

Greenstreet Tavern now features live jazz music

By KEN SHAPERO
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Howard Johnson's may be famous for its fried clams, but it may soon be known for its live jams.

No-holds-barred jazz is on the menu at the downtown hotel's Greenstreet Tavern, 100 E. Jefferson St., dished up by a group of the area's most experienced jazz musicians.

Alan Cosgriff, the hotel's food and beverage director, said he's committed to transforming the Greenstreet Tavern into Louisville's pre-eminent jazz showcase, even though it means overhauling the tavern's decor, drink menu and advertising.

The tavern's jazz era began last week, with saxophonist Mike Tracy and Chameleon — a group that features Glenn Fischer on keyboards, Tyrone Wheeler on bass, and Darryel Cotten on drums.

"They'll be the house band," Cosgriff said.

But there's more on tap than one band.

The Greenstreet Tavern will be

the site of this season's Jazz Showcase performances, every Wednesday night starting in November.

The Jazz Showcase, in its second year, is an effort coordinated by jazz promoter and aficionado Everett Hoffman to present local jazz groups in concert.

As part of the Showcase, local jazz musicians will be welcome on stage on the first and last Wednesday in November to jam with Tracy and Chameleon.

Cosgriff said he's looking at the possibility of bringing nationally known jazz headliners to the club in the future. Well-known musicians could go there to solo and use the local musicians as backups, Cosgriff said.

That kind of jazz programming is still in the planning stages, but for now you can hear live jazz music at Greenstreet Tavern four nights a week, Wednesday through Saturday. There's no plan to institute a cover charge unless a national act is playing, and there's free parking in the Howard Johnson's lot.

Cosgriff thinks that all that jazz will drum up more business for the tavern, which in days past was home to rock 'n' roll-style entertainment.

Those days are over.

"We think jazz fits into a hotel setting," Cosgriff said.

Even so, Cosgriff said the change

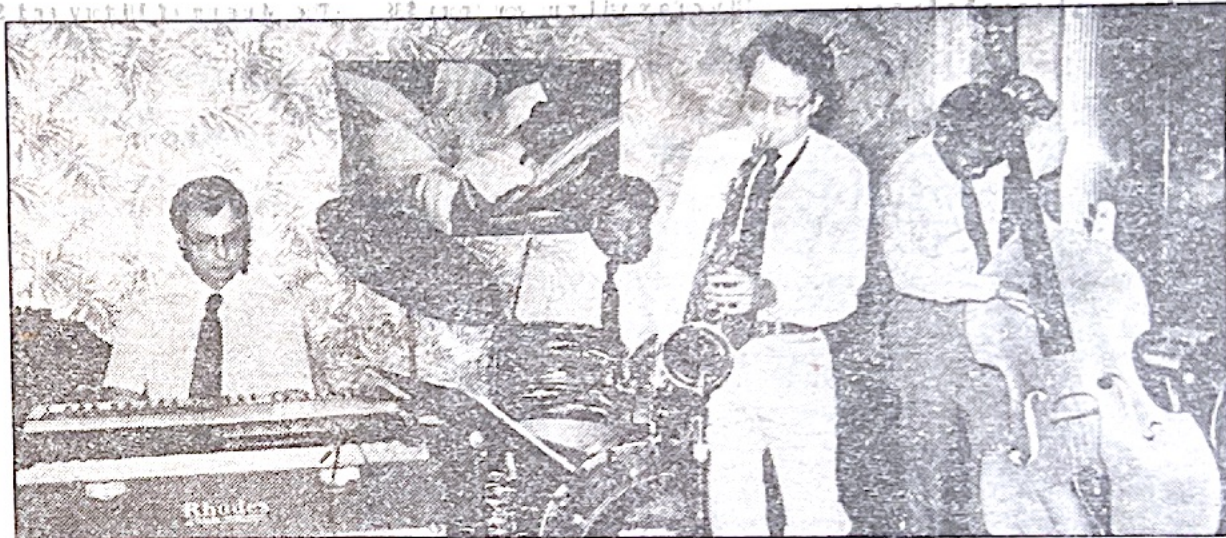


Photo by John Goff

Saxophonist Mike Tracy with (from left) Glenn Fischer, Darryel Cotten and Tyrone Wheeler at Greenstreet Tavern.

to jazz music was intended primarily to attract Louisvillians.

Radio and newspaper advertisements, posters, fliers and mailers are being designed to spread the word that jazz has arrived at the Greenstreet Tavern.

The hotel is redecorating the lounge. New wallpaper and color schemes are part of the package, and new carpeting may be ordered soon, he said.

And the bar offers a new wine

list, because jazz patrons are liable to be wine drinkers, Cosgriff said.

The changes seem to be making both customers and musicians happy.

In the past week, business has picked up significantly," Cosgriff said. "It's telling me we're on the start of something really good."

Mike Tracy, the band leader, said he and his fellow musicians are pleased with their new arrangement.

"We have a lot of freedom," Tracy said. "It's a very positive atmosphere and a great chance to play."

Cosgriff, who used to be the general manager of Charley's, a Main Street restaurant and bar that went out of business in June of 1984, hopes jazz can help attract some of his old clientele.

"We're committed to the jazz policy," he said. "It's still in the experimental stage, but there's no doubt in my mind that this will work out."