

# Jazz fans watch favorites on film

(Continued from page 1D)

and a bunch of other kids would get four to eight free passes each week. I saw every show that came along — Douglas Fairbanks, Chaplin, the Max Sennett comedies. I became a nut for all films.

"I KEPT GOING to films and by 1928 or '29 when sound came to the theater, it wasn't long before they had musical shorts and then jazz was incorporated into films.

"I didn't call it jazz back then. I called it hot dance music. It was well in the 1930s before I started to use the word jazz. I made it a point never to miss a film if I knew that jazz or hot dance music was going to be in it."

The John Baker story then jumps to 1943. During World War II, he was stationed in New York City for three years. He was made officer in charge of screening the training and news films for a 5,000-man Air Force facility.

As was his habit, or his addiction, when he found films with jazz in them, he found ways to acquire them. When he and his wife then moved back to Columbus after the war, the films were stored away and virtually forgotten while he went about being an attorney and they reared several children.

"One day several years later, I had 8 or 10 jazz collectors at my house and I happened to remember some of these old films and brought them and showed them on a small projector we had for the kids. They were excited by the films and wanted to come back again and again to see them. I then realized that I had something that was even more interesting than my records."

The four hours of footage from the nearly 350 hours in his collection which he brought to Detroit was constantly interesting with enough music, tap dancing, humor and nostalgia to satisfy the most diverse musical and jazz tastes.

AMONG THE BLUES singers presented on Friday night was Jimmy Rushing, the original Count Basie band vocalist. Rushing appeared in duet with the relatively unknown singer Ada Moore. In three song sequences from a rare rehearsal kinescope from a long-forgotten TV special, Rushing simply overpowered the weaker, or more self-effacing, female singer.

Rushing was not timid in stealing the

vocal spotlight. Baker recalled after the show that he brought this film sight unseen with a group of other kinescopes that came initially from a TV studio that went bankrupt.

Baker paid at the time — several years ago — \$475 for a series of films labeled "black blues vocalists." He considers it a real find and says he would pay twice as much today for just the Rushing films which are one-of-a-kind.

Bessie Smith, Big Joe Turner, Dinah Washington and Billie Holiday (backed by a 1950 Count Basie sextet) were among the other blues performers who were seen in films Friday night.

The Saturday night show was called "Evolution of Jazz," and while not at all evolutionary in approach to jazz, it did present some outstanding lesser-known hot dance bands. Most of the bands captured in the films show did not receive the popular acclaim of some other well known jazz bands.

THESE CLIPS and Vitaphone shorts indicate that despite unsophisticated arrangements the bands of Elmer Snowden, Noble Sissie and Chris Columbus were big-league swing units.

The gems on Saturday night were the three Fats Waller segments from longer movies. From 1933 and 1943, they showed the swinging pianist to be as irrepressible and irreverent as ever. With his rakish face and lecherous eyes, he could inject humor into any musical situation.

The final of his three numbers was "Ain't Misbehavin'," which done in his typical fashion, was done a few weeks before he died. On his way back to New York by train from California, he suffered an attack of bronchial pneumonia and did not recover.

The final film was a 10-minute movie featuring the 1934 Louis Armstrong in Europe. Baker noted, "There are three or four prints of this movie now. However, when I got it from a collector in Europe, I was the first American to ever see it."

Thanks to John Baker's delightful addition to preserving jazz artifacts, jazz enthusiasts too young to have seen either the original jazz bands or their films can still enjoy the history of this music. Cass City Cinema, buoyed by the success of this program, is already planning to bring Baker and his films back to Detroit next year.

There is an audience for jazz films in the Motor City.

## What's on the Weekend

### IN THE SUBURBS

• **ST. DUNSTON'S GUILD OF CRANBROOK** — "Carousel," Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, Friday-Sunday, June 1-3, and Thursday-Saturday, June 7-9, at 9 p.m. at outdoor Greek Theater in Bloomfield Hills. Ticket information at 644-0527.

• **BOTSFOOT INN DINNER THEATER** — "The Owl and the Pussycat," Nancy Gurwin Production, every Sunday with dinner at 6 p.m.; show at 7:30, in Farmington Hills. Reservations at 474-4800.

• **NEW ORLEANS JAZZ CONCERT** — Every Thursday 8 p.m. to midnight and 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Saturday at the Sussex House in Southfield. Phone 559-3377 for information.

• **COMEDY CASTLE** — Mike Binder, young comic from Birmingham, in two shows at 8:30 and 11 p.m. through Saturday, June 2 in Olde World Cafe in West Bloomfield. Phone 851-3252 for reservations.

### IN DETROIT

• **FISHER THEATER** — Musical "Grease" through Sunday, June 3, in the New Center area. Phone 872-1000.

• **ETHNIC FESTIVAL** — Irish Festival in Hart Plaza downtown, Friday-Sunday, June 1-3.

• **THURSDAY JAZZ AT THE ART INSTITUTE** — George Benson (saxophonist) Quartet at 7:30 and 9:30 p.m. Thursday, May 31, at Detroit Institute of Arts in Cultural Center area. Phone 832-2730.

• **ATTIC THEATER** — Michigan premiere of the British drama "Ashes," at 8 p.m. Thursday-Sunday, through June 9 in Greektown. Phone 963-7789.

• **DETROIT FILM THEATER II** — "Lin Tse-Hsu (The Opium War)" (China-1980-Chen Chun-Li) at 7 and 9:30 p.m. Friday, June 1. "Thieves Like Us" (U.S.A.-1973-Robert Altman) at 7 and 9:30 p.m. Saturday, June 2; and "The Making of Othello" (U.S.A.-1978-Orson Welles) at 7:30 p.m. Sunday, June 3, at Detroit Institute of Arts Auditorium. Ticket office, 832-2730.

## TV's Vic Caputo stars in play 'Any Wednesday'

The musical "I Do I Do!" starring Nancy Gurwin of Southfield will complete its engagement at the Paradiso Cafe on Woodward in Detroit at the end of May after a three month run.

Opening Friday, June 8, and continuing Friday and Saturday nights in the Mediterranean Room at the Paradiso

Cafe, 17630 Woodward, Detroit, will be Vic Caputo, TV host, in Muriel Resnik's comedy hit "Any Wednesday."

Dinner is at 7 p.m., show at 8:30 p.m. For reservations call 869-3888. The show is directed by Birmingham resident Edgar A. Guest III; produced by Ms. Gurwin.

## Vegetarian dinner offered

A vegetarian dinner and workshop will be held from 4-7 p.m. Sunday, June 3, at the Birmingham Unitarian Church, 651 Woodward at Lone Pine Road.

Chaire Peck of Birmingham said the dinner was first offered last month for National Health Week, but that the response was so overwhelming she decided to continue with more dinners.

Timco Nutritionists will be cooking the dinner, featuring vegetable soup, spinach salad, ratatouille, quiche and spinach pie. Dinners are priced for adults and for children.

The workshop includes people from Theater Concern. Also represented are local health food stores and food co-ops.

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