



An All-Volunteer
Organization
Since 1986

WMJS HOSTS FIRST "JAZZ in the PARK(ing LOT)" EVENT



GR Groove



Clif Metcalf Organ Trio



In the Blue Jazz Ensemble



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The West Michigan Jazz Society partnered with Amore Trattoria Italiana and Kaczmariski Hearing Services to present the first "Jazz in the Park(ing Lot)" festival. A portion of restaurant and musicians' earplugs sales during the event was donated back to WMJS from both Amore and Kaczmariski Hearing Services. Since we cannot host our traditional Monday night summer series, "Jazz in the Park", we will be sponsoring local musicians & jazz venues in West Michigan to host safe and

socially distanced outdoor concerts. The originally scheduled series lineup for Jazz in the Park is being postponed into 2021.

It was a hot day in Comstock Park, but the music was even hotter! The festival lineup included a diverse roster including GR Groove, the Clif Metcalf Organ Trio, and the In the Blue Jazz Ensemble. GR Groove and Carl Kaczmariski (of In the Blue) can be regularly found playing during dinner hours at Amore. Patrons of

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Amore and WMJS jazz fans alike attended the event in their vehicles or sat socially distanced on the lawn surrounding the parking lot of Amore while enjoying their carry-out meals. At Amore Trattoria Italiana, Chef Jenna expertly combines her International culinary background with her mother-in-law's traditional old-world Italian recipes to create an experience unlike anything else in West Michigan. The event was also live streamed from the WMJS Facebook page, for those who were not comfortable with attending in person.

GR Groove is an "All-Star" jazz band of area high school musicians that met in the St. Cecilia Music Center Youth Jazz Ensemble. They formed under the direction of WMJS Musicians of the Year, Dr. Paul Brewer (2020) and Dr. Robin Connell (2017). Personnel: Joseph Schimmelmänn (alto sax), former WMJS scholarship recipient Koda Smith (tenor sax), Peter Sage (trumpet), Judah Guerra (trombone), Max Gage (piano), Samuel Avendano (guitar), Benny Brewer (bass), and Mitch Arganbright (drums).

Clif Metcalf Organ Trio personnel included Clif Metcalf (Hammond B-3 Organ), Jordan Finn (guitar), Jake Metcalf (drums). Clifton Metcalf plays Jazz and Blues on the mighty Hammond B-3. He is an inductee of the Hammond Family of Artists--Hammond Organ Company, USA. Clif is a regular member with bands such as The Thirsty Perch Blues Band, Hannah Rose and the Gravestones, the Holland Concert Jazz Orchestra, and many others. Jordan Finn is a guitarist based in West Michigan. He began his journey playing guitar at the age of

10. Throughout his early years as a musician, he spent much of his time developing his skills in several musical genres, which allows him to be involved in a variety of musical groups throughout Chicago as well as Michigan's west coast.

In The Blue Jazz Ensemble personnel included Tim Grieme (saxophone), Steve Rothstein (guitar), Jarrett Holtslag (piano), Carl Kaczmariski (bass), and Andrew Witter (drums). In 2016, In The Blue began creating music and playing gigs in Detroit. In The Blue Jazz Ensemble has been building a reputation as a great local talent in West Michigan at restaurants and events. The band is comprised primarily of current or former students of the GVSU Jazz department, under current WMJS education chair Tim Froncek!

The West Michigan Jazz Society is an active 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. For the over nine out of ten people who no longer itemize their charitable giving, the CARES Act allows these individual taxpayers to deduct donations to charity of up to \$300 on their 2020 federal tax return, even though they take the standard deduction. Married-filing-jointly taxpayers will get an above-the-line deduction of up to \$600. A 'digital donation jar' is always available to show your support for WMJS securely through PayPal online: [PayPal.me/wmichjazz](https://www.paypal.com/WMJSS)

If you have not registered or renewed your 2020 WMJS membership yet, you can do so on our website: <https://wmichjazz.org/membership>

- Jake Vanderhayden

Kaczmariski Hearing Services

Kaczmariski Hearing Services sponsored this event. Kaczmariski Hearing Services has been family-owned and operated for over 25 years. Owners, Beckie and Carl Kaczmariski, built their business on their passion for helping people to hear better and live better. Nowadays, the Kaczmariski team includes five certified audiologists as well as an array of wonderful support staff who are always focused on providing unparalleled customer service. Dr. Beckie was at this concert for walk up service and was fitting custom musicians' earplugs!

They have four convenient locations in the Greater Grand Rapids-Area and offer hearing aids from three of the top manufacturers in the country: Starkey, Widex and Phonak. Visit their website for more information: <https://www.kaczmariskihearing.com>



New face on the membership committee

"Hey Jazz Lovers!! My name is Lauren and I am a Michigan State University Graduate who has grown up around a family of music. I have been participating in WMJS events for many years now with my parents and I love to see all those who are involved in the West Michigan Jazz Society. To support the efforts to increase Jazz Society Memberships I have joined as part of the Membership Committee. My main goals are to keep the relationships we already have with many members but also to increase memberships to 'Keep Live Jazz Alive'. Another goal of mine is to help support the WMJS in diversifying their performers, board members, and audiences. Through the COVID-19 shutdown it has been inspiring to see jazz musicians and lovers around the world work hard to support each other and keep jazz going! I hope to continue helping

WMJS do this for our communities. Jazz is an important part of my world and I would love to be able to share these WMJS experiences with friends, families, and others. Thank you for being part of our community!"



WMJS president Michelle Needham and Chef Jenna Arcidiacono from Amore were interviewed by eight West on WOODTV on June 19th to promote the first "Jazz in the Park(ing lot)" at Amore.



"Who Care" presented an \$825 check to support WMJS's mission to bring jazz to the people.

Women Who Care is an inclusive group of women whose mission is "looking to give back and helping streamline fundraising for Kent county-based charities." They create an awareness of the many non-profits making a positive impact in our community. Find out more at: <https://www.facebook.com/ggr100wwc/>

Pictured above right-left, board members, Jake Vanderheyden, Shannon Dennison, Peni Reed, Michele Needham, Dan Ohlman, and Jim Reed.



NOTE: When shopping Amazon, please shop under [Smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com). You can select WMJS as a nonprofit and we will receive a portion of your purchase donated back to us from Amazon!



Opinion

Considering recent events both with covid-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement, I felt it necessary to address our current state as it relates to our love of America's original art form, Jazz and Creative Music. Racism and violence against Black People have gone on for centuries. Many of our beloved figures of jazz experienced all sorts of violence and discrimination as they forged ahead with their art. Miles Davis was clubbed over the head by a police officer as he stood in front of Birdland. Charlie Parker was institutionalized for addiction. Billie Holiday's cabaret card was taken away. Not to mention the severe segregation because of Jim Crow laws that they had to endure while touring throughout the country. All are examples of the lives they had to live.



Miles Davis after beating outside Birdland, NYC Aug. 25th, 1959

As we quarantined ourselves for months we've had to find ways to stay connected and it showed the importance of our interdependence as human beings. I write this in light of the movement for racial equality and justice. The Black Lives Matter movement challenges the deeply imbedded biases of our society here in this country and around the world. We've seen daily protests over the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and Grand Rapids native Breonna Taylor. We've seen demonstrations surrounding these issues before but somehow this seems different. The awful, violent images in the media and on social media of the deaths of young

black people are etched in our minds and at times it seemed the world was falling apart. We've seen protests before, but not like this. We see people of all races, genders and ages participating which leads me to hope that perhaps this time it is different. So, the question is what is our individual responsibility in these times in regards to quelling injustice to promote equality of all races, ethnicities and genders?

You may ask "What does this have to do with jazz?" Jazz is our true American art form. It's the art form that the West Michigan Jazz Society is sworn to uphold, promote and sustain. Jazz was created by Black people and grew out of the experiences in that community. One of our great gifts to the world is our varied and beautiful culture. Our music, art, dance, poetry, acting and storytelling; all have been our power. It's based in our deep spirituality and our struggle and experience as Black people. But

all too often it's either been culturally appropriated or we have been taken advantage of as artists. Take for instance the Blues. The Blues was born out of the Black experience just as jazz was. But it, too, has been culturally appropriated. Once a safe space for Black Americans to learn and experience our culture has been taken over by White Americans who control the narrative and the money. At the same time, it's also the greatest form of Democracy where everyone has a voice.

There is no doubt that we were the inventors and innovators of jazz but like other art forms we are unable to obtain positions of power and dictate the narrative and the economics. I'm not saying that White jazz musicians haven't contributed to the art form, but jazz was born out of the struggle of Black people and thus we shouldn't have to take a back seat to anyone. We should be more and more put in positions of power. Almost all jazz festivals, record labels and clubs are either curated by White Americans or they have been put into the position of gatekeepers; the ones who decide who gets the work and who doesn't. This is in no

way a “dig” on my White musician friends or White musicians in general. It’s more about the gatekeepers in the music industry and the educational institutions that teach these art forms. Speaking from my educator position, I feel that all young people should be taught about the historical significance of the contributions of Black arts to our American culture. We must increase the understanding of Black culture and history because it has been devalued in my mind. So in this time of looking at Systemic and Institutional Racism we should not forget about the community that brought this beautiful art form to life.

How do we go forward?

Number One: A Starting Point - Understanding Black people in America come in a multitude of colors, backgrounds, sizes, shapes and religious affiliations. The word black has been used in a number of ways to denote negativity; “black magic”, “black balled”, “black listed” all negative. Recently or I would say in the past 15 years or so the term, “Bi-Racial” has been used more and more often. If you look at everyone from Nina Simone and James Baldwin to Thurgood Marshall and Adam Clayton Powell you can see that we are a rainbow of people; and being so are subjected to the same discriminatory practices. Africa itself is a huge continent. It encompasses radical geography as well as a multitude of types of peoples, ethnicities, cultures, hues and shades. We are a nuanced culture which is sometimes hard to pinpoint even in terms of religious and spiritual practices. My own family boasts of Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, Muslims and Buddhists. Within my own family we range from the lightest to the darkest of hues, educational backgrounds, sexual orientations, and beliefs on cultural issues. One thing that all of my family can agree upon is that we all love jazz and the cultural aspects of which it came from. There is never a one size fits all for Black folk.

Number Two: Black History

There is only one month in the year where the attention turns towards the history of Black Americans; February the coldest and shortest month of the year. It occurs to me that Americans have been deprived of the true history of our nation, some of it glorious and some of it difficult to have

conversations around. This country we call America was built upon the enslavement of Africans and the genocide of Native Americans. You can say that these two things are the original sins of our nation. Despite this, it was the resilience of Black Americans that thrived through our deep belief in our spiritual principles. If we can truly learn more about all of our history as Americans, then we can reach a better understanding. Please know that for centuries in this country Black people were considered not even completely human. Black people have endured 246 years of chattel slavery in this country and only 157 years of “freedom”. This so-called era of “freedom” includes Jim Crow, Red Lining, Discrimination, Mass Incarceration, Police Brutality, and the inability to vote.

Number Three: Systemic Racism

We just don’t need for police to stop killing us, we need reforms in all aspects of society. Racism is systemic. Racism is built into all of our various systems; racism shows up in our lives across institutions and society: the wealth gap, employment, housing discrimination, government surveillance, incarceration, drug arrests, immigration arrests, infant mortality and more. For example, a close examination of wealth in America finds evidence of staggering racial disparities. The average income for a white family in 2016 was \$171,000, while the average income for a Black family was \$17,500 (The Brookings Institute). Gaps in wealth between Black and White households reveal the effects of accumulated inequality and discrimination, as well as differences in power and opportunity that can be traced back to this nation’s inception.

Number Four: Education

Everyone should learn Black History. I say that because it’s been excluded from curriculums throughout the United States. The entire educational system needs to be reimaged. The stories the narrative of Black lives and First Nation People (Native Americans) are often misrepresented and truths about the glory of pre-enslavement Africans and pre-colonial Americans left out. Conversations on race are often avoided or altogether overlooked in schools. Also, a much deeper understanding of racial issues and ongoing racial matters by teachers is essential. We have to increase the value of Black Lives.

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What can others do to become allies of Black people and communities of color besides marching? First, let us have a voice. Second, put us in positions of power, of decision making; of making a difference. Third, seek out members of our community to lead the change that is necessary. All in all, we are all human and it's important for all of us Black, White, Native American, Asian; to create a world of humanism. And jazz IS the world of humanism. You can hear it in the music of John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme" and "Alabama" or Archie Shepp's "Things Have Got to Change" and Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage". This music we call jazz is a sacred music; a music with high spiritual energy and should be treated as such. Let us be thankful for all those that brought us this music as well as those who continue to uphold it.

Let's reimagine an America and a world where the love of people is made possible through the arts. With the music of jazz, hard work and understanding we can foster a world where all people are equal and seek justice when and where it is necessary. It is my

constant prayer that the world will one day be at peace. That we can emanate love more than hate. However, it does not mean we cannot stand up to injustice when it occurs. Let's all work together to form a truly "just" society; you and I in our everyday actions, deeds and words.

Kevin Bujo Jones - Percussionist, Educator, Bandleader



SOME FOLKS HAVE STEPPED UP TO HELP WMJS! THANK YOU!!

Kayne Ferrier (in honor of her sister Greta)
Greta Kulpa
Susan Miller
Jay Schoettley and Gail DeYoung
Mark & Donna Kahny
Jake Vanderheyden and In the Blue Jazz Ensemble, LLC
Patricia Dermody
Anthony and Alma Prince
Jan Basham
Elsa Fierens
Women Who Care

NEW Memberships at Patron level

West Michigan Musician's Union
Kaczmariski Hearing

Jack Morrison's family designated WMJS as a place to donate in Jack's memory. So far \$1200 has been received! Donors include, John Miller, Jim Reed, Robert and Gisila Whench, Richard and Maureen Morrison, Peni Reed and The Four Freshmen Society c/o Cathy Donaldson. We appreciate the Morrison family.



With frequent changes in live and streaming music this summer, be sure to check in at www.wmichjazz.org, the musicians' websites and Facebook pages to keep up to date. Also, check in at WMJS's Facebook as Paul Keller has pop up concerts often!

Note: ALL Noto's concerts require a dinner reservation. (616.493.6686)

July Jazz Around West Michigan

FRIDAY, JULY 17

- Kathy Lamar Trio at Noto's Italian Restaurant, 6:30-9:30pm
- Terry Lower Trio featuring Lana Hoffman, Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

SATURDAY, JULY 18

- John Shea Trio at Noto's Italian Restaurant, 6:30-9:30pm
- Jim Cooper at Harbor Light Brewery, South Haven, 4pm

SUNDAY, JULY 19

- Edye Evans Hyde with Mike and Evan Hyde live streaming on Facebook, 7pm
- Organissimo live stream on FB, and YouTube, 'Live from Jimmy's Basement', 7pm

MONDAY, JULY 20

- John Shea at the Republic, 7-10pm

TUESDAY, JULY 21

- The New Standard at Dee-Lite, Grand Haven, 6-9pm
- Jeff Shoup and Jim Alfredson of Moriarty's 'Live from Jimmy's Basement', FB and YouTube, 7pm

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

- Tom Hagen Trio featuring Rick Reuther at Noto's, 6:30-9:30 pm
- Terry Lower Trio with Lana Hoffman, vocalist at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

THURSDAY, JULY 23

- Terry Lower Trio with Lana Hoffman, at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

FRIDAY, JULY 24

- Kathy Lamar Trio at Noto's Italian Restaurant, 6:30-9:30pm
- Terry Lower Trio with Paul Vornhagen, at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

SATURDAY, JULY 25

- John Shea Trio at Noto's Italian Restaurant, 6:30-9:30pm

SUNDAY, JULY 26

- Jim Cooper at Harbor Light Brewery, South Haven, live streaming at 4pm

- Edye Evans Hyde with Mike and Evan Hyde live streaming on Facebook, 7pm
- Organissimo live streaming concert on Facebook, and YouTube, 'Live from Jimmy's Basement', 7pm

MONDAY JULY 27

- John Shea at the Republic, 7-10pm

TUESDAY, JULY 28

- The New Standard at Dee-Lite, Grand Haven, 6-9pm
- Jeff Shoup and Jim Alfredson of Moriarty's 'Live from Jimmy's Basement', 7pm

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29

- Tom Hagen Trio featuring Rick Reuther at Noto's, 6:30-9:30 pm
- Up the Creek Dixieland Band at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

THURSDAY, JULY 30

- Terry Lower Trio featuring Lana Hoffman at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

FRIDAY, JULY 31

- Kathy Lamar Trio at Noto's Italian Restaurant, 6:30-9:30pm
- Robin Connell Trio at the Listening Room with Jim Cooper, 7:30pm
- Terry Lower Trio featuring Lana Hoffman at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm



blue lake
PUBLIC RADIO

WBLU 88.9 GRAND RAPIDS
WBLV 90.3 MUSKEGON

Blue Lake Public Radio features Jazz From Blue Lake every Monday through Friday starting at 10 p.m. and the 5 hour broadcasts are also available the following day on demand by clicking the Jazz From Blue Lake links at www.bluelake.org/ondemand.

August Jazz Around West Michigan

SATURDAY, AUGUST 1

- Shea Trio at Noto's Italian Restaurant, 6:30-9:30pm

SUNDAY, AUGUST 2

- Jim Cooper at Harbor Light Brewery, South Haven, live streaming on Facebook, 4pm
- Edye Evans Hyde with Mike and Evan Hyde live streaming on FB, 7pm
- Organissimo live streaming on FB, and YouTube 'Live from Jimmy's Basement', 7pm
- Planet D Nonet at Gull's Landing, Pentwater, 6-10pm

MONDAY AUGUST 3

- John Shea at the Republic, 7-10pm

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4

- The New Standard at Dee-Lite, Grand Haven, 6-9pm
- Jeff Shoup and Jim Alfredson of Moriarty's 'Live from Jimmy's Basement', FB and You Tube, 7pm

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5

- Tom Hagen Trio featuring Rick Reuther at Noto's, 6:30-9:30pm
- Terry Lower Trio at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6

- Terry Lower Trio at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7

- Kathy Lamar Trio at Noto's Italian Restaurant, 6:30-9:30pm
- Terry Lower Trio at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8

- John Shea Trio at Noto's Italian Restaurant, 6:30-9:30pm

SUNDAY, AUGUST 9

- Jim Cooper at Harbor Light Brewery, South Haven, live streaming on FB, 4pm
- Edye Evans Hyde with Mike and Evan Hyde live streaming on Facebook, 7pm
- Organissimo live streaming concert on FB and YouTube, 'Live from Jimmy's Basement', 7pm
- Bill Hyde's All-Star NYC Quartet at Gull's Landing, Pentwater, 6-10pm

MONDAY, AUGUST 10

- John Shea at the Republic, 7-10pm

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11

- The New Standard at Dee-Lite, Grand Haven, 6-9pm
- Jeff Shoup and Jim Alfredson of Moriarty's 'Live from Jimmy's Basement', FB and You Tube, 7pm

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12

- Tom Hagen Trio featuring Rick Reuther at Noto's, 6:30-9:30 pm
- Terry Lower Trio at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13

- Terry Lower Trio at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14

- Kathy Lamar Trio at Noto's Italian Restaurant, 6:30-9:30pm
- Terry Lower Trio at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15

- John Shea Trio at Noto's Italian Restaurant, 6:30-9:30pm
- Robin Connell Trio at the Listening Room with Paul Brewer, 7:30pm

SUNDAY, AUGUST 16

- Jim Cooper at Harbor Light Brewery, South Haven, live streaming at 4pm
- Edye Evans Hyde with Mike and Evan Hyde live streaming on Facebook, 7pm
- Organissimo live streaming concert on FB, and YouTube, 'Live from Jimmy's Basement', 7 pm
- Robert Pace and Natures Brew at Gull's Landing, Pentwater, 6-10pm

MONDAY, AUGUST 17

- John Shea at the Republic, 7-10pm

TUESDAY, AUGUST 18

- The New Standard at Dee-Lite, Grand Haven, 6-9pm
- Jeff Shoup and Jim Alfredson of Moriarty's 'Live from Jimmy's Basement', FB and You Tube, 7pm

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19

- Tom Hagen Trio featuring Rick Reuther at Noto's, 6:30-9:30 pm
- Terry Lower Trio at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20

- Terry Lower Trio at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21

- Kathy Lamar Trio at Noto's Italian Restaurant, 6:30-9:30pm
- Terry Lower Trio at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22

- John Shea Trio at Noto's Italian Restaurant, 6:30-9:30pm

SUNDAY, AUGUST 23

- Jim Cooper at Harbor Light Brewery, South Haven, live streaming at 4pm
- Edye Evans Hyde with Mike and Evan Hyde live streaming on Facebook, 7pm

- Organissimo live streaming concert on FB, and YouTube, 'Live from Jimmy's Basement', 7 pm

MONDAY, AUGUST 24

- John Shea at the Republic, 7-10pm

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25

- The New Standard at Dee-Lite, Grand Haven, 6-9pm
- Jeff Shoup and Jim Alfredson of Moriarty's 'Live from Jimmy's Basement', FB and YouTube, 7pm

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26

- Tom Hagen Trio featuring Rick Reuther at Noto's, 6:30-9:30 pm
- Terry Lower Trio at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27

- Terry Lower Trio at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28

- Kathy Lamar Trio at Noto's Italian Restaurant, 6:30-9:30pm
- Terry Lower Trio at Clara's on the River, Battle Creek, 6-10pm

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29

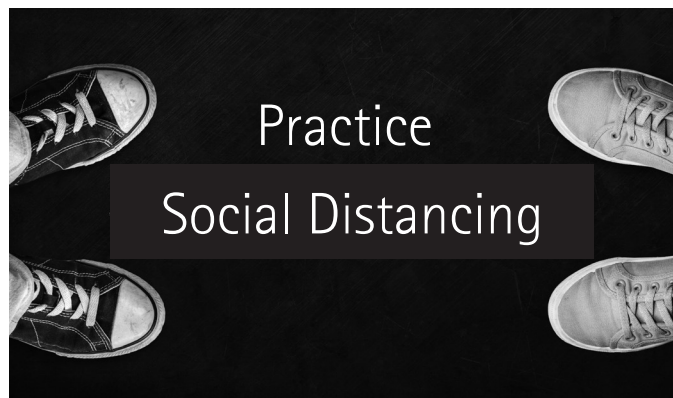
- John Shea Trio at Noto's Italian Restaurant, 6:30-9:30pm

SUNDAY, AUGUST 30

- Jim Cooper at Harbor Light Brewery, South Haven, live streaming at 4pm
- Edye Evans Hyde with Mike and Evan Hyde live streaming on Facebook, 7pm
- Organissimo live streaming concert on FB, and YouTube, 'Live from Jimmy's Basement', 7 pm
- Jenna Mammina/Tom Castanzo at Gull Landing, Pentwater, 6-10pm

MONDAY, AUGUST 31

- John Shea at the Republic, 7-10pm



SCHOLARSHIP NEWS!

The scholarship committee of the West Michigan Jazz Society has chosen two students to receive the 2020 award. Congratulations to these young jazz musicians, we will be watching for you out there in the jazz world!



Alex Alexiev plays trombone, he is a Grand Rapids native who graduated from Northview High School. While at Northview he was a member of the Northview Jazz Band and attended Aquinas

College's jazz camp. Alex was fortunate to have been mentored and tutored by the late Bob Taylor. Alex currently attends Grand Rapids Community College where he is majoring in jazz studies and is a member of the Grand Rapids Community College's Big Band.



Reuben Stump plays the double bass as well as the electric bass and is a resident of Dimondale, Michigan. He was tutored by both Ed Fedewa and Robert Hurst and is currently attending the University

of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Reuben has played with the University of Michigan's Jazz Ensemble, the Blue Lake International Jazz Ensemble, and other small combos. He aspires to perform, record, and to compose and has a growing interest in audio production.

"Music is a more potent instrument than any other for education, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul."

— Plato

(This report contains the story of how the racial attack on Miles left a lasting impression on him)

Miles Davis Profile

Drawn from “Miles” autobiography, 1989 & “Milestones”
Vol. 1, Jack Chambers, 1983



No two books about the same person could be less alike than the two listed above. The biography is like a college textbook, while the autobiography is like pulp fiction. The first is loaded with technical research; the other is full of scatological remembrances. Miles' book is a self-portrait of a sleaze ball with an emphasis on his own brutality. This is not to say his first-person narrative is not good reading, if you don't mind every other sentence containing the grossest of curse words. The few parts that are not scandalous are mainly plagiarized from Chamber's bio (details of his recording dates; band changes, etc.) since he was often too drugged to remember business details. Stanley Crouch harshly revealed this in a review in 1990. He was by then a champion of the young Wynton Marsalis. He spotlighted that Wynton was everything Miles no longer was...clean-cut, articulate, and a mainstreamer of jazz in the traditions that Miles had by then deserted when he took up jazz-rock fusion.

Reading about the career of Miles Davis is like examining the history of jazz from 1945 until 1990. He was in the midst of most stylistic developments and innovations, often leading the way while playing in a lyrical, introspective and melodic style. His choice of sidemen and collaborators helped forge these new directions.

Son of a dental surgeon, Davis grew up in the black middle class of East St. Louis, Ill. Vol. 1 of “Milestones” covers his life from his birth in 1926 until 1960, by which time he had taken his place in the top ranks of jazz. He began trumpet lessons at age 12 and was playing gigs in St. Louis while still in high school. A chance opportunity to sit in with the Billy Eckstein big band in 1944, which included Diz and Charlie Parker, put him under their spell and led him to seek them out when he enrolled at Julliard later that year.

By 1945 he had quit school to become a full-time jazz musician, joining the ranks of bebop revolutionaries and working on his own individual style. He played in Parker's group for three years before creating his nonet in 1949 with arranger Gil Evans. They influenced

a large number of musicians in a style packaged by Capitol Records as “The Birth of the Cool.” The group included John Lewis (piano), Gerry Mulligan (baritone), Lee Konitz (alto) and Max Roach (drums). By now Miles was totally hooked on heroin and was creating an image of being outwardly unemotional and indifferent while seething with hostility; wearing natty clothes and dark glasses; turning his back on his audiences and letting drugs dominate his life, which had an increasingly detrimental effect on his technical abilities.

The years 1950-54 were spent picking up gigs where he could, due to club-owners' awareness of his addiction. Typical of Chambers' biography, which involves pages and pages of detail on every recording session Miles was ever involved in, he relates the following: “Surfacing in St. Louis spring 1952, Miles was taped playing as a guest soloist in a group led by tenor sax man Jimmy Forrest at the Barrelhouse Club. This is a good example of the catch-as-catch-can Davis was forced to take, and the result is more favorable to Forrest with his big bluesy tone on solos that are bright and witty, with oblique references to dozens of obscure songs. The audience clearly belongs to him, even though one of the best musicians ever to come out of the St. Louis area was sharing the stage with him. The music is spirited, especially when Davis and Forrest are “trading fours” on Tadd Dameron's “Our Delight,” which became the name of the laterreleased album. Davis was luckier than usual in finding a musician of Forrest's caliber to play with when he played in clubs outside of New York City.”

Inspired by the discipline shown by the fashionable playboy/boxer Sugar Ray Robinson when he was training for a fight, and perhaps chagrined that Chet Baker had been named Downbeat's top trumpeter in 1954, Davis went home to his Dad's house, locked himself up for two weeks, and quit drugs “cold turkey.” He then joined a group of jazz musicians in Detroit for several months, working to get his chops back up before returning to New York.

The death of Charlie Parker in March 1955 was like the end of an era. The rise of pianist Amad Jamal became a new influence as Davis felt a kinship with his melodic understatements, rhythmic lightness, and harmonic inventiveness, which were always central to his own style. The first official year of the Newport Jazz Fest – 1955 – headlined the Count Basie and Woody Herman big bands; the Brubeck and Armstrong small bands. An “all-star” ensemble was booked to play the closing concert which included two of his 1949 nonet musicians – Zoot Sims and Gerry Mulligan – plus Thelonius Monk and Percy Heath. At the last minute they decided to add Miles on brass, too late for his name to appear on the program, but when he completed his muted solo on “Round Midnight” everybody knew who was on the trumpet!

This fresh spotlight enabled him to put together a new quintet with Red Garland (p), John Coltrane (alto), Paul Chambers (b) and Philly Joe Jones (d). The next two years were very successful for club dates and recording dates, which are voluminously covered in Chambers’ book. Early in 1957, following throat surgery, the whispery voice that resulted seemed to add to his growing anti-social stage behavior for which he received much criticism. His response was: “It’s not about being vain. It’s the way I am...I play for myself and the musicians in my group.” Adding Cannonball Adderly to make up a sextet in 1959 (called by some critics the finest small band in the history of jazz) their new version of “Milestones” and “Straight, No Chaser” were huge hits, along with the album “Porgy & Bess” that Miles did with arranger Gil Evans and His Orchestra.

The sextet peaked in 1959 with the release of “Kind of Blue,” an album that became a landmark in modern jazz, the most popular disc of his career which eventually sold over two million copies. At the same time, on a personal level he was still off drugs, financially secure, elegantly dressed, driving a Ferrari, living in a large house that was a converted church on West 77th Street, and married to an elegant former dancer, Frances Taylor. In his own words though, he was a terrible husband, not hesitating to slap his lovely wife when she made a simple statement, after meeting Quincy Jones, that he was a good-looking man! Nor did his fame and riches prevent a disgusting racially motivated attack on him by the New York police outside Birdland when, between sets, he escorted a young white woman to a waiting cab and stopped

outside to smoke a cigarette. A policeman accosted him; said he was loitering and when Davis protested he was taking a break and was working at the club he was standing in front of, he found himself clubbed in the head, arrested, charged with resisting an officer and had his cabaret card (required by performers to work in NYC) suspended for the two months it took to get the charges dismissed.

That this terrible incident had a lasting effect on him is related in his book with great bitterness. He felt he coasted for the next several years, trying no new settings and writing almost no new music. For nearly four years the apostle of change became the Prince of Darkness, although he and Gil Evans collaborated again with the unique “Sketches of Spain” with Miles playing flamenco in a tone so clear that it sounded like his trumpet was singing. In the early ‘70s he was experimenting with electric instruments and fusing more funk into his music. By 1976 a combination of bad health cocaine use and lack of inspiration caused him to go into a five-year retirement. In the ‘80s he was wearing dreadlocks (having lost most of his own hair), dressing very “hippy” style and using more synthesizers and studio techniques in his recording which attracted the younger audiences he craved. By now he was considered an elder statesman of jazz with a celebrity that extended beyond the basic jazz audience. This made it a great surprise to his jazz fans when he joined the Quincy Jones orchestra at the Montreux Jazz Festival in July 1991 performing some of the arrangements written for him in the late ‘50s by Gil Evans. He had never previously looked back at any aspect of his career. He died of pneumonia, respiratory failure, and a stroke just a few months later.

In summary, Miles had taken an all-inclusive, constantly restless approach to jazz that had begun to fall out of favor by the time of his death, even as it had earned him considerable controversy during his lifetime. It was hard to recognize the bebop acolyte of Parker in the flamboyantly dressed leader with the hair extensions who seemed to keep one foot on the wah-wah pedal and one hand on an electric keyboard in his later years. However, he did much to popularize jazz and had retained an ability to play moving solos that still demonstrated his affinity with tradition. He was a constant reminder of the music’s quality of boundless invention and improvisation, using all means possible.

-Betty Forrest

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Jazznotes

Newsletter for members of the West Michigan Jazz Society

Summer 2020

If you would like your jazz event included
in our media publications please send your
schedules to jlbasham@i2k.com
by the **10th** of the month.

West Michigan Jazz Society Board Members

Board meetings are now held virtually on Zoom. 4th Wednesday of each month, 6:00 pm

If anyone wants to view them they can ask for the link

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This Summer Issue
of Jazz Notes was
produced by:

Editor: Donna Kahny

Staff: Jan Basham,
Nancy Reahm

Photography: Michelle
Needham

Writers: Jake
Vanderheyden, Kevin
Jones, Betty Forest

LK Creative Design,
Graphic Design and
Production

Printed by Storr Printing

Website Design and
Maintenance by Van
Wyk Technology
Consulting LLC.

Summer 2020