Jazzfest from page E1

In addition to the band of legendary musicians, the Jazzfest also features the bluesy attitude of The Sun Mossengers, the raw energy of the well-traveled Straight Ahead and the ethereal sound of flutist Alexander Zonjie. Amid a diverse program in this year's Jazzfest, there's an unmistakable common homegrown feel. But, while the musicians may have a metro Dutrit address, there's no pigeonholing their music.

Accessible jazz

Accessible jazz

"It's a community event, so why not keep it in the community," said Robert Pipho, musical director of the Jazzfest.
That's an approach born from necessity as much as tradition.
In the last five years, the Jazzfest has continually reinvented itself. In 1993, the festival began with an indoor concert featuring the Johnny Trudell Band at the former Birmingham Theater.
But in recent years, the festival had looked to artists on the national jazz secen to compete

national jazz scene to compete for audiences in the busiest concert season of the year. Last year's show featured internation-

Kenny Garrett.
This year's Jazzlest, however, its clearly on familiar and accessible jazz, said Pipho.
That's due in part to a slightly smaller budget, fewer corporate sponsorships and the desire of the participating restaurant owners to increase attendance.
"We have more mainstream and commercial music," he said. "The reasoning is that it might bring in more people."
While the emphasis is on creating more of a party atmosphere than a traditional celebration of jazz, Pipho said there will be more than a passing nod to the "straight ahead" jazz heritage of Belgrave, Benson and other longtime musicians.

"There are jazz purists who won't acknowledge any other form of jazz," said Pipho.
"But there are simply many types of jazz. We have everything from the Chicago blues sound to the music of Monk, Cole Porter and Sinatra."

Higher register

The annual Jazzfost has become much-anticipated, not only by jazz enthusiasts, but by local restaurateurs.

Over the three-day festival,

Drolet of The Community House in Birmingham, coproducers of Jezzfest.

"This makes Birmingham a destination point and adds to our image as a happening place." Anytime Beigrave, Benson and their handmates Buddy Budson and Ursula Walker share a stage, the gig ain't routine.

By sheer force of personalities, persoverance and longevity, Belgrave and Benson are much more than established musicians. Through their playing, teaching and inspiration, they, as much as any two jazz artists in recent history, embody the gritty spirit and never-say-die attitude of many area jazz musicians.

"It's an education every time I play with them," said Budson, a keyboardist in R.I.K. Reunion Band and a regular along with

tion.

Apparently, there's a greater intangible benefit than keeping the cosh registers ringing.

"This is a significant image event for us," said Roberts. This brings folks to town who may have been to Birmingham in some time.

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Walker at Birmingham's Forte's.
"Their quality is on the level of
musicianship anywhere in the
world." some restaurants have recorded a 25 percent increase in busi-ness, according to Bill Roberts, president of the 14-member Birmingham Restaurant Collec-

"Their quality is on the level of musicianship anywhere in the world."

Perusing the musical biographies of Belgrave and Benson is like taking a stroll through the history of American jazz over the last five decades. Belgrave has toured with Ray Charles, Ella Fitzgerald, Charles Mingay, Bud Powell, Arctha Franklin, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Dizzy Gillespie, Meanwhile, Benson has played with Tommy Flanagan, Yusef Latef, J.C. Heard and performed on many Motown recordings. While their contemporaries where recording contracts were more lucrative, and opportunities to perform with headlining artist were more plentiful, Belgrave, Benson, Walker, and other world-class jazz musicians chose to stoy in Detroit. And next week, the R.I.K. Reunion Band will remind audiences that world-class musicians are not only from Detroit. Live and perform in the area.

At the end of the early July concert, Benson twisted the mouthpiece from his gold-plated eaxophone, and placed it in his case. have been to Birmingnam in some time.

"Of course, (the Jazzfest) can only be so big. This isn't Montreux. We want this to be a community event."

Based on the ethnic and racial composition of the audiences has years, the Jazzfest will be appreciated by a multicultural community.

appreciated by a multicultural community.

"Jazz just lends itself to diverse audiences," said Leslie Drolet of The Community House in Birmingham, coproducers of leavefast

At one time, he worked seven days a week, playing gigs in hells and nighttlubs. For a night, he's shown those at the Polish Club in Detroit why his sound continues to resonate. Benson smiles as he lays his sax comfortably in its sculpted

se. "It's all in a day's work."

() FEE

But he and Belgrave sure make it seems timeless.

Controversy from page E1

ried and keeping your buby immoral?" she defiantly added. "Polish Wedding" has its fair share of controversy, however. Dance' character, Hala, does shots of vodka while she is preg-

sants create and the serious of voids while she is pregnant.

"She doesn't drink as much as the girl in 'The Snapper,' Conclly said of the Irish movic, a sequel to 'The Commitments.'

This is life. She smoke a Market of the Snapper, and the Snapper of the Snapp

tnat sne nash i tearned to toughen up.

Not all the reviews have been bad, Connelly added.

"I happen to have spoken to Polish people. Women practically mobbed me. They loved the partrayal of the mother. I did not make a movie about being Polish. I made a humanistic drama, she said.

Connelly was born to a Polish mother and Irish father. After briefly residing in Hamtramek, Connelly and her family moved to the Six Mile Rond area of Detroit and then settled in Royal Oak where she graduated from Dondero High School.

"Glenn Frey (of The Eagles) used to mow our lawn. It was nice to see this big, hunky guy mowing our lawn. Actually back then all the guys used to mow the lawn with their shirts off, she explained.

In "Polish Wedding," Connelly shree kep love of shirtless men, especially with Tress.

The idea behind "Polish Wedding" began with her mother for most of his life.

"Everybody in my neighborhood is a butcher, baker, policeman or factory worker; people lives, But what I suddenly realized is the epic level of life that goes on behind the appearance of simplicity — lives with grid loves that have gone unfulfilled, with children that have been given up, with all kinds of polignancy, ironics and truly poetic beauty. All of it so accurate with her husband on children,

with her husband and children, also explained that she wanted to capture the innocence of Michigan.

"Back then you could drive into a gas station and some kid would come over with his overalls, and he would be wearing a baseball hat. Suddenly, he would would be wearing a wall up his visor and expose

pull up his visor and expose these incredible blue eyes and beautiful face. In Michigan, there's unsung beauty every-

where."
In 1994, Connelly submitted
the "Polish Wedding" script to
Sundance Writer's Lab. She was
accepted and the script made its
way to producers Julia Chasman
and Geoff Stier. Connelly said
she was thrilled that her first
choices – Olin, Byrne and Danes
-agreed to do the film.
"I wanted a Polish Sophia
Loren and Marcello Mastroinani. I considered a lot of American
actresses. There's not many
American actresses who wish to
be portrayed as a mether," she
said.
Copnelly explained that Olis-

said.

Connelly explained that Olin was perfect for the part because she, like most European women, isn't afraid to "let it all hang out." Therefore, it was important to find a strong male counter-

out. Therefore, was sinjointerpart.

"If you have a lot of woman, you have to have a lot of man," she said with a cluekle.

Working on a sheestring budget, Connelly called upon her family to help with props and extras. Her nunt canned the close-t-full of pickles that Olin and Danes much on. Her sisters chose the furniture. The cast learned to love the Detroit area as much as Connelly, Byrne, while staying at the Townsend Hotel in Birmingham, frequented the entery Toss-Ups and visited Dick O'Dows.
According to Connelly, the cast learned to love each other, as well.

According to Connelly, the cast learned to love each other, as well.

"There were plenty of affairs and secret covert things going on. That contributed to the chemistry of the movie."

It wasn't all golabit and pierogies, however. The making of Polish Wedding, which was filmed in the summer of 1996 in Humtramck and Detroit, was struggle. In an effort to avoid going too far over budget, "a lot of the script was cut." Still, she said, the spirit of the movieremained.

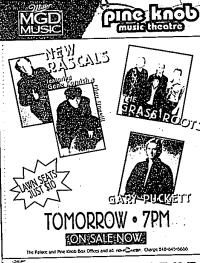
Recently, Connelly did an interview with Entertainment Weekly and subsequently, the magazine printed that she was unhappy with the film. Connelly said she was upset with the article.

"There were some parts that I

aming was upset with the arti-cle.
There were some parts that I wanted to stay in but that is hardly a thumb down on my own movie, ahe said own for my own own can be calls "Neurotica," a guide to the lost art of prolonged centars warringe and madness.

guide to the lost art of prolonges ecestasy, marriage and madness. Connelly explained that she is expecting her film "Days of the Dead, a love story about the rela-tionship between a man in his 50s and a girl who is 17, to gen-erate controversy.

But for "Polish Wedding," she said she wishes the complaints would stop.
"I resent it. It has caused unfortunate pain in my family."





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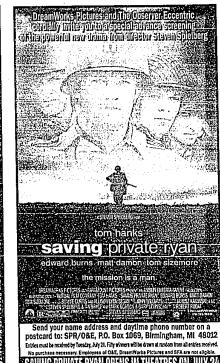
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