

# Cityscape

By Gene Williams



## U of L clinic has students being taught all that jazz

Cityscape is a weekly column in which members of the Courier-Journal news staff ruminate on intriguing aspects of life in the Louisville area.

The Dave Brubeck Quartet once recorded a fine, melodic composition called "One Moment Worth Years," a palette of the many hues of jazz.

That might have been the theme of last week's events at the University of Louisville School of Music, which resounded with instrumental colors during what has become an eagerly anticipated annual event — the Jamey Aebersold jazz and improvisation clinic.

Avid young music students and equally avid veterans of decades of jamming in smoke-filled clubs each paid \$195 to pack a year's worth of music into an arduous weeklong series of conversations, rehearsals and recitals.

About 115 students (40 more than last year) and a faculty of 20 educator-musicians, assembled from cities as distant as New York, San Francisco and Miami. They filled practice rooms and the recital hall with jazz of as many varieties as there were players. In most cases, the only sour notes heard were meant to be so.

Like jazz itself, the clinic exem-



Staff Photo by Tom Hirschfeld

Ken Slone, left, an instructor in charge of a four-student trumpet combo, listened as they performed Friday at the jazz-clinic

finale. Instructors Dan Haerle, on piano; Todd Coolman, on bass; and Ed Soph, on drums, made up the rhythm section.

plified the notion of the *ensemble* — of parts fitting together to create a musical whole. It was a festival of technical skill, devotion to craft, mutual respect, inspiration, hard work and the joy of learning.

Glenn Watts, a recent graduate of Louisville's Seneca High School who will be a freshman at U of L this fall, said of the clinic:

"It's instructional, and it's inspirational. The chance to hear other players and the chance to hear the instructors make it special. And Jamey is inspirational, and that transfers to us."

Watts, who plays tenor saxophone, was taking part in his second summer clinic.

Patrick Ballenger, an alto sax player who was attending the clinic for the first time, said:

"It's a great chance to trade experiences with other players. . . . My goals were to find out just what

I had to learn musically and to help my playing mature. I've been able to do that — and I can apply it to my work in school."

Ballenger will be a senior at duPont Manual High School and the Youth Performing Arts School this fall.

The week was no walk in the park — for students or faculty.

Every day was filled with class and combo work from 8:30 in the morning until 4:30 in the afternoon. Faculty concerts highlighted the evenings, until Friday, the closing night, when students got a chance to show in concert what they'd learned during their combo practices.

Although students didn't have much free time, their special camaraderie — born of earnest effort, shared interests and the excitement of developing new skills — was evident in concert, when

every solo in every group sparked applause.

Tom McCullough, a Louisville drummer, demonstrated that the clinic wasn't just for youngsters. McCullough, 49, has drummed for several Louisville groups through the years, and has attended three of the clinics.

Why would he attend such an affair?

"I have a lot to learn," he said. "And any time you can spend some time with (drum instructor) Ed Soph, you can learn a lot. He keeps coming up with new things, new concepts. I came here looking for new ideas, new ways to approach playing and practice."

Soph, who played in Woody Herman's band for several years, said, "It's a real learning experience for me. You find drummers with the same kind of problems each year, but you learn you have to ap-

proach the correction differently with each student.

"We (the instructors) see ourselves in these kids. We have, or have had, the same problems. I tell them, 'The only reason I'm here instead of you is that I've been at it longer.'"

Soph, who plays, teaches and composes, is a veteran faculty member of the Aebersold clinics.

"You have to do a little bit of everything to get along in this business," he said.

For one student, Chris Bizianes of Louisville, the clinic offered a chance to present a work of his own composition — "Spontaneity," a piece he wrote with his twin brother, John.

During the students' recital, Chris' combo performed the piece

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and he took a major part on tenor sax. (John, who usually plays trumpet, played piano in a combo that performed later.)

Material chosen by the groups wasn't easy pickin's. Featured works included "Walkin'" by Miles Davis, "Witch Hunt" by Wayne Shorter and the classic "Dear Old Stockholm."

To Aebersold's delight, some of the students were educators. Becky Schaffer, who teaches at Covington Latin High School, played superb alto sax for her group.

Although teaching comes first with her, she is looking forward to exploring jazz with her students next year. She said she also plays

with groups around Covington, mainly in the Mainstrasse section of downtown.

She was extremely enthusiastic about the camp.

"I've never played mainstream jazz before, but it has been great," she said. "I'll be back next year."

Another player who'll be coming back is Terrie Richards, a singer from Orlando, Fla., who said she almost didn't attend this year because only two vocalists signed up.

She said she finally told herself she needed to either improve or forget about it.

"I learned more in this week than I could have ever guessed," she said.

And how do the instructors view the camp?

Ken Slone, a fluegelhorn player and former resident of New Albany, Ind., who now lives in Brooklyn, N.Y., said:

"It's a chance to play your chops into shape. And the kids are really into this thing. They work hard and they appreciate what we're trying to do. It's a high kind of a week."

It also could be a high kind of help for the U of L jazz program.

Mike Tracy, who will rejoin the faculty in the fall after several years as artist-in-residence in the Frankfort and Jefferson County school districts, said the clinics can only help.

"It's a great thing for the kids in this city to have the opportunity for this kind of program," he said. "This is a time for us to get real

close to the kids, to have a lot of interaction with them."

Aebersold, who is a well-known local musician and teacher at various times at Bellarmine and U of L and who has organized clinics since the days when the music school was on the Shelby campus, didn't invite the players back for next year's clinic.

He didn't have to.

He merely mentioned that it will take place in July.