



NEWS LETTER

Fall 2009

www.louisvillejazz.org

LOUISVILLE **JAZZ** SOCIETY

The Jazz Guitar Clinic at Bellarmine Rocks!

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It's been said that there are really only two types of music - good and bad, and that good instruction paves the way to playing good music. Twenty five guitar players, ranging in age from teens to the men in their seventies, and coming from seven different states (including Kentucky), all recently enjoyed some of the best music teaching our planet has to offer at the 2009 Bellarmine Jazz Guitar Clinic held on June 8th and 9th.

The Louisville Jazz Society has been sponsoring the Jazz Guitar Clinic at Bellarmine University for roughly two decades now, and for good reason. The good reason is that we truly love good jazz don't we? And playing jazz guitar well is not quite as simple as falling off a rock and rolling backwards. Don't get me wrong - I'm not trying to be a musical snob. I dig good music from several genres. I'm simply attempting to highlight the discipline it takes to hit that "sweet spot" of jazz, when the soul of the melody, the richness of the harmony, and the power of the groove all combine to reach the heart. The insight and discipline required to play that way does not just happen. Few are the players who stumble upon it by chance.

And speaking of hitting the musical sweet spots, the Bellarmine Jazz Guitar Concert Monday night June 8th had a small but appreciative audience feeling good. Jack Wilkins, Howard Alden, and Jeff Sherman commanded the magic on their guitars, and Tyrone Wheeler and Terry O'Mahoney aptly supported them on bass and drums respectively. It's a real treat to hear jazz guitar played by masters of the craft. But for

me, the greater privilege was the time spent with Jack Wilkins and Howard Alden as they taught concepts, answered questions, and showed us how it's done.

I'll spare you the technicalities, but I would like to briefly mention a few points of learning that came up. Here's a quote from Howard Alden: "Spend some time with these [Bach Partitas] and I guarantee your picking technique will improve 500%". I realize that's hyperbole, but heads were nodding, and comments following confirmed that it rang true for us. We all have plenty of homework to do!

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Two guys play guitar

			LIS BUSINESS PARTNERS

Fusion Lives: New Releases from the Masters

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During the late 1960s, jazz artists as diverse as Miles Davis and Gary Burton were listening to the sounds of rock and funk and incorporating the amplification and rhythms into their own music, while keeping the improvisational focus of jazz. Dubbed at the time either jazz-rock or fusion, it has (like all styles of jazz) had its ups and downs over the years. There seems to be a renaissance of sorts lately, with many new releases which range from archival to reunion to new ensembles. This article will review several of these new offerings, in alphabetical order. (The June 2009 issue of **Louisville Music News** (www.louisvillemusicnews.net) also contains my reviews of two other recent recordings in the genre, **Jeff Beck: Performing this Week . . . Live at Ronnie Scott's** (Eagle Rock CD and DVD) and **Mike Stern: New Morning: The Paris Concert** (Heads Up DVD)).



Gary Burton, Pat Metheny, Steve Swallow, Antonio Sanchez: Quartet Live (CD, Concord CJA-31303) Vibraphonist Gary Burton's quartets from the middle to late 1960s broke new artistic ground, fueled by the searing electric guitar of Larry Coryell, with the excellent

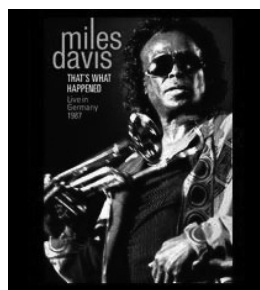
bass of Steve Swallow, and either Roy Haynes or Bob Moses on drums. After Coryell left, there were other guitarists, but none reached the popular heights of Pat Metheny, who performed and recorded with Burton from 1974-76. Now, Burton, Metheny, Swallow, and Metheny's drummer Antonio Sanchez have joined forces to produce this new live album, recorded in June of 2007 at the famed Oakland, California club Yoshi's. Among the pieces originally recorded in the '70s, the group revisits songs as varied as Chick Corea's "Sea Journey," which swings with a steady pulse, and Duke Ellington's lovely "Fleurette Africaine (Little African Flower)." Burton was never a prolific writer, so it's a special treat to hear the band rock out on his "Walter L." The band closes with a stretched-out, 13 minute romp through a favorite from Metheny's repertoire, "Question and Answer." As one whose first jazz purchases in the 1960s included Gary Burton's **Duster and In Concert**, I am delighted to hear Burton playing so imaginatively, and with such verve, in the classic quartet setting of his first major triumphs.



Chick Corea and John McLaughlin: Five Peace Band Live (2-CD set, Concord CRE-31397) After playing with Miles Davis, Chick Corea and John McLaughlin formed two of the best known and most popular fusion bands, Return to Forever (see below) and the Mahavishnu Orchestra, respectively.

Now they have joined forces with saxophonist Kenny Garrett, bassist Christian McBride, and drummer Vinnie Colaiuta as the Five Peace Band. They recorded this generous two disc set during a 2008 European tour. Disc One opens with McLaughlin's "Raju,"

which has some of the feel of classic Mahavishnu. Corea's "The Disguise" actually has more of a post-bop than fusion sound to it. McLaughlin's "New Blues, Old Bruise" is bluesy jazz with heartfelt solos by Garrett and McLaughlin. The first disc closes with a 27:45 workout on Corea's "Hymn to Andromeda." Jackie McLean's "Dr. Jackle" opens Disc Two, with Corea seemingly channeling Thelonious Monk. Except for McLaughlin's edgy tone, this 23-minute performance sounds like a bebop jam session, or something from the JATP recordings. "Señor C.S." sounds like a Corea Spanish-influenced composition, but is actually written by McLaughlin. For me, the high point of the set is the Joe Zawinul/Miles Davis medley "In a Silent Way/It's About that Time," on which the band is joined by guest Herbie Hancock, whose piano work occasionally veers toward freeform. A beautiful acoustic duet between Corea and McLaughlin on "Someday My Prince Will Come," closes the set with grace and another nod to their former employer, Miles Davis, who popularized this waltz from **Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs**. Throughout the more than two hours of music here, it is worth noting that what could have degenerated into a bombastic shredfest turns out to be far more intelligently conceived and executed.



Miles Davis: That's What Happened: Live in Germany 1987

(DVD, Eagle Rock EE 31980) With recordings such as **In a Silent Way** and **Bitches Brew**, Miles Davis forged new pathways in jazz. Following his sabbatical from 1975 to 1980, he continued to pursue an electric muse, with a seemingly constantly changing

lineup of younger musicians. This DVD captures a hot night in Munich, featuring the sax and flute of Kenny Garrett, the two-bass lineup of "Foley" McCreary and Darryl Jones (now with the Rolling Stones), Adam Holtzman and Bobby Irving on keyboards, Minu Cinelu on percussion, and Ricky Wellman on drums. The concert is a bit over an hour long, and the DVD also includes an interview with Miles as well as a feature on his visual art. From the fast-paced opening medley of "One Phone Call/Street Scenes/That's What Happened" through the moody, Spanish-tinged closing song, "Portia," Miles makes it clear that he came to play, and that he was in control. "New Blues" shines the spotlight on Foley's unique lead bass work in a deep blues. The pop songs from his repertoire of this era, "Human Nature" and "Time After Time" are given thoughtful readings by the leader and his band. The highlight of this performance is a 17-minute version of "Tutu," which begins with Garrett's plaintive flute and includes great footage of Miles and Foley challenging each other to new heights. There are some who have written off much of Miles Davis' post-1980 work, but this DVD effectively challenges the view that he was not on top of his game.

Return to Forever: Returns (2-CD set, Eagle Rock ER 20149) and **Live at Montreux 2008** (DVD, Eagle Rock EE 39182) Perhaps



the best known, and certainly the best selling lineup of Return to Forever consisted of Chick Corea on keyboards, Stanley Clarke on bass, Al Di Meola on guitar, and Lenny White on drums. Their summer 2008 reunion tour sparked a great deal of interest in the jazz press, and now there are audio and video documents of the music made by these artists. The 2-CD set was recorded primarily in Clearwater, Florida, with additional pieces from Boston, Montreux and London. The DVD, obviously, was recorded at the Montreux Jazz Festival, and contains bonus tracks from the Clearwater show. For a band that embraced amplification and synthesizers in its heyday, it comes as a pleasant

surprise that the 2008 edition of RTF played so much and so well on acoustic instruments. Not to worry, though, both sets start with the band's thoroughly electric playing on "Hymn of the Seventh Galaxy," "Vulcan Worlds," and "Sorceress." Each player is given solo spots, and the DVD visually captures their enthusiasm, which is also evident on the audio CDs. "No Mystery" is one of the acoustic showpieces, and leads into "Chick's Solo" in which he uses mallets on the strings before settling in to a straight-ahead piano trio performance. "Romantic Warrior" has a Spanish feel to it, and leads into "El Bayo de Negro (Stanley's Solo)," during which Clarke plays in a warm, understated style before launching into one of his patented slapping solos. In short, if you enjoyed RTF back in the day, you can't go wrong with either or both of these reunion releases.

(continued from front page)

Part of the clinic was spent listening to old recordings of early jazz guitarists and discussing aspects of their styles. Players such as Lonnie Johnson, Eddie Lang, Carmen Mastren, Teddy Bunn, and others were highlighted. That's two powerful lessons in one. First, we must all learn to take the time to listen. Listening is vital to making good music. And second, digesting the history of the earlier jazz greats and their playing styles informs us in ways that a focus limited to current styles cannot.

To demonstrate that, Jack and Howard played "Rose Room" twice. The first time, Jack quoted Django Reinhardt in his solo, and used an approach for his own improvisation based upon Django's style. The second time through, Howard did the same thing based upon Charlie Christian's playing. The value of these lessons to the end of playing good jazz cannot, in my opinion, be overstated.

Jack Wilkins told us, "You have to play with other people. You have to. It helps you to discover where the flaws are in your playing". Jack also explained that playing music with others helps to keep your playing "organic". And Jack demonstrated improvising around the melody, showing us that "the melody is not something to get out of the way so you can get to your solo". In light of this, Howard Alden introduced the term *cantus firmus* to the class, which means "having the melody going through your head throughout so that you can return to it at any point in the tune". That's some sage advice that I plan to work on.

Jack and Howard also discussed how our improvisations should unfold like a conversation. Have you ever heard a guitarist overplay? Howard talked about what he and Jack had for breakfast and went on and on about numerous mundane details of the meal without taking a breath. Point taken. Then, to further demonstrate what it is not, they attempted to play a bad example of a tune. Now, I say "attempted" because even when these two were trying to play badly they still sounded good! But when the good example followed, we could clearly hear the difference. Their musical statements employed breathing time, which, in turn, further enabled their interplay. What should we take from this? Our statements should not be divorced from listening. There's a music lesson and a life lesson.

I asked my friend Steve Irvin what stood out for him from the clinic, and he e-mailed me a long list of things. One point he mentioned was how "they showed us how to accompany others by letting us come up and play with them and explaining what they were doing". If you've ever seen a fellow with white hair playing jazz guitar at Java Brewing or at Café Metro, that was Steve. Anyway, that jogged my memory about something Jack said about comping for a soloist or vocalist: "The comp is just as important as the solo". Amen to that! Jim Hall was cited as a good example of someone to listen to for how he balances comping and soloing. I have some recordings of Jim Hall both as a leader and as a sideman and I'd meant to write myself a note to make the time to listen to them again with a purpose. Now I've got the note. Thanks for the reminder, Steve.

I could go on and on about the clinic, but I'd like to finish now by expressing thanks. Thanks to Howard Alden and Jack Wilkins for leaving the Big Apple to spend some time with us. It was Jimmy Raney who recommended Jack Wilkins to Jeff Sherman for a gig at Bellarmine some years ago. Since that initial time, Jack has become a regular clinician - this was his seventh time to teach at the clinic. Jack also writes for *Just Jazz Guitar* magazine, and like Howard Alden, stays busy playing jazz in New York City. Howard's credentials are long and impressive as well. If you have Jeff Sherman's CD "Some Other Time" you may have noticed that it was Howard who wrote the liner notes. So, as the saying goes, these guys go way back. Some folks who are loaded with talent are less loaded with friendliness. That, of course is not the case with Jack and Howard. Their giving and warm-hearted attitudes are obvious to all who've spent time with them. It was a real joy to study jazz guitar with them.

Jeff Sherman, of course, can be heard regularly at Varanese at 2106 Frankfort Ave. When was the last time you heard Jeff play? He's a living, breathing encyclopedia of the jazz canon, and well worth lending an ear to. Also thanks are due to everybody who supports what Jeff's got going here. And thanks to Jeff. Without his dedication, it would not happen. And if you are a member of LJS, you're included in the category of support. It does not happen without you either. Thank you.

Jazz Performer Profile: Megan Samples

By Michele Blum

If you ask Megan Samples what makes her unique, she'll tell you she isn't. "I'm really pretty average," she'll say, but on examination that statement just doesn't hold up. She's pursuing a degree in jazz drumming, which is hardly the path chosen by most young women from Mount Sterling, Kentucky. And the group she gigs with most often? Squeeze-bot, the quartet comprising Todd Hildreth on accordion, Brandon Johnson on tuba, Mike Sullivan on banjo, and Megan on drums. Not exactly your average jazz ensemble. So whether she knows it or not, it's apparent that the word average doesn't really apply to Megan.

She started drumming simply to help out the family band. Her family is musical, so between them, her father, brother, and sister had the piano, guitar, and vocals covered, but they lacked a drummer. So Megan became the family rhythm section, banging on whatever was handy. When she was eight she heard her first "real" drummer, JR Veal. Although he is from Baton Rouge, he and Megan met in Indiana where he and several members of his family were rockin' the church camp Megan attended. When she heard him play the drums, she understood for the first time that they could be far more than just a rhythmic presence in the background. Although she didn't have the vocabulary to express it at the time, what she suddenly understood was that the drummer could be an integral part of an ensemble, contributing both rhythmically and melodically. Coincidentally, Veal ended up in the Mount Sterling area for a while years later and at age 14 Megan had the opportunity to study with him for about a year. But in grade school private lessons weren't an option, so

she started working her way through the various school ensembles that were available: first the sixth-grade and middle school concert bands and then the high school jazz and marching bands. Although her band



Megan Samples

experience didn't offer the private instruction she would have liked, she got to play a variety of percussion instruments including xylophone, marimba, vibes, snare, timpani, and auxiliary percussion instruments. More importantly, it was the high school jazz band that introduced her to the music that would ultimately resonate with her more strongly than any other. And during her years in those bands she gained something far more valuable, though perhaps less tangible, than instrumental experience or exposure to new styles. She started to realize how much she loved playing percussion and that, for her, it was much more than a hobby or something to do after school. It was what she wanted to do more than anything else.

And so it was that she arrived at the University of Louisville three years ago. When she got there, she'd had only the one scant year of private instruction with Veal and she was

the only female on the scene, two things that might have intimidated a more average sort. But she didn't let either of these things stop her and, although she wasn't the most technically accomplished of the people auditioning that day, she was accepted and has since earned a reputation for being anything but average. Chris Fitzgerald, ensemble leader and instructor of jazz piano, bass, and theory at U of L says "Megan has worked really hard and grown like a weed. She's got a major-league work ethic that I wish I could bottle and inject into every student. It gives me hope to see a kid with such a mature and practical attitude coming through the pipes in this culture of instant gratification."

For Megan's part, she wouldn't trade the experience she has gained at U of L for anything. She credits jazz drum set instructor Jason Tiemann, Fitzgerald, and other faculty members with completely changing her approach to drumming and transforming her view of the music world. She's gained exposure to artists like Elvin Jones and Tony Williams, both of whom she cites as influences; the technical aspects of her own playing have improved by leaps and bounds; and she's had the opportunity to get some experience on the gig scene. Her playing with Squeeze-bot gives her a chance to play with a big, aggressive sound, something she enjoys and feels a drummer deserves a chance to do occasionally, since they're so often relegated to the background. But skill as a background player is equally important, so she's thankful for her recent collaboration with vocalist Sarah Stivers. Although it was a big adjustment, she enjoyed working with Sarah to acquire the touch that's



Squeeze-bot

necessary to complement, yet not overpower, a vocalist. But the gigs are more than educational opportunities – they’re also just plain fun. Like the night Squeeze-bot offered a discount to cross-dressers in the audience. Judging from the degree of participation, the jazz lovers at the Rudyard Kipling that night were either desperate to save a buck, or were long-repressed cross-dressers yearning to be free. Either way, the view from the bandstand was priceless.

When Megan isn’t studying or playing, she volunteers as an instructor for the Louisville Leopard Percussionists, the youth ensemble led by Diane Downs. Her work with them has shown her that she loves working with young children and she hopes to eventually have a similar ensemble of her own. She also dreams of one day starting a foundation to fund lessons for children whose families can’t afford them. As someone whose own family couldn’t afford private lessons and who understands how life-enriching music education can be, Megan hates to see any child denied that opportunity for purely financial reasons. Sadly, it’s a very common problem and one that she very much wants to address. For the time being, she has one more year of school and then who knows? Like most people her age – or for that matter all of us – she can’t be sure what the future holds. But whether she ends up as a teacher, performer, nonprofit-foundation organizer, all of the above, or something else as yet unknown, it’s clear there’s one thing she won’t be. Average.

Watch the Squeeze-bot Web site, <http://www.myspace.com/squeeze-bot>, for upcoming performance dates. And speaking of fun, check out the Squeeze-bot performance of “Walk this Way” at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gf3KRTwDu_Y. It’ll make you smile. Then go hear Megan and the crew – they’ll make you smile some more.



JAZZ VENUES

As always, we suggest that you call the venues to confirm appearances.

- **The White Oak at Artemisia Gallery**
620 E. Market Street
583-4177
- **Bearno’s by-the-Bridge**
131 West Main St.
584-7437
- **Clifton’s Pizza Company**
2230 Frankfort Avenue
893-3730
- **The Comedy Caravan**
1250 Bardstown Rd.
(Mid-city mall)
459-0022
- **Jack Fry’s Restaurant**
1007 Bardstown Road
452-9244
- **Galt House Hotel & Suites**
Fourth Avenue at the River
589-5200
- **The Nachbar**
969 Charles Street
637-4377
- **Seelbach Jazz Bar**
4th & Muhammad Ali
585-3200, ext. 205
- **Volare Ristorante**
2300 Frankfort Avenue
894-4446
- **Varanese**
2106 Frankfort Avenue
899-9904

Kenny Barron @ UofL

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The Jamey Aebersold Jazz Studies Program is proud to announce that acclaimed pianist Kenny Barron will open the 2009/2010 Jazz Fest/Jazz Week concert series on Sunday, October 25 in the Margaret Comstock Concert Hall at 7:30pm. The opening of Mr. Barron's biography offers an apt description of his talents and recognition within the jazz world:

Kenny Barron's unmatched ability to mesmerize audiences with his elegant playing, sensitive melodies and infectious rhythms is what inspired *The Los Angeles Times* to name him "one of the top jazz pianists in the world" and *Jazz Weekly* to call him "The most lyrical piano player of our time."

The remainder of his bio details his fifty plus years as a performer and educator. His musical life is one which clearly demonstrates how a gifted pianist developed into a world class soloist and accompanist. With a professional career that began at the age of sixteen, Kenny Barron has played with historically significant and modern music masters alike, a who's who in the jazz world - Dizzy Gillespie, James Moody, Roy Haynes, Lee Morgan, Philly Joe Jones, Freddie Hubbard, Stanley Turrentine, Milt Jackson, Buddy Rich, Ron Carter, Buster Williams, Ben Riley, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Eddie Harris, Sonny Stitt, Harry "Sweets" Edison, Charlie Rouse, Gary Bartz, Regina Carter and more. His style reflects his diverse musical interests and vast experience.

While maintaining an extremely active and diverse schedule, Mr. Barron has spent considerable time developing his own voice as composer and group leader during the last twenty years. His own recordings have earned him seven Grammy nominations encompassing



Kenny Barron

a wide range of music – from his Brazilian influenced recording 'Sambao' to a duo effort with violinist Regina Carter. As an educator, Mr. Barron was an influential professor at Rutgers University touching the musical lives of such modern artists as Terrance Blanchard, David Sanchez, and Regina Bell. With more than forty recordings to his credit, Kenny Barron remains a role model for anyone interested in jazz and improvisation. His bio best sums up his current musical direction:

Throughout his career, Kenny Barron has been the pianist of choice for some of jazz's greatest musicians. Now at age 66, whether he is playing solo, with his Trio, his Brazilian jazz ensemble, "Canta Brasil" (a quintet featuring some of Brazil's

greatest musicians) or his latest quintet (which features Stefan Harris and Anne Drummond), Kenny Barron is recognized the world over as a master of performance and composition.

I hope to see you on October 25. Mr. Barron's appearance is made possible by Gist Piano Center, BankingQuestions.com, and Crowne Plaza Hotel. Please call the School of Music at 502 852 6907 for tickets and additional information. You can also visit www.jazz.louisville.edu for details on this and upcoming jazz concerts. Coming in January 2010 – Gary Keller (saxophone), February 2010 – Toots Thielemans (harmonica) with Kenny Werner (piano), Houston Person (saxophone), Valery Ponomarev (trumpet) and more.

All That's Jazz: News and Notes from the President

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The Louisville Jazz Society held its general election in April this year, and I'm pleased to announce that we have a new LJS President-elect who will take office in June 2009. He is Matt Grossman, a musician and knowledgeable jazz fan with experience leading other music organizations on both sides of the river. Matt also operates two music businesses, Simply Grand and Vintage Piano Works. Matt brings a wide range of talents to this volunteer job and we are certain that the LJS will be in good hands with his leadership.

We are also fortunate that Miles Bailey will be continuing to serve as our Treasurer, minding the dollars and cents with his usual aplomb.

Long-time board member Martin Kasdan, Jr., will step up as our Vice President, while outgoing VP Patty Bailey will remain on our board as an advisor for any and all projects. We appreciate their many years of service already, and are delighted that we can count on Marty and Patty for their ongoing support.

Yours truly, Nancy Grant, will now assume the duties of Secretary.

I've thoroughly enjoyed my two-year term as president of the LJS, meeting new jazz fans and hearing great music all around town. Now it's time, in accordance with our by-laws, to pass on the gavel to a worthy successor. Matt has plenty of enthusiasm to carry forward our many ongoing projects, and great ideas for fresh endeavors. All of us on the board are looking forward to working with Matt to develop new jazz opportunities throughout the Louisville Metro area.

You can do your part to help grow the jazz community here by volunteering to serve on one of our many LJS committees or by joining our Board of Directors. Send an e-mail to Matt at president@louisvillejazz.org with your ideas today.

As I've worked with Matt during this transition period, I've been thinking about how vibrant our jazz scene has become. So many amazing and talented musicians are playing so many varieties of jazz in so many different venues -- we truly have a feast for the ears any night of the week, month after month.

Be sure to check out the jazz calendar of events at www.louisvillejazz.org, and if you don't already receive **The Jazz Insider** (our e-mail notices about coming events), sign up today by sending your request to JazzInsider@louisvillejazz.org. A special "thank you" goes to new board member Larry Cooper, who's doing a superb job expanding our musician-liaison efforts while working with webmaster Wake Purple and membership coordinator Harry Kron to keep things up-to-date.

And I extend my sincere and heartfelt "thanks" to each and every fan for supporting jazz and helping the Louisville Jazz Society play such a vital role in our community's cultural life.

I hope to see you soon at upcoming jazz events!



Nancy Grant and Matt Grossman



The Louisville Federation of Musicians

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NEWSLETTER

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