

NIGHTLIFE

BY JEFFREY LEE PUCKETT, STAFF COLUMNIST

Jazz society gears up to move beyond be-bop



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When Gus Coin died last year, he took a little of the Louisville Jazz Society with him. Coin, the society's tireless president, was nearly a one-man show.

"When Gus passed away, it appeared to most of us that things had to be done differently because none of us had the time to give as Gus did," said Mike Tracy, the society's new president. "Gus' passing gave us the opportunity to change and diversify."

The society, begun in 1983, elected to delegate and to rededicate. More members got involved, bylaws were rewritten, the board was revamped to better represent minorities and women, and a pledge was made to change the society's reputation as a champion of little else but be-bop-style jazz.

The changes begin to pay off when the society's new concert season makes its debut Monday night with TanaReid at the Silo Brew Pub, 630 Barret Ave. (7:30 p.m., \$10, \$8 for society members.)

TanaReid — headed by drummer Akira Tana and bassist Rufus Reid — dips into various styles of traditional jazz, including be-bop. But Tracy points to two scheduled concerts as symbols of the society's commitment to change: Tommy Newsome, former "Tonight Show" hornman, will play swing-style jazz on March 29, and the St. Louis Ragtimers will live up to their name April 19. The focus returns to bop with the April 5 Hal Galper Trio concert.

Except for the TanaReid show, society concerts will remain at Lockett's Downstairs at Actors. All shows will start at 7:30 p.m. instead of 5:30, another change designed to draw larger crowds.

One thing won't change: The Louisville Jazz Society will continue its educational projects. Ten to 15 times a year, the society stages clinics at local schools, where it gives both an aural and oral history of jazz.

"Most people in Louisville don't know that we do these kind of things because we lack publicity," Tracy said.

Tracy said the group, which has 456 members, is aiming for a higher profile. For the first time, the board is putting together a list of the society's accomplishments in hopes of attracting more grants. To grow, Tracy said, the society needs more money; only yearly grants from the Kentucky Arts Council has kept the group above water. One reason the organization has featured so many be-bop artists is that they tend to be more affordable.

"Maybe with a sax player in the White House," Tracy said, "we could get a little more help."

Most touring jazz artists are brought to Louisville either by the jazz Society or the Kentucky Center for the Arts, which is co-sponsoring the TanaReid show. Ken Clay, who books most of the center's jazz shows, joined the jazz society board last year.

"Overall, the society is developing a greater appreciation for jazz in Louisville," Clay said, "and you can't have enough of that."