

# Jazz from page A1

Smithsonian Institution calls "Classic Jazz," born in America very early in this century, nurtured in New Orleans and Chicago and Detroit.

Jazz that's blues and ragtime and swing and bebop and "modern." Jazz that's black, jazz that's white, jazz that's blending of both that makes some say it's the only original American art form.

Jazz that put names into the encyclopedia, Joplin, Morton, Armstrong, Waller, Goodman, Holiday, Fitzgerald, Tatum, Krupa, Hampton, Basie, Ellington, Gershwin, Garner, Monk, Whitman.

**A timeless journey**  
Those who sit in these 75 or 80 chairs are not queuing after an earlier life. This is not nostalgia, just as the thrill of seeing the Mona Lisa is not a rush to move back to the 16th Century. This is about the dismissal of time as a scale of values. It's about the conquering of time, with values the victor.

But for all it's worth, classic jazz is not without threats.

"I don't want it to be a lost art," said Creon Smith, a 44-year-old who four years ago bought and became keeper of Michigan's oldest operating inn, the Botsford Inn, Farmington Hills.

Those who share Smith's determination to keep classic jazz alive fill the "jazz room" of the Botsford every Thursday. And every Thursday, about a third or more are regulars, some who have been coming since the concerts began three years ago.

"Mostly," said Jack Campau, 73, of South Lyon, "we come for the jazz. And also because it's like a party."

Party, a newcomer might

wonder, or a religious event? Are these folks lovers or believers?

If they've come for services, they likely have chosen one of the most dynamic preachers to be found: Jack Brokensha, an artist known and honored locally and internationally and music for more than a couple of generations.

**Musical kick**  
At 7:15 or so, Brokensha skips into the jazz room, with his "Good-on-yo" Aussie smile lighting his path.

He likes being here and call his Thursdays at the Botsford "probably the sanest part of the week."

"Musically, it's a kick," Brokensha said. "Here, me and the group get to do what we want to do. It's like the old bebop rooms of the '50s: people came for the music and they understood what was happening up there on the stage."

Rich Kingman, 27, of Royal Oak, knows what's happening on the stage in the Botsford jazz room. "You can tell they're all passionate about the music they're playing. You can feel it," he said.

Kingman, who says he's following his father as a Brokensha fan, mostly has listened to "mainstream music for my age; rock and roll, alternative, classical."



Hitting the skins: Drummer Jerry McKenzie is a standout performer with the Stan Kenton Orchestra. He's a court officer at the 47th District Court.

He's been to three concerts at the Botsford and will be back. "I like the atmosphere. It's fun, relaxing, and you can get into the music."

**Jazzy reminiscences**  
Laverne Eady, who keeps her age secret but admits to being a teenager in the '50s, has brought Beverly Hills friends Bibbs and Bill Andrews, both 77, to introduce them to the Thursday phenomenon. About the music, Eady, of Redford, said, "I think that people who don't know about it are really being cheated."

During the past three years, Sharon, 60, and Stanford Evans, 65, of Bloomfield Hills, have attended at least once a month. He's a longtime Brokensha fan, back to the days of the Australian Jazz Quartet. The A.J.Q. Evans said, "The cool jazz."

Much the same reasons for

coming are expressed by many others. Among them are some women who choose to be of an age, but whose record collections might have started in the days of 78 RPMs.

Sally Wassman, Farmington Hills, and Pat Hille, Farmington, have been coming since the beginning. They meet high school friends and make new friends.

Mary Son, Dearborn Heights, said, "I friends with some of the musicians and their wives."

**She booked them**  
Midge Ellis, Livonia, is always there. Actually, the jazz concert is there because of Ellis.

Now retired from her day job as coordinator of special events at Schoolcraft College, Ellis has been booking jazz "for 40 years, 30 in Michigan."

"My father was a jazz buff and I used to sit on his lap while he taught me how to listen," Ellis said. "I never dreamed that I'd know some of those people and actually book them and hand them a paycheck."

Book them she did, for the jazz series she started and ran in the '70s and '80s at Livonia's Clarenceville High School.

"We had big bands. Two or three a month. Kenton, Herman, Buddy Rich, Maynard Ferguson," and others, Ellis said.

son," and others, Ellis said.

During that series, she housed the musicians at the Botsford, beginning a relationship with the inn that would evolve into a proposal to new owner Smith for a way to revive the declining Botsford dining and socializing habits he faced.

Smith, a fan of jazz and profile, told Ellis to do it, also avowing his perceived responsibility for the inn's preservation, emphasized, he says, by being just the fifth owner in 166 years. He now reports that those declining habits have been reversed.

At 8 p.m., most of the chicken pot pie, freshly roasted turkey, shorts ribs of beef, and sauteed calves liver has been eaten and the dishes cleared. Those who still have their dinners in front of them now chew with a deferential quiet, anticipating the opening sounds of the Jack Brokensha Quartet.

Brokensha steps up to his vibraphone, raises the mallets like exposed nerve endings, and brings them down onto the metal keys, filling the room with roundly reverberating bell-like calls to visit his soul.

In the back of the room, a woman listening to the music sways almost imperceptibly to the mellow metallic vibrato and smiles the softest of smiles, on face as pretty now as at any earlier time you might have first seen her.

"I met him when I was 17," she said. "At the Sydney Town Hall, a friend took me backstage to say hello to a vocalist and he was there."

She liked the music then and even more now. "He's playing better than ever."

As if validating her right to judge, Shirley Brokensha quickly calculates that as of this Thursday night she's been listening for 48 years.

## Meet members of the quartet

The Four Who Are The Jack Brokensha Quartet:

**Jack Brokensha:** Native Australian and key member of the Australian Jazz Quartet in the '50s; played everywhere and with everyone, including Sarah Vaughn, Miles Davis, Gerry Mulligan, and many others; when A.J.Q. disbanded, he accepted offer from Detroit's WXYZ-TV for the Soupy Sales show and other projects; did a radio show on WQRS; had his own jazz club near the Fisher Theatre; contributed to the Motown sound during that company's early days.

**Matt Michael:** Jazz pianist, composer, arranger, and director; performed with Peggy Lee, Al Hirt, Doc Severinsen, Vic Damone, Rosemary Clooney and others; notable day job as director of jazz studios in Wayne State University's department of music, teaching everything about jazz and commercial music including how to make a living at it.

**Dan Jordan:** Bassist who has played with Stan Getz and Oscar Pettiford and other internationally known artists in the U.S., and in London and Paris while living there in the '80s; by day works in international finance with a major auto company.

**Jerry McKenzie:** Drummer labeled "the best" by Stan Kenton, during the '60s and '70s when McKenzie was called "the driving force" behind the Kenton orchestra; also a retired police detective and sometime local court officer.

For information call (248) 474-4800. The Botsford Inn, 28000 Grand River, Farmington Hills, at Eight Mile Road, between Inkster and Middlebelt roads.

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