

# ARTS & LEISURE

*It's been  
around for  
a while and  
it's here  
to stay*

## LOUISVILLE

BY GREGG SWEM  
COURIER-JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Some say Louisville is a good jazz town. Others think differently. Some think jazz concerts draw a crowd in Louisville. Others feel the city is oriented more toward country-Western and rock 'n' roll. Some say area interest in jazz is at its peak. Others feel there's little opportunity to perform jazz locally.

Despite these differences of opinion, there's no denying that jazz has been a part of the Louisville musical scene for many years and is currently being played from the West Side to the East, from downtown to South Louisville. Moreover, it's being taught to increasing numbers of students at area colleges and universities.

Most jazz musicians and devotees do agree, however, that the popularity of jazz in Louisville has fluctuated and continues to do so.

Clubs have prospered, only to fall victim to the whims of trends and a changing economy. Musicians and singers have come and gone. And audiences — perhaps the most important element — have been fickle.

"Louisville is better than most cities but it has its ups and downs," said Nelson Keyes, composer-in-residence at the University of Louisville School of Music. Keyes has kept an eye on the local jazz scene for quite a while.

"Every town is bad if the guy is out of work — even New York can be a bad town," said Keyes, a pianist who used to play with a trio.

In jazz, as in theater, there are more artists than there are jobs to fill. A lot of musicians are out of work. When jobs aren't available in the Louisville area, most musicians look elsewhere. "You almost have to travel to make it," Keyes said.

Drummer Luis Taylor and tenor saxophonist Bill Jordan move back and forth from Louisville to New York. Pianist Dave Leonhardt, who performed at Stanley J's last summer, has engagements in New York now.

"Students are going wherever the jobs are available," said Gus Coia, head of Bellarmine College's music department and founder of the college's jazz program. Bel-

larmine is the only college in the Louisville area that offers a degree in music with a concentration in jazz.

Barrington "Boogie" Morton is a Louisville native who has performed a lot in other places. "You have to be on the road. You have to get out of here. You will starve to death in this town," said Morton, who's a pianist, saxophonist and bass player.

"L.A., New York — even places like Atlanta, Miami — they got a lot more choices," said Morton, who returned to Louisville a few years ago after touring with the Ink Spots. Morton still plays, although his principal job these days is managing a liquor store.

"I think jazz is the victim of greed," said Morton, citing clubs with high cover charges. "At the Fig Tree (its Stanley J's brought in some well-known jazz artists last summer), the price was sort of out of range for most people. For what they had to offer and the price, I gave them 15 minutes. We used to have coffeehouses — the Topaz — I played there. It was cheap."

At 46, Morton remembers the days when Louisville's West Walnut Street between Sixth and 13th was alive with night spots that featured jazz. He and other local musicians, as well as such big names as Cannonball Adderley, used to play in the neighborhood.

Another veteran of the Louisville jazz scene is 49-year-old Gene Klingman, who's practicing law these days but hasn't lost touch with his first love. "I'm not an authority on jazz in Louisville, but I am a pioneer," said the bass and guitar player.

To listen to Klingman talk about jazz is to step back in time. Names of night spots no longer around pour from his lips: Riney's, the Topaz, Kentucky Tavern (affectionately known by most as KT's), Iroquois Gardens, the Tap Room, the Top Hat, the Idle Hour, the Oar House, the Julep.

Klingman and his trio, the Trademarks, played at these clubs in the '50s and '60s. In addition to Klingman, the mainstays of the group were his brother Dave Klingman on clarinet and Don Murray on piano. When Murray started teaching at Bellarmine College and formed his own trio, pianist Raymond Johnson stepped in.

Many clubs where the group played were downtown. Those were the days when downtown bustled at night. "All the hotels were open and we were the hot group," Klingman said.

Riney's on Walnut between Fourth and Fifth was close to the Watterson and Seelbach hotels. Klingman remembers such notables as Arthur Fiedler, Liberace, Bob Crosby and Edward G. Robinson venturing over from their hotels to listen to the Trademarks play. "We got a lot of favorable comments from out-of-town people, and the papers wrote about us," he said.

On the recommendation of Duke Ellington, who had heard the group's album, he took the Trademarks to the old Blue Note in Chicago.

Although Klingman refuses to play rock 'n' roll, "Boogie" Morton has made a living not only by playing jazz but by appearing with hillbilly, country-Western and rock-'n'-roll bands.

Like Morton, keyboard artist George Dawson has learned to be flexible, to adapt to other types of music.

"We're in the wrong market for jazz," Dawson said. "We've had some of the best

players in the country but can't sell the product here."

Two nights a week at the Holiday Inn Rivermont, Dawson plays what he calls "fusion jazz," a mixture of jazz and rock. The rest of the week he plays mostly middle-of-the-road selections.

It's a compromise he makes to accommodate what he thinks are local audiences' musical tastes. "This is a country-Western and rock-'n'-roll town," Dawson said.

Dawson believes many people don't appreciate jazz because they haven't been exposed to it. "A lot of people think of loud music when they think of jazz. They think it's a disorganized, formless type of music, which is totally wrong. I fault the radio stations. You don't get any regular jazz — not on a commercial basis."

Morton agrees. "The only music radio stations are going to play is the stuff kids will buy records of. It's all commercial."

Both Dawson and Morton are talking about AM radio stations and not FM, because the Louisville Free Public Library's WFPL-FM carries jazz six nights a week from 9:30 p.m. to midnight and is planning to expand its jazz offerings. WFPL-FM at U of L offers jazz programs Thursday through Sunday evenings at various times.

Both men can remember the days when Louisville AM stations carried jazz programs. Dawson was host of a WHAS jazz and conversation show. Listeners could call in and talk to guests like Miles Davis and Joe Henderson, he said.

Today, Louisville jazz buffs tend to flock to Joe's Palm Room. Any time of the week the nightclub at 18th and Jefferson is filled with music-hungry souls from all over town. In addition to local groups like Crisis and Destiny, horn player Eddie Harris and vocalist Helen Humes have appeared there. Gary Burton is coming in November.

Keyboard artist Raymond Johnson has been playing at Joe's Palm Room in the early evening this summer.

Johnson, who has returned to his hometown for an indefinite stay after performing in New York 18 years, learned to play music at Central High School, where he, "Boogie" Morton and Ben Ingram, a local bass-fiddle player, were band students.

When Johnson first started appearing at black clubs along West Walnut Street in the late '40s, the Palm Room was at 13th and Magazine, its original home. When urban renewal forced tenants to move out in the late '60s, Joe's Palm Room relocated further west in the Russell area, its present home.

What makes the Palm Room unique is that it's the only surviving night spot from the once-driving West Walnut area. "There used to be lots of clubs. This is the only club — the only one that has entertainment in the black neighborhood," Johnson said.

But jazz hangouts haven't always been in the West End. Take the old Arts in Louisville House on Zane Street south of downtown, where in the late '50s and early '60s, members came to hear the Ramsey Lewis Trio and other groups. Or Riney's, downtown on Walnut, Or the Topaz, a club at Baxter and Highland in the East End, where folks could hear a combo while looking at paintings by local artists.

Today you can find jazz being played

See **LOUISVILLE**  
PAGE 7, Column 1, this section

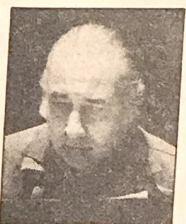
Saxophonist Jamey Aebersold, shown in a 1973 photo at right, is one of Louisville's most successful jazz musicians. He thinks Louisville is "a decent jazz town." Don Murray, below, used to play piano for the Trademarks.



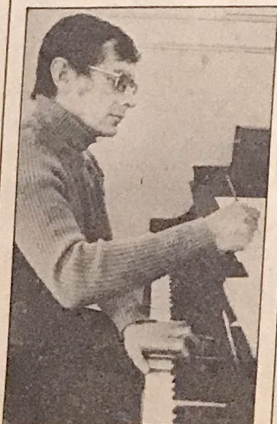
The Trademarks, a jazz trio, played at 1958 music festival in French Lick.



Gus Coia, shown in a 1972 photo, founded Bellarmine College's jazz program.



Keyboard artist George Dawson, above, has learned to be flexible. Jeff Sherman, below, thinks jazz "has a bad self-image."



Nelson Keyes, composer-in-residence at the University of Louisville, feels "Louisville is better than most cities" for jazz.



Keyboard artist Raymond Johnson, who returned to Louisville after spending 18 years in New York City, is appearing this summer at Joe's Palm Room.

# Louisville jazz: It's here to stay

Continued from Page 1, this section around the metropolitan area from Iroquois Amphitheatre, where the annual Louisville Jazz Weekend is held, to Amy's on Fourth Street, to Captain's Quarters at Harrods Creek.

To jazz Aebersold, one of Louisville's most successful jazz musicians, this summer's jazz weekend was "one of the biggest things I've seen around here." About 2,000 people, "young and old alike," jammed into the amphitheater both nights for the free event.

A jazz clinic was held at U of L in conjunction with the weekend. Aebersold, a saxophone player, and other artists from Louisville and beyond participated in both events.

Once a fixture at local jam sessions, Aebersold doesn't perform as much as he used to. Instead, he runs a mail-order business from his home in New Albany, selling jazz-related books and records and teaching people how to improvise — the heart and soul of jazz. In the past few years, his jazz clinics have taken him as far away as Australia and New Zealand.

But Aebersold has kept a close watch on the local jazz scene. "I think this is a decent jazz town, but there are very few opportunities to play it (here). This town is country-Western."

Aebersold has taught at Bellarmine, Indiana University Southeast and U of L. But his last teaching stint at the U of L School of Music left unpleasant memories. "I finally quit because of their policy towards the music (jazz) and the saxophone," he said.

One of Aebersold's students at U of L — Mike Tracy — teaches there now. "Back in those days (1970-74) the music school wasn't so lenient towards jazz," Tracy said. "They didn't know how to deal with the music."

Tracy said that as far as he knows the jazz classes at U of L are now among "the few classes that are growing in the music school." In the decade he's been associated with the School of Music, the attitude has "changed considerably. At least the people out there put up with jazz."

But the U of L School of Music "doesn't really have a full-fledged jazz program," he said. "The finances are impossible now, even if the School of Music wanted one."

Like many jazz musicians in the Louisville area, Tracy has more than one job. He plays in a dance band "because you need to make some money." In the summer, he performs in Summerscene's Jazz Mobile. He also participates in jazz camps with Aebersold.

Both Tracy and Aebersold express displeasure over what they think is jazz's stepchild status in the community. "Every time the orchestra plays, there's a review in the paper," Aebersold said, "but nobody comes out (to review) for the jazz weekend which is only once a year."

Tracy pointed out that jazz groups aren't funded like other musical organizations in the area. "The musicians feel slighted."

He feels that jazz has perhaps taken a back seat to other kinds of music because people have thought of it as "dirty music and associated it with drug addicts. Most people don't have any idea of the heritage of jazz."

Jeff Sherman, who heads the jazz program at Bellarmine College, believes jazz "has a bad self-image. It's on the lower rung of the artistic ladder — jazz was born in the streets — but I hope that's changing."

No matter what the uninitiated may think, jazz musicians are devoted to their music.

"If you think jazz means more to me than anything else in the world, you're right," said Klingman, who has performed with some of the most respected people in the field, including Ramsey Lewis, Marian McPartland and Kai Winding.

Jazz musicians in the Louisville area are a closely knit group. Talk to one and you find he has performed with just about every other jazz musician in town at one time or another.

Saxophonist Everett Hoffman is no exception.

In 1970, Hoffman and a couple of colleagues — Aebersold and trumpet player Kenneth Stanley — helped form the Louisville Jazz Council. The membership totaled 150 jazz players and devotees.

The jazz council, which was founded to encourage an audience for jazz and to set up scholarships for young musicians, brought in artists like Phil Woods, Coleman Hawkins, Art Farmer and Freddie Hubbard. "We had some successful ventures out of it but the costs got so great we had to put it on hold," Hoffman said.

The Louisville Jazz Council is being revived and its "purposes are pretty much the same," Hoffman said. "In a town like this, you really have to create your own environment. Lots of people like to listen to jazz but there are not too many places to hear it."

Anyone interested in joining should write the Louisville Jazz Council, c/o Everett Hoffman, 118 S. Fifth, Louisville 40202.

Herb Hale, who has been president of the Louisville Federation of Musicians, Local 11-637, for the past 16 years, thinks jazz "is probably at its peak here now."

Hale feels encouraged by large crowds at several recent jazz events, including performances by Louisville natives Jonah Jones and Helen Humes the last couple of summers on the Riverfront Plaza/Belvedere.

"I think it looks excellent — better than in years. And young people are beginning to accept it — not just rock 'n' roll."