



Getting Around

By ETHEL SIMMONS

Bobo sings blues in Birmingham

Bobo Jenkins has been singing the blues for more than a half-century, and come the Winter Carnival he will be singing them in Birmingham.

"Blues will fit you when you're happy. Blues will fit you when you're sad," Jenkins said.

Alabama-born and a resident of Detroit since the 1940s, Jenkins has made a name for himself with the blues. He will star in a blues concert at 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 3, at the Bloomfield Theatre, as part of the Birmingham Winter Carnival.

Ron Kovacs, who brought the Bloomfield Theatre back to life 14 weeks ago, is delighted by the prospect of Jenkins' appearance.

KOVACS HAS TWO goals for his theater. He thinks there's a need for "alternative entertainment. It can still be quality."

Mainly, the Bloomfield Theatre is offering movies, for \$1. "The movies are a little older," he acknowledges. But Kovacs also wants to provide "top quality local entertainment, like Bobo."

The concert, with Jenkins singing and playing the blues on his guitar, may also present other blues performers he will bring along. In addition, the Straw Hat Band, part of the Birmingham Community Band, will perform.

Dr. Michael Whitty, a professor at the University of Detroit, loves the blues and has helped find locales to spread the musical message and promote interracial fellowship.

Whitty approached Kovacs after the Bloomfield Theatre owner had presented a bluegrass concert at the movie house in December. He thought Kovacs might like to "bring the blues to Birmingham," and he was right.

WHITTY SAYS the blues is "gut music, feeling music, or heart music." He also emphasizes that "this was the root of rock and roll."

He defines the blues as presently "a high school young white person's music, principally."

Bobo Jenkins is the man behind the Detroit Blues Festival, which will be presented for the fourth year on a three-day weekend in September.

According to Whitty, the Detroit Blues Festival is a remnant of the Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival. It's the only musical form offered as an ethnic festival, he said.

Jenkins explained the relationship between blues and jazz by saying, "Jazzed-up blues, they named it jazz. It all comes out from blues. Blues is the roots."

Jenkins started playing the harmonica at age 5 in Forkland, Ala. He played the harmonica while he sang the blues until 1954 when eight of his teeth were broken after another car struck his automobile.

YOU CAN'T control the harmonica with broken teeth, he said, and eventually switched over to guitar to lead his musical group.

Jenkins writes his own music and lyrics, and a girl does the scoring for him, writing down "what I play."

The first song Jenkins recorded was "Democrat Blues," at the time Eisenhower was elected to the presidency. The song talked about how the "Democrats put you on your feet," and then went on to talk about the Republicans. "I had some calls asking me if I was putting out a political song," he said. He didn't realize he was, at the time, Jenkins now declares. But the song was "a smash hit."

Detroit hosting Montreux Jazz

Detroit will host the first North American Montreux International Jazz Festival over a five-day Labor Day weekend next summer with activities centered on the riverfront and nearby downtown concert halls.

The internationally acclaimed festival will open its 14th season in Montreux earlier in July with a salute to Detroit. A contingent of Detroiters will be on hand to announce final plans for the Montreux-Detroit Festival.

Among those will be Livonian Don Lupp, chairman of the music department at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn. Lupp is the North American representative for the Montreux Jazz Festival and was instrumental in bringing the festival to Detroit.

Detroit Mayor Coleman A. Young, who made the announcement at historic Music Hall, site for many of the jazz performances, said, "The Montreux-Detroit International Jazz Festival has the potential to become a prestigious annual event for our city."

"Detroit will be a festival city and the place to be during Labor Day weekend in the United States, drawing international visitors to share our hospitality and enjoy outstanding jazz performances in one of the jazz capitals of the world."

CONCERTS WILL BE centered at the Philip A. Hart Plaza, Detroit Plaza Hotel, Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts and other downtown locations.

Joining Detroit officials for the announcement were Raymond Jausi, a

Montreux economic delegate who represented Montreux Mayor Jean-Jacques Vevey, Michel Ferla, administrative director of the Montreux Tourist office, and Robert McCabe, president of the Detroit Renaissance Foundation, which is sponsoring the festival in cooperation with the Detroit Plaza Hotel, Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts and the Detroit Council for the Arts.

The Northwestern High School Jazz Ensemble, led by Ernie Rodgers, performed. Rodgers and the ensemble participated in Festival 13 last summer in Montreux.

In a personal letter to Mayor Young, read at the briefing, the Montreux mayor linked the two cities while taking special note of Detroit's musical heritage.

"What a wonderful adventure for Montreux to be associated with one of the most important metropolitan cities in the United States, whose roots in jazz music are so strong," wrote Mayor Vevey. "We are sure that the Montreux-Detroit festival will have all the success they so greatly deserve."

THE SWISS FESTIVAL began 13 years ago and annually attracts the top performers in jazz, blues, rock and gospel to the festival setting in the Swiss Alps on Lake Geneva. For the 20 days of the festival, the Montreux population swells from 15,000 to 30,000.

Detroit officials believe the Montreux-Detroit festival will have the same dramatic effect in the Motor City.

McCabe reported that final arrangements for sites and concert schedules should be completed by late spring. The five-day event will feature both free and ticketed concerts, he said, and will include performances by noted Detroit jazz artists and high school and university jazz bands, as well as international music stars.

The festival is being planned around several major themes, including the best of Dixieland; Jazz of the Americas, featuring North and South America's jazz greats; Motown Sounds; Big Bands; and jam sessions at Hart Plaza.

During the entire festival there will be free public performances at Hart Plaza and other downtown locations.

The Swiss and American festivals will be jointly promoted. A festival poster has already been designed by Karen Magdalen Ringer, a student at the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit. The design will become the official symbol of the festival and will appear on all other promotional items.

"The Montreux-Detroit International Jazz Festival is another important step forward for the Renaissance City," said Mayor Young. "It will bring further recognition of our ability to host major conventions and boost our attraction as an exciting place to visit and enjoy the true spirit of our people."

Cedar Point slates auditions for shows

First-hand experience in the entertainment business is not easily obtained, but it is guaranteed for the 150 people who will be selected to perform in Cedar Point's live shows this summer.

"Audition 1990," a six-state audition tour conducted by members of Cedar Point's Live Shows Department, will begin with registration from 12:30-3:30 p.m., and auditions beginning at 1 p.m., Jan. 31 in Farmington Hills at the Holiday Inn on W. 10 Ten Mile Road at the I-96 (Grand River Avenue) exit.

Cedar Point, the amusement/theme

park in Sandusky, Ohio, produces 16 shows. There are five in-park theaters staging 13 shows exemplifying several different types of music, including vaudeville, Dixieland, contemporary and bluegrass, and three groups of strolling musicians who roam Cedar Point's midways. The groups are sometimes joined by the Cedar Pointers, four fuzzy-costumed canine characters.

During the summer those chosen to perform at Cedar Point will do 350-700 shows. This, according to Live Shows Manager Marjory Cronenwett, provides excellent experience for the entertainers.

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