

Record club promotes jazz

By Stewart Francke
special writer

In the basement of MJRC member Paul Demers' Royal Oak home is a meticulously preserved and documented 15,000 volume record collection. And although it is primarily big band era jazz, Demers' collection typifies the MJRC ethos: Dedicated to advancing and promoting all that is jazz. The Michigan Jazz Record Collector's Association is comprised of close to 65 Detroit area jazz lovers.

The membership convene every fourth Wednesday at various sites in the greater metropolitan area (usually a Ram's Horn restaurant in Livonia), while there, they conduct a joyous, informed session that includes: swapping records (78's, 45's, CDs, tapes) both rare and common; presenting literature and related memorabilia, and generally defining jazz, their passion. Though the membership is overwhelmingly male and over 55, wives attend, as does a growing younger contingent.

Each member's private collection varies in worth and theme, Demers probably eclectically representative of the majority — turn of the century piano rags, Dixieland, early instrumentalists, big band, even the roots of rock and roll, in the form of blues vocal groups. "It's hard to determine the worth," Demers says, because each collection is priceless to each member. It works two ways: the pride that each member has in value in that respect, and the monetary value of the records themselves.

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highly specific manner, such as Joe Strykowski, who is interested only in Duke Ellington recordings. Even the categorization requires definition: "records" in now an all inclusive term encompassing tapes, 78's, 45's, LP's, and all memorabilia or sheet music.

The presentations at each meeting vary. At a recent meeting that I attended, Demers presented an erudite chronology of big band arrangements titled the "Marie Syndrome." Through the combination of his spoken essay and corresponding recorded examples, Demers unfolded the continuum of jazz stylings that resulted from Tommy Dorsey's 1937 recording of Irving Berlin's "Marie."

What followed was not as much answer records as variations on the "Marie" paradigm: tight horn arrangements and extended trumpet or sax solos, cornered around a half sung/half chanted middle eight. "Marie" was more than an exciting big band innovation. It was repeated frequently by Dorsey because it was enormously successful commercially. Dorsey continued the "Marie" style until 1941, ending with another Berlin standard, "Blue Skies."

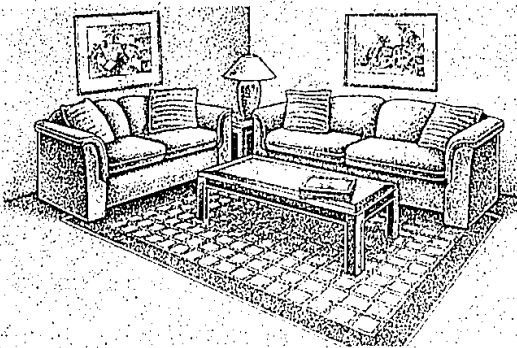
By examining the American musical continuum, one can find invaluable

musical and historical connections that can link a young Frank Sinatra to the Orle's Sonny Til to the hybrid style of Elvis Presley to a rock star such as Bruce Springsteen. It's not that far fetched, both Sinatra and Springsteen were raised near Hoboken, New Jersey and both had enormous hits with the title (though different compositions) "Dancing in the Dark."

MJRC is a chapter of the International Association of Jazz Record Collectors, with a working objective of maintaining a non-profit organization that is available to jazz enthusiasts and collectors. In addition to the monthly meetings, MJRC members publish a newsletter, research discographies, update mailing lists and compose presentations. Past presentations have been on varied subjects, including Max Baity, Glenn Miller, elements of Duke Ellington, Artie Shaw, Pepper Adams, Lester Young and Jazz arrangers. Annual dues is \$12. MJRC is interested in expanding its membership. If interested, write: Paul Demers, 2731 Crooks Road, Royal Oak, Mich. 48073.

Stewart Francke, a musician and free lance writer has a special interest in modern music.

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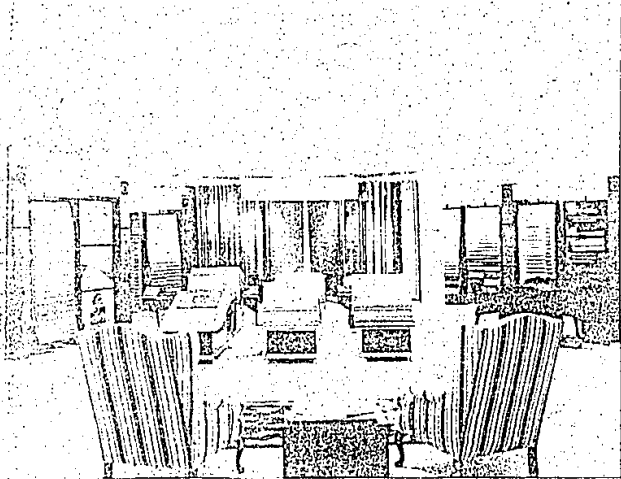
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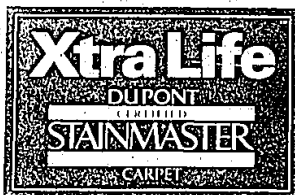


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