

# 8th annual Michigan Jazz Festival

## Musicians focus on tradition

BY LINDA ANN CHROMIN STAFF WRITER

"That's not jazz," said Midge Ellis referring to the latest trend to call easy listening music smooth jazz.

Textbooks on music history seem to agree listing Charlie Parker, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Billie Holiday, Dizzie Gillespie, Thelonius Monk, and John Coltrane as the masters of America's only true art form. That's why Ellis is so adamant about showcasing straight-ahead, Big Band, Dixieland, and Bebop at the eighth annual Michigan Jazz Festival. This year's all-day jam session is no exception with 26 groups playing all of these styles. On Sunday, July 21, more than 180 musicians will face the audience on the campus of Schoolcraft College.

"John Trudell and Tom Saunders select the performers," said Ellis, a long-time Livonia resident to whom the festival is dedicated this year. Ellis was responsible for bringing in such greats as Stan Kenton to play the Clarenceville Jazz Series from 1969 to the early 1980s in Livonia.

"I'm excited about the new bands," said Ellis. "It's good that more musicians are hearing about it and want to be playing in it. We have Brad Sharp from Toledo and everything from Big Band to the Dixieland sounds of the Tartar Sauce Jazz Band, Bebop. Hopefully we cover the bases and there's lots of free parking. The program lists all the musicians so when people hear someone they like they'll know who he or she is."

Once listeners hear Barbara Ware's voice they won't have any problem remembering her name. The Southfield singer performs with the Matt Michaels Trio at 6 p.m. on the Lear Stage in the red tent.

Ware is a frequent guest of Matt Michaels, a Southfield pianist and co-director of jazz studies at Wayne State University. He and his trio (Dan Jordan of Troy, bass and Jerry McKenzie, Farmington Hills, drums) perform every Wednesday at Run's Firestone Inn in Garden City.

At the festival, Ware will introduce her third CD 'Let Me Off Uptown' recorded in the Wayne State University studio with Michaels and his trio.

"It's straight up jazz," said Ware who will perform on Wednesdays, July 24, and every other Wednesday at MotorCity Casino. Audiences all over town will recognize the sounds from her regular appearances at a variety of venues. On Sept. 27, she'll play a benefit for the Birmingham YMCA at the San Marino Club in Troy.

"I grew up listening to Nat King Cole, Ella Fitzgerald and Lionel Hampton, and always wanted to be a singer but I never thought it was a dream I would realize," said Ware who began singing professionally after taking an early retirement. "The Michigan Jazz Festival has got such great history. It's an honor to perform there."

Mark Berger feels the same way. The Ferndale horn player frequently can be heard in concerts and Broadway shows throughout the area. On Aug. 11, he performs as a sideman with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra at Meadow Brook Music Festival on the campus of Oakland University in



Barbara Ware introduces the Michigan Jazz Festival audience to selections from her new CD 'Let Me Off Uptown' recorded in the Wayne State University studio with the Matt Michaels Trio.

Rochester Hills but first he and the Detroit Reed Collective take to the Inmart/Boll stage in the Lower Waterman building at Schoolcraft College 12:15 p.m. Sunday, July 21 to play everything from Ragtime to Swing and avant-garde. Later this year he and band member Paul Onchuk play the Fisher Theatre production of Some Like It Hot opening Dec. 3 for three weeks, and 42nd Street at the Masonic Temple opening Oct. 22 for three weeks.

"The Michigan Jazz Festival is a great outlet for local talent to be heard and featured," said Berger, a Ferndale resident. "It's nice to play for a jazz listening crowd. There's an assortment of different types of music and it's free."

Chris Collins music would probably fit into the unusual category. His latest CD Jazz From the Shamrock Shore blend traditional Irish and jazz music. The recording was introduced at the Jazz Vespers series in Birmingham on St. Patrick's Day. Collins is co-director of jazz studies at Wayne State University and director of the WSU Jazz Band, and plays with the DSO on their jazz series. He and his group finished a 10-day tour of South Africa just in time to perform their tunes about mythological creatures in Irish folklore 4:45 p.m. on the Inmart/Boll stage.

"I was at the Glasgow Scotland Jazz Festival four years ago when he decided to spend some time in Ireland," said Collins of Romeo. "I arrived in Dublin and went into a pub where I heard a flute and fiddle player. It was inspiring, complex, intense music yet the general public were enjoying it. I returned to take up the penny whistle and flute and started studying the standard tunes and they in turn started working their way into my compositions. Two years ago I decided to blend Irish and jazz traditions into a seven-member band composed of penny whistle, harp, fiddle, bass, drums and piano. The music is a long

term pursuit of mine. I'm going back to Ireland in fall to continue my studies in music on a WSU grant to study Sligho style."

Elaine Standley can't wait to hear what Collins creates but for now she's content to listen to the new sound he'll play at the Michigan Jazz Festival. Standley, a Plymouth pianist, has played the event before and serves on the committee which produces the event.

"I'm looking forward to Chris Collins," said Standley. "He has two women - one who played harp with the DSO on their European tour and she's going to bring an Irish harp. The other plays violin. And I can't wait to hear the Detroit Reed Collective. I'm excited because it's four woodwinds. It's different. There's no rhythm section. I love the newness of the festival and I love the old guys who've been around."

kmomin@home.com.net

## MICHIGAN JAZZ FESTIVAL

**What:** Performances by 26 groups including seven big bands. Admission and parking are free. Food and beverages available at an outdoor food court and the Ocelot Grill and American Harvest Restaurant in the Waterman Center

**When:** Noon to 10:30 p.m. Sunday, July 21  
**Where:** Schoolcraft College, 18600 Haggerty Road, between Six and Seven Mile, Livonia. For more information, call (248) 474-2720 or (734) 459-2454

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**2** Trinity Irish Dance Company  
**3** Tommy Lee  
**4** Festa Italiana 2002 (Comme Francis, Sal Richards & The Gaylords)  
**6** Michael Bolton  
**8** Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons, Felix Cavaliere & The Rascals, Lou Christie and The Association  
**9** 1984 Tribute - Salute to the Banties

**Sept 6** Aaron Carter  
**14** Franklin the Turtle • 11am & 7pm  
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