

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100

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Big brassy band swings on Mondays



ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

Trumpeter Johnny Trudell and his Top Brass brighten Monday nights at Jamie's on 7 in Livonia. Trudell's big band, one of the best known in the Detroit area, also plays backup for visiting celebrities.

SO MONDAY NIGHT is a dead night, eh? No one goes out for entertainment on Monday night, right?

Wrong. At least at Jamie's on Seven in Livonia. That's where Johnny Trudell and his Top Brass has been entertaining for almost three years. With a 15-piece band and a vocalist, Trudell has found the right combination of big band sounds to survive on a night that is traditionally quiet — except for the sounds of Monday night football.

Trudell believes there's no mystery to his band's success. "We play everything from Glenn Miller to Michael Jackson," said the trumpet player, who's been a pro since the age of 13. "Our vocalist, Bart Fiori, also sings everything from Frank Sinatra to Kenny Rogers to Lionel Richie."

On a recent Monday night, the band was in top form showing its varied repertoire. Couples danced to "Tuxedo Junction," "As Time Goes By" and Duke Ellington's "Satin Doll." The band's soloists enlivened "The Theme from M.A.S.H." and Hoagy Carmichael's "Stardust."

Always, the music by Top Brass is genial, saying that's never too brassy for the room. And Trudell's solos on trumpet, flugelhorn and valve trombone are models of incisive decorum.

Trudell, 45, first formed his band about 25 years ago to play at the old Roosterland supperclub. He has a world of experience with big bands. Trudell has had some of the best gigs in the city, playing behind the best entertainers to come into metro Detroit at places like the Hyatt Regency in Dearborn and Meadow Brook Music Festival at Oakland University near Rochester.

He also was trumpeter in such big bands as those led by Ralph Marterie, Buddy Morrow, Tommy Dorsey, Bob

Crosby and Tex Beneke.

"I think we're doing something that's unique in the United States here," Trudell said about his Monday night big band sessions at Jamie's. "They try it other places but it doesn't seem to work. I've managed to keep my band working and also provide music for people who like to go out and dance."

(Jamie's on Seven, Seven Mile and Middlebelt roads, Livonia, phone 477-9077.)

ANTON JAMES is a young songwriter, guitarist and vocalist who recently released his debut record called "Off the Cuff."

An EP, "Off the Cuff" got airplay for a while on WHIP, WABX and WLBS before the last two stations changed their format away from progressive rock.

What is progressive rock? According to a release from the James camp, it's any music well done.

"Off the Cuff," which includes four tunes, seems to qualify as progressive rock. It's not easy to categorize James' music except to say that it's a blending of rock and jazz sounds that is on the whole winsome and sometimes engaging.

James has been kicking around Detroit with bands led by other musicians but got tired of playing other people's music. Lending his own band gives him greater control over the music — all of which he writes.

His live band, with musicians who do not appear on the record, will be performing Saturday night at the Old Miami, on Cass Avenue, Detroit.

Among the band members are David Rollins of Livonia, Mark Edwards of Redford and Ross Smith of Farmington.

VIRTUOSO BASSIST Richard Davis



on music

James Windell

will be performing at 8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 3, at the Detroit Institute of Arts Recital Hall.

Known for his capable work in a variety of settings — from avant-garde jazz to classical — Davis has recorded with the likes of Eric Dolphy, Dexter Gordon, Elvin Jones and Oliver Nelson.

Davis is currently professor of Bass and Black Music Studies at the University of Wisconsin. He will be joined in the upcoming concert by pianist Kenn Cox, guitarist Spencer Barfield, bass Jaribu Shahid and drummer Tani Tabbal.

The concert is part of the Music at the DIA series sponsored by the Creative Arts Collective. For more information phone 832-2730.

SUPERSTAR saxophonist Grover Washington Jr. is scheduled for two shows Tuesday, Oct. 30, at the Premier Center, 33970 Van Dyke, Sterling Heights.

With a new album called "Inside Moves," Washington returns to the Motor City area to do some promoting of the LP.

Although of superstar status since his 1974 "Mister Magic" album (at least six albums since then have sold in excess of 500,000 copies), Washington is one of the nice men in contemporary music.

Since becoming a monster success in the music business, he's been working on a doctorate in composition and producing the group Pieces of a Dream.

the trio that often opens his shows. But getting back in front of concert audiences — which he does a couple of times a year — is important to Washington. "It lets you know if you're on the right track, and it lets you get just a little bit closer to those fans who keep sending you fan mail," Washington said in a recent interview.

Studying composition has been important in his development. Although he left hometown Buffalo to travel with the Four Clefs at age 16 and has worked with many top names in jazz and pop music since, Washington admits he still has much to learn. "Studying composition is like taking the blinders off," he said.

He thinks his musical studies will only bring about slight changes in his successful musical style, but he defers to his fans, saying they will have to judge that.

ALSO COMING up is a stop by the King's Singers from England, who will appear at 4 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 18, at Orchestra Hall in Detroit.

The popular group that always provides outstanding vocal entertainment will be brought back to Orchestra Hall by Brothers Productions. This will be the third concert by the group in Detroit. Kathy Fischer of Brothers Productions said the previous two concerts were sold out. "This concert looks like it's headed that way, too," she said.

For more information, call 271-4360 or 653-3700.

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