

NEW SCLETTER



A True Jazz Lover



by Danny O'Bryan

When Mike Tracy was a little boy his father told him, "Whatever you do in life, do something you love, because I hate my job."

Tracy, 38, an assistant professor at the University of Louisville School of Music, took his father's advice and became a jazz saxophonist. But he didn't stop there. For the last 17 years he's been teaching other people how to play jazz and express themselves creatively.

Currently, Tracy is in charge of the jazz studies program at the University of Louisville.

"Next school year I will have two college big bands and five or six combos. I also have a jazz theory class and I give private lessons," Tracy said.

According to Tracy, older people are now wanting to learn how to play jazz.

"It's no longer just the kids in school. There has been a noticeable increase of people in their 30s and 40s who want to take jazz classes. There are a lot of senior citizens who want to learn how to play," Tracy said.

Tracy, who has taught at jazz seminars all over the world including Australia and Japan, said that jazz is becoming more popular in the Louisville area for three reasons, the Louisville Jazz Society, the jazz study programs at the University of Louisville and Bellarmine College and WFPL FM National Public Radio.

"If it weren't for the jazz being played on the radio we wouldn't be having this conversation. People have to hear the music before they will seek it out," Tracy said.

Recently Tracy used his knowledge of jazz to further his teaching career in an area outside of music. He completed a Masters Degree at the University of Louisville's School of Education with jazz as the topic of his thesis.

"The subject was Blue Note Records. I went to California and New York City and interviewed some of the old Blue Note jazz artists like Benny Golson and Horace Silver," Tracy said.

In the thesis Tracy explores the ways jazz musicians create their art. The personal and environmental factors that go into creating an improvised solo.

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"Now, part of what I do at UL is to supervise student teaching. I teach them how to communicate. How to get their ideas across to other people. I think the way a jazz musician communicates on his instrument is very similar to the way people communicate ideas. It's all interrelated," Tracy said.

Tracy said one of the most popular instruments today among students is the saxophone.

"There's been a big increase in saxophone students lately. A lot of people become interested because of pop stars like Kenny G and David Sanborn but all you have to do is turn on the television and you'll see cartoon characters like the Simpsons and Little Lisa playing the saxophone," Tracy said.

Tracy was recently contracted to re-score Kurt Weil's Three Penny Opera for an all saxophone Orchestra, which performed at one of the Lonesome Pine special music productions at the Kentucky Center for the Arts in July.

One thing is for sure, Mike Tracy loves his job. ■

Trading Fours

Jazz guitarist Larry Coryell and his trio will appear at 8 p.m. August 23 at Phoenix Hill Tavern, Baxter Ave. Tickets are \$13.50 for guaranteed seats and \$11.50 for standing room only. Tickets can be purchased at the Tavern and at the Kentucky Center for the Arts and all Ticketron locations.

The 12th Annual Chicago Jazz Festival, the largest free jazz festival in the world will be taking place in the windy city August 30 through September 2. Some of the artists scheduled to appear in Petrillo Music Shell in Grant Park include Miles Davis, Horace Silver, Shorty Rogers, Bud Shank and many more. For information call 312-744-3370.

Two jazz clubs in nearby Cincinnati, Ohio continue to book in top jazz entertainment. The Greenwich Tavern, 2440 Gilbert Ave. is a hot spot for jazz. In recent weeks they've booked in top jazz artists like Clark Terry, Richie Cole and Cedar Walton. For information phone 513-221-6764.

The Blue Wisp Jazz nightclub at 19 Garfield Place in downtown Cincinnati is a wonderful spot to hear the finest in jazz entertainment. Best known for its weekly Wednesday night swing fest featuring the Blue Wisp Big Band, one of the hottest jazz orchestras in the Midwest. This club regularly books in big names like singers Mark Murphy, Dave Frisberg and trumpeter Bobby Shew. For information phone 513-721-9801.

A Decade of Jazz Radio

by Gerry Weston

Editor's note: Gerry Weston was the host of WFPL FM radio's "Jazz Tonight" program from October 1980 until December 1985. He is currently general manager of WFPL and WFPK FM radio.

1990 - yes, hard to believe. I now officially declare myself a veteran Louisvillian. Ten years is enough time for that status. Louisville is home.

In late July, 1980, when I first swooped into town in my beloved VW squareback (aka deathtrap) the city seemed a bit sleepy to me. But after job searching in Boston, where changing lanes on the highway can be a gut wrenching experience, I was excited and determined. After five years in commercial radio I was given an opportunity to build a jazz department, produce a nightly program, and not record one single advertisement promoting health care products. Job heaven had arrived.

The live Louisville jazz scene at that time was pretty dismal. The club situation was in a down cycle, and the attitude among area jazz aficionados was strikingly negative (nothing will happen in Louisville, why bother trying?, people will never understand the music, why didn't you stay in Boston?). Being a stubborn sort, I adopted the posture that things will get better and it will begin on the radio. I accepted the job because I could not believe that a city the size of Louisville did not have a consistent jazz radio program; especially considering the rich jazz history of the city: Jimmy Raney, Helen Humes, Lionel Hampton, Jamey Aebersold, Anna Mae Winburne, etc.

The first year of Jazz Tonight was a lesson in patience and persistence. You can't believe how many supposed "music lovers" would ask me, in all seriousness, "Why put so much jazz on the

radio? Does it really deserve that much attention?" These questions usually came from classical music lovers who claimed to know about music. Ignorance is bliss, no? For them, yes. For jazz starved radio listeners, definitely not. Jazz Tonight slowly began building an audience and around 1982 it took off.

A parallel development happened in the community: The Annual Jazz at the Water Tower Concert began (1981), bars opened up limited hours for jazz, Soundchaser appeared on the scene, the Louisville Jazz Society was formed (1983), the Kool Jazz Festival appeared for one glorious and dreamlike week, things seemed to snowball.

None of this is to suggest that WFPL FM deserves sole credit for a jazz turnaround. But I do think that radio provided a basis, or positive role model, to remind everyone, aficionados and newcomers alike, that jazz is an incredibly enriching musical experience, filled with a variety of rhythms, dynamics and musical textures that is equal to any form of music on earth. Damn ignorance, full swing ahead.

I'm so happy the Louisville Jazz Society remains the focal point for live jazz in the city. The bar situation will always be up and down. We've witnessed the rise and demise of Just Jazz, but then along came Othellos. Maybe someone else will take a chance, maybe not. It's a risky business, folks.

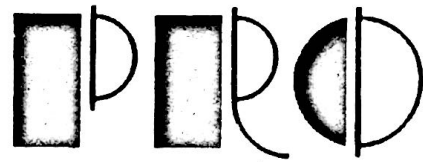
My responsibilities have broadened since becoming General Manager, WFPL survived a budget crisis in 1986 and is in a strong position for growth in the 1990s. Our audience has more than doubled and the future looks wonderful. Jazz is now a part of the WFPL tradition. It is a tradition we are proud of and will continue. See you in the '90s. ■

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These items are surplus equipment available for sale due to a recent system upgrade. For more information call Mike or Phyllis at 502-585-2664.



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