."

"Sweet Lorraine" introduces the excellent guest vocalist Eddie Erickson, who plays the Nat Cole role. He's got great pipes, with a mellow baritone, reminiscent of another great singer, our mentor, Bennie Carew. "Calypso Blues" provided a special treat for yours truly, because Paul and I performed it with Bennie at Sigees Lounge in the Harley Hotel.

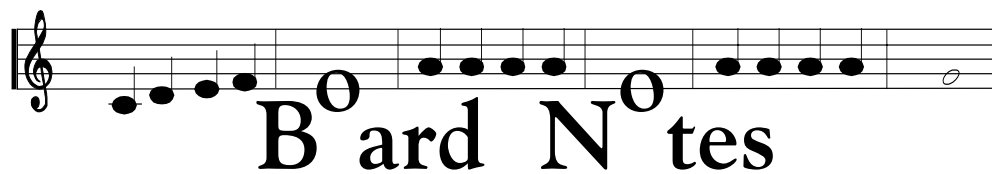
"I Know that You Know" is a tour-de-force arrangement for this cozy, cohesive unit. Steve and Paul play with typical wild abandonment, and their young guitar man, Ralph Tope, fits in perfectly with these two swinging gents. Ralph has a warm and pretty tone on the guitar and plays lots of tasty licks. He's a real up and comer.

My rating: five stars. Paul Keller Trio's "We Like to Riff" can be easily purchased at www.pkorecords.com.



Editor's Note: *In the interest of transparency, let it be noted that our reviewer, John Shea, is a close friend of Paul Keller and it would be highly unusual for such a good friend to give less than a rave review! They go back nearly 30 years, when Paul joined John's trio at Sigees' Lounge on Cascade Road after the death of Bennie Carew. We fully expect that when John comes up with a new CD, we will receive as ravishing a review from Paul!*

Just giving them both a hard time, readers... musically you cannot go wrong listening to, and purchasing, the magical output of either of these fine jazz artists.



Board member John Miller, having completed six years of service (two as President), was required by our By Laws to step down for one year. His value to the organization is such that he has been appointed to the position of Special Events Coordinator and will be in charge of planning next spring's 25th anniversary celebration. Barb Keller was elected to fill the open seat on our nine-member Board. Dona Raymer and Craig Benjamin will continue their positions as President and Vice President for another year.

Board member Deb Snow will be heading up our Education Committee, looking for new directions to take this important part of our goal to perpetuate live jazz among the youth of our area. Pete Proli continues as our treasurer, as does Barb Keller as secretary. Mary Rademacher and Marilyn Tyree co-chair our Program Committee. All of our Board members are active in the giving of their services and input to keep our organization going and growing. We are currently at 520 members!

Support Local Jazz Venues!

Terry Lower and **Edye Evans-Hyde** at Clara's by the River, 44 N. McCamley, downtown Battle Creek - on the patio from 6 - 1 PM Thursdays & Fridays all summer

Mary Rademacher (mary@maryrad.com)
Thur. 8/5 & 8/26 at Gillys w/Mark Kahny 7-10 PM
Mon. 8/9 - Bluewater Grille w/Tom Hagen 7-10 PM
Thur. 8/12 w/Trio at Douglas Social Club 5:30-9 PM
Thur. 8/19 - Mary/Rick Reuther & Hagens - 7 PM at Hudsonville Veteran's Park

NOTO's - fine dining, great music from 7-10 PM
Wed. - Tom Hagen Trio w/Rick Reuther
Thur. - Kathy LaMar & Bob VanStee
Fri. - Tony Reynolds & Wally Michaels
Sat. - John Shea Trio

Edye Evans-Hyde & the Roger McNaughton Trio, Thur. 8/3 - Riverwalk Plaza, Lowell - 7-9 PM

Fred Knapp Trio - Wed. 8/11 - Ferrysburg, Coast Guard Park 7-8:30 PM

Groove Merchant - Tues. 8/3 - Rockford, Garden Club Park, 7-9 PM

John Shea Trio
Mon. - Republic Bar-45 S. Divison 8-11 PM
Wed. - Brick Road Pizza - 1017 Wealthy 7-10 PM
Fri. - Wicks Pk. Bar & Grill, Saugatuck - 8-11 PM
Sat. - Noto's from 7:30 - 10:30 PM

Gillys (BOB) Thursdays Mark Kahny 7-10 PM
Red Jet Cafe-1431 Plainfield NE 6-9 PM
8/9 & 8/23 - Greg Miller Jazz guitar
8/16 & 8/30 - Mark Kahny

Mangiamao's - Wed. 7-10 PM - Wally Michaels
Fri. 8/6 - Hugh DeWitt 7-11 PM
Sat. 8/14 - Zach Vinson
Fri. 8/20 - Mark Kahny

Bluewater Grille - 5180 Northland Dr.
Sat. 8/7 - Hugh DeWitt 7-10 PM
Sun. 8/8 - Greg Miller 4-7 PM
Mon. 8/9 - Mark Kahny/Mary Rad. 7-10 PM

Tues. 8/10 - Carol Morgan, trumpet 7-10 PM
Wed. 8/25 - Paul Lesinski/Tony Reynolds 7 PM

Grand Rapids Jazz Orchestra at Founder's Brewery
- every 1st & 3rd Sun. 5:30 PM

What Not Inn - M89 & Blue Star Hwy - (269) 543-3341
Sat. 7-11 PM / Sun. 6-9 PM, Monday Jazz Jams 6 PM
8/7 - Jack Wilkin 8/8 - Mary Rademacher
8/14 - Diego 8/15 - Christy G
8/21 - Entyce 8/22 - Edye Evans-Hyde
8/28 - Christy G 8/29 - Entourage
9/4 - Christy G 9/5 - Diego

The Jazz Society presents our Fall Season **Jazz Gumbos** every third Monday, Sept. thru May, at the Kopper Top Guest House, 634 Stocking NW, from 6:30 'til 8:30 p.m. First up Sept. 20, "A Tribute to Ray Charles" featuring the Mark Kahny Trio & vocalist Tony Reynolds. These are cabaret-style jazz showcases. Admission is \$12 for guests and \$8 for members, including choice of bowl of chili or gumbo plus salad. Cash bar available.

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Check out our Web Page: www.wmichjazz.org

Jazznotes

August 2010

Articles, photos and comments are welcome! Send before the 20th of the month to:

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Address and e-mail changes: Please notify Membership Chair (Betty Forrest, 458-0125). Bulk mail is not forwarded by the Post Office.

- Student \$10
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Interested in working on a committee? Yes No Later

JAZZ NOTES is sent to all members of the West Michigan Jazz Society to inform members of area jazz and to promote jazz in general.

Your contribution to the West Michigan Jazz Society is Tax Deductible.

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