



JAZZ AVENUES

BY STEVE MONROE

KEARNS: THE KEY IS PASSING THE MUSIC ON

Much has been made of the resurgence of the U Street community in Northwest DC with its venues for jazz in particular attracting younger patrons of the music along with the older fans. And not only U Street, but also other areas of the city are making a new effort to feature jazz, such as H Street in Northeast.



Ron Kearns
photo courtesy of the Fish Middleton Jazz Society

Ron Kearns, the veteran educator and musician who has been around the DC music scene for many years, is pleased with the revival. "DC has a very rich music past and a very promising future," says Kearns. "Venues such as HR 57 and the U Street clubs give emerging jazz artists places to develop their skills. There is a lot to be said about having an opportunity to hear others and play with others while developing

your jazz skills. I think things are getting back to how they used to be. At one time DC was considered the second largest market for jazz after New York City."

Kearns notes one thing that disturbs him.

"But things are coming back in a different way," he says. "I remember when there was a real cooperative spirit with the musicians. There was more of an atmosphere where people didn't mind mentoring, helping people out. But now, some of that closeness, people looking out for each other, seems to have gone. Things have turned more competitive."

Kearns is a native of Roanoke, Va., which also spawned jazz greats like pianist Don Pullen and horn virtuoso Byron Morris. It was Kearns' older brother, who had a collection of Blue Note records, who first got Kearns into jazz.

"I liked a lot of people at first," he says. "Then I heard Cannonball Adderley on Miles Davis' album 'Kind of Blue' and I was really hooked." When he came to DC, he was also influenced by the musicianship and leadership of people like Rick Henderson, former leader of the Howard Theater house band, the late saxophone master Stanley Turrentine and horn man emeritus Buck Hill.

"That's why I appreciate what Rick and Buck, and Stanley did for me when I came along," said Kearns. "They realized if the music was going to survive it had to be through the young blood coming up, so that's what I've always tried to do."

Kearns attended Knoxville (Tenn.) College, where he earned a bachelor's degree in music education, then came to DC and earned a master's degree. For

awhile during his school years he studied classical music during the week, and on weekends "was a pure jazz guy," he says, gigging around with small groups and bands. As a professional educator he began passing along the heritage at schools in Baltimore and later in this area at JFK High School in Silver Spring and Walter Johnson High School in Bethesda. One of Kearns many honors over the years was Down Beat magazine's Achievement in Jazz Education Award for 2005.

Kearns says, "Probably of all the things I've experienced in life, seeing my former students enjoy so much success is the one thing of which I'm most proud. Over the years, I've had many students go on to be successful musicians, some of whom are very well known. Last year, many of them came back to perform a reunion concert for and with me. I was so proud of how well they played and how much fun they had playing together. Allison Miller, Bruce Williams, Terrell Stafford, Eric Harper, Halley Schoenberg, Marcus Johnson, Matt Rippetoe and others came back ... [and then there is] Paul Carr has worked with me since I produced his first CD in 1989 and many of his students have participated in my summer jazz camps."

Kearns has also found the time to pro-

duce several recordings of his own as a leader, most recently last year's "Live at the Montpelier" CD. He's working on another recording now, and says, "I'm trying to decide whether to do all originals," says Kearns, "or use some of the tunes from the concert we did at the [February] East Coast Jazz Festival."

Preserving the heritage

The Library of Congress last month announced the fourth annual selection of 50 historic sound recordings added to the National Recording Registry. The National Recording Registry (<http://www.loc.gov/rr/record/nrpb/nrpb-nrr.html>) was established by the National Recording Preservation Act of 2000 to "maintain and preserve sound recordings and collections of sound recordings that are culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant."

Along with recordings from classical, folk, pop and other genres, the recordings added to the registry this year include; "Ory's Creole Trombone, Kid Ory, 1922; 'Singin' the Blues." Frankie Trumbauer and his Orchestra with Bix Beiderbecke. (1927; "One o'Clock Jump." Count Basie and his Orchestra. (1937); "Straighten up and Fly Right." Nat "King" Cole. (1943); "Time Out," The Dave Brubeck Quartet, 1959. ■

MAY HIGHLIGHTS

Chick Corea, May 2-7, Blues Alley; **Terrell Stafford**, May 5-6, Twins Lounge ; **Hilton Ruiz**, May 25-28, Blues Alley; **Dee Dee Bridgewater, Abbey Lincoln 11th Annual Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Festival**, May 11-13, Kennedy Center; **Reggie Watkins**, May 11-13, Twins Jazz; **John Hicks**, May 12-13, Twins Lounge; **Christian McBride**, May 18-20, Kennedy Center; **Ramsey Lewis**, May 19, Kennedy Center; **Lafayette Gilchrist and the New Volcanoes**, May 26-27, Twins Lounge

NOTABLE MAY BIRTHDAYS:

Shirley Horn, May 1	Cecil McBee, Sonny Fortune, 19
Richard "Groove" Holmes, 2	Fats Waller, 21
Ron Carter, 4	Sun Ra, 22
Stanley Cowell, 5	Archie Shepp, Charles Earland, 24
Mary Lou Williams, 8	Miles Davis, 25
Mel Lewis, 10; Red Garland, 13	Dee Dee Bridgewater, 27
Sidney Bechet, 14	Hilton Ruiz, 29
Woody Herman, Betty Carter, 16	Benny Goodman, 30
Jackie McLean, 17	Louis Hayes, 31