

Montreux-Detroit jazz brings out big crowds

By JIM WINDELL

review

Despite Michigan showers dampening some of the jazz spirit at Hart Plaza, the five-day extravaganza of the Montreux-Detroit Jazz Festival was an unqualified success.

Anytime an event, cultural or otherwise, can draw several hundred thousand people to downtown Detroit, it is worthy of special note. There were many things to savor at the end of what is hoped will be an annual festival.

The opening ceremony Aug. 28 featured background music by 4 Swiss band, the Hot Mallets, that sounded like a Benny Goodman band of the '30s. The ceremony was carried out briefly and efficiently on Woodward Avenue.

Mayor Coleman Young and Montreux (Switzerland) Mayor Jean-Jacques Vevey were on hand to do the official opening bit, with appropriate words about the jazz relationship between the two cities.

WITH HIS FLOWERY comments, Vevey characterized Detroit as a city in renaissance. Cevey and Young then declared the Montreux-Detroit International Jazz Festival to be under way.

Not much happened in the way of music that day, but it was fun to stand around Woodward and John R watching people enjoy the sun and the cheerful sounds of the Hot Mallets.

On Friday, the concerts began in earnest with the first of what was to be about 40 free concerts and eight paid concerts. One of the appealing things about the festival was the number of Detroit and Michigan musicians featured.

THE MICHIGAN STATE University Band a couple of days later also appeared to a large, responsive crowd inside the Detroit Plaza Hotel.

This was a festival in which people got their money's worth. All the paid concerts ran well over three, and sometimes four, hours. At the Music Hall, Friday-Monday nights, sets were running up to an hour and a half — long enough to please even the most enthusiastic jazz lover.

And that leads to another plus, the variety and options available. It was impossible, even with careful planning, to catch every concert. Fans could pick and choose, with amazingly good quality available.

The Detroit musicians looked good in their concerts. Lenore Paxton had the difficult task of opening a concert for the Heath Brothers and Ramsey Lewis on the Detroit Plaza Hotel terrace. In a quiet setting, featuring her on both electric and acoustic piano and David McMurry on sax and lyricist, Ms. Paxton showed she is a pianist who can perform well in a jazz/rock setting. She didn't take any back seat to the popular Ramsey Lewis.

That same night, over at the Music Hall, the Wayne State University Jazz Lab Band sparked in a set with trumpeter Clark Terry. Both Terry and the audience were impressed by some of the fine soloist Dick Shearer has come up with for the jazz lab band, which has been around less than two years.

SUNDAY NIGHT at the Music Hall mixed styles with 90 minutes of Detroit drummer and percussionist Roy Brooks had the opening act with his Aborigine Percussion Choir. Brooks led the 25-piece percussion choir in several pieces.

Classical and jazz guitarist Laurindo Almeida followed with 90 minutes of Brazilian-flavored jazz. The set not only showcased Almeida's beautifully polished style but also the high quality of sound at the Music Hall.

The evening ended with Tito Puente and his band swinging their way through Latin American music. This was a very rare appearance for Puente in Detroit, and even in the Midwest, and the band came off like a combination of Willie Bobo and Santana raised to about the fourth power.

Highlight of the five days (actually six since Sippie Wallace and B.B. King were rained out Sunday night and rescheduled for Tuesday night) was the Monday night Music Hall concert called Detroit Jams. That concert put the whole Montreux-Detroit International Jazz Festival into perspective.

DETROIT, As several masters of ceremonies noted throughout the festival, is one of the major source cities for jazz. New Orleans provided jazz musicians prior to 1920, in the '20s musicians came from Chicago, then in the '30s it was Kansas City. But for the '40s and '50s the great musicians came from Detroit.

Even though Mill Jackson, Tommy Flanagan, Billy Mitchell, Barry Harris, Elvin Jones, Thad Jones, Hank Jones, Ron Carter, Kenny Burrell, Roy Brooks and dozens of other jazz musicians originally came out of the Motor City, Detroit has never gotten the recognition it deserves for producing such extraordinary musicians.

With a reunion concert, and with the eyes of the jazz world watching, the Detroit Jams concert was a musical way of reminding everyone that jazz and Detroit are practically synonymous.

Detroit Jams gathered together some experienced Detroiters like tenor Billy Mitchell, guitarist Kenny Burrell and trombonist George Bohanon to swing with hometown stalwarts who came from the same era.

Billy Mitchell referred to all of them as "the world's oldest beboppers." Not far off the mark, as the expatriates and the hometowners swung, bebop style, through some pop standards like "Now's the Time," "Night in Tunisia" and "Half Nelson." The Detroit jazz musicians perfected their craft through the jam session, and this was an indication that the skill had been learned well.

THE HOMETOWNERS drew considerable praise from the audience. Alto sax men George Benson and Larry Nozoro and trumpeter Cass Harris seem to exemplify the best jazz playing in Detroit these days.

Montreux-Detroit International Jazz Festival meant good music and a near-paradise for the jazz fan. It was a great start for a new jazz festival and suggests just how far the Detroit Renaissance has taken the people and the city. As the out-of-town musicians leave

Fans stay loyal to Grateful Dead

By ERIC MOBEY

The Grateful Dead has accrued an impressive following since its early beginnings in 1966 and its fans are simply referred to as Deadheads.

There are hundreds of thousands of Deadheads scattered across the United States, a phenomenon that differs from any other rock group following. Deadheads' fanatical penchant for retaining their hippie culture is remarkable.

They were out in force for the Grateful Dead's one-night stand Wednesday at Pine Knob.

The hill was sparsely populated and there were lots of empty seats in the pavilion. Yet the outdoor music theater abounded with energy.

PEOPLE DANCED or milled about and were generally having a grand time. The aroma of illegal substances hung in the thick muggy air.

The Deadheads for this concert were young, having been in elementary or junior high school when their rock and roll idols first arose out of Haight-Ashbury.

Older Dead groups may prefer fashion days, coiffed hair and Van Halen, but the new Deadheads prefer tie-dyed shirts, peasant dresses and hair that would give Vidal Sassoon ulcers.

The new Deadheads must have pirated their clothing from older brothers and sisters who left a cache of time-capsule clothing in their old rooms. Nevertheless, the new Deadheads have a flair for the authentic, right on down to their dance steps.

There was plenty of time for dancing. The Dead performed two sets that together lasted more than three hours.

The band uttered little more than a sentence or two all evening. No introduction of songs or members of the group. The audience knew most of the songs anyway.

Many of the Grateful Dead standards were blatantly absent from this concert. Gone were "Uncle John's Band," "Truckin'," "Sugar Magnolia" and "Casey Jones."

One or two of these classics spliced in would have heightened the routine performance. The most obvious left-down occurred on the forever-extended jams.

THE DEAD also is a band notorious for endless tuning procedures. Band members were oblivious to the audience, setting their instruments to the exact specifications. Often the long wait pays off. Jerry Garcia's guitar riffs were clear and sweet all evening.

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The band made up for lost tuning time by merging one song into the next. The songs start out slow and then build melodically.

A good example of this merging was the execution of "Eyes of the World," which then flowed into a drummer duet featuring Bill Kreutzmann and Mickey Hart. Kreutzmann and Hart hammered away on an arsenal of drums that reverberated off everything in the theater.

The band rejoined Kreutzmann and Hart and floated into a hot version of Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away."

The Grateful Dead does not seem about ready to fade away. The band has weathered the changes of rock music well and remained constant. It may do little innovative work but it is dependable.

Twin open houses mark new season

Celebrating the commencement of their fall seasons, the Detroit Public Library and the Detroit Historical Museum will stage a gala "Double Exposure" 6-9 p.m. Sept. 17.

Music, movies, demonstrations, exhibits and other special free activities have been scheduled for visitors of all ages at both locations.

The Detroit Public Library is located at 5201 Woodward, between Putnam and Kirby. The Detroit Historical Museum, 5401 Woodward, is next door across Kirby. Their connecting sidewalks will be lined with flaming torches to dramatize the twin open houses.

The library's auditorium program will feature photographs of photographer Richard Verick, illustrating the music of Grofe's "Grand Canyon Suite." This musical program will be presented three times, at 6, 7 and 8 p.m.

STORYBOOK FILMS will be continuously shown in the library's Explorers Room, starting at 6 p.m. and repeating at 7 and 8.

Live music will be performed. At the library, the Brass Menagerie will perform on the Woodward Terrace at 6:30, 7:30 and 8:30 p.m., while guitarist Michael Bryce and vocalist Susan Caroselli do a wandering minstrel act inside the building.

At the Historical Museum, the Finland Station will perform historic union songs in the "F.O.B. Detroit" exhibit at 7 and 8 p.m.; jazz pianist Diane Apey and the Palm Creek Folklore Society will be heard on the Streets of Old Detroit; and the barbershop quartet Just for Keeps will stroll through the building.

The library will open a major exhibit, "Clips from the Alternative Press, 1969-80," in its third floor exhibit hall, honoring a decade's production from the private press of Ken and Ann Mikolowski of Grindstone City.

The Mikolowskis will be there in person to discuss their work and will have for sale examples of the unusual broadsides and postcards that they publish.

OTHER LIBRARY exhibits: in the Photogallery, "Photographs by James Sandall" in the Rare Book Room, "Famous Private Presses" in the National Automotive History Collection, "Presidents on Wheels" in the Burton Reading Room, "Treasures of the Burton Historical Collection."

The Detroit Community Music School begins its 54th school year Sept. 11 with new programs as well as on-going instruction in all phases of music and dance.

New students are being accepted for fall sessions in the Suzuki method of violin instruction for children as young as 3 and 4 years.

Also planned for fall are the popular Orff-Schulwerk classes for pre-school children which combine song, movement and the use of simple, specially designed instruments to introduce the basic elements of music to the student.

Registration for the classes will be held on Sept. 6, 8, 9.

Detroit Community Music School is a non-profit organization. It is located at Kirby and John R in the university-cultural area of Detroit with a major branch in Bloomfield Hills. The school currently has a registration of more than 1,500 students. For information, call 631-2370.

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