

## HORNS OF PLENTY

### Local nightspots are jumping on the bandwagon of hot jazz

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When you're hot, you're hot.

And right now jazz is hot in Louisville.

And because it's hot, a number of nightspots are jumping on the bandwagon. While the music isn't necessarily a big moneymaker, jazz has held its own well enough to keep the clubs interested.

Officials at restaurants and clubs are sounding a similar theme about jazz: The music is harmonious with their nightspots' styles, and it either draws or broadens a clientele they wish to cultivate.

"Jazz is conducive to our type of hotel," said Tom Pagels, food and beverage director for the Hyatt Regency-Louisville. "We want to show people who might think of us as a stuffy, overpriced place that we are not."

The Hyatt is a relative newcomer to jazz, having recently signed Soundchaser, perhaps the city's most popular group, to play in the Balcony Lounge.

Pagels wanted to bring in music that "wouldn't rock the place," which is comfortable and softly lit, and he's noticed that the crowd on Fridays and Saturdays, when jazz is played, is a more adult group, meaning many patrons in their 40s and 50s.

Jazz will be a big part of the Hyatt's New Year's Eve bash, which will feature Dixieland music, and the instrumental and vocal jazz of Soundchaser and the group, Walker, McCulloch and Kays.

Gary Solodkin, owner of On Broadway, is also giving the nod to jazz, even though it's not a moneymaker for him. "I have something of a unique situation," he said. "I



Staff illustration by Joanne Meshew

have a restaurant with a club, not a club with a restaurant. If I had to rely on jazz to make money, I would have been on the bread line a long time ago."

He doesn't mean that in a disparaging way; it's just his way of saying that as long as the music pays for itself, he's satisfied. "Jazz goes with my motif, my atmosphere," he said.

The music from On Broadway's bar doesn't intrude on the diners, but rather may encourage them to stop on the way out for a nightcap and some listening. "We have nice, comfortable surroundings," Solodkin said, "and the music (of the Edgar Brooks Trio and singer Mary Ann Fisher) — more toward blues — fits in with our dining atmosphere."

Solodkin isn't a new hand at this, though his lounge didn't feature jazz for several months this year. On Broadway was pretty much the birthplace of Chameleon, a group that backed singer Vikki True for so long in the lounge.

Though the featured entertainers are at On Broadway only on Friday and Saturday nights, New Year's

Eve will see them playing and singing for revelers.

Another late bloomer in the jazz garden is the Greenstreet Tavern at Howard Johnson's In Towne. The club has engaged Chameleon with saxophonist Mike Tracy to play weekend nights, and it has become home to Jazz Showcase, the brainchild of longtime jazz musician and devotee Everett Hoffman, each Wednesday night.

The crowds at the Jazz Showcase in particular have been good, according to Nedra Henning, assistant manager. She has said that the tavern is packed practically every Wednesday night.

Another newcomer to the jazz scene is Mark Smith, owner of The Seville Diner Pub. Soundchaser made a believer out of him during a popular stay at the Bardstown Road restaurant/club over much of the summer and fall. Smith especially likes the crowds that jazz brings to his club. "The clientele has good be-

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havior. We don't have any drunks or people who get out of line.

"The music complements the dinner hours," he said. He finds that many customers stay after dining for what might be some new listening for them.

Smith is so much into jazz now that he's bringing in the Buddy Rich Orchestra for a one-night stand on Jan. 15. "I'm already thinking about bringing in some more headliners," he said. "You know, this club gives a person a chance to mix and mingle, to get close to the performers."

Meanwhile, Beth Taylor, who

books performers for Phoenix Hill Tavern, expects jazz to return in full swing in the spring, when the club reopens its roof garden. While there has been some jazz there lately, it hasn't been on a regular basis.

The roof garden used to be home to evening jazz performances each weekend, with Sunday nights particularly popular.

Does jazz bring in a different type of audience from the pop/rock crowd that patronizes Phoenix Hill? "It's nice to expose some rock 'n' rollers to jazz," Ms. Taylor says. "We try to expose our people to a wide variety of music."

Bauer's restaurant on Brownsboro Road also expects to see jazz on the upswing. The restaurant has a long tradition of featuring jazz performers, going back to the times when pianist Louis Knipp was a fixture there. Bauer's returned to that tradition last summer with jazz on its patio.

Manager Skee Bauer said that the summer offerings were a great success and noted that jazz nights brought in something of a different mix of patrons.

"We feel we can reach a different kind of diner with this," he said. "They seemed to be people who were accustomed to going out frequently." On the weekends, he said, the diners seemed to stay a bit later, and he credited the music for that.

With another nod to jazz on the up-beat in Louisville, Bauer emphasized that the music will be back at the restaurant next summer.