



Courtesy Photo

Dan Thomas will perform with his quintet June 10 at Jazz in June.

Jazz in June dedicated to Berman

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—Butch Berman devoted much of his final days to future plans—an April 14 benefit for Norman Hedman in New York City, a May 23 salute by the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra to the music of Russ Long, and the upcoming Jazz in June outdoor concert series.

Though his death on Jan. 31 prevented him from experiencing these events, the **Berman Music Foundation** will continue to carry on his vision by participating in Jazz in June for the first time since 2004, when the BMF sponsored the Eldar Djangirot Trio and the Kendra Shank Quartet. To show its appreciation for the BMF support through the years, the Jazz in June folks are dedicating the 2008 series to Butch Berman.

“For more than 10 years, the Berman Music Foundation has served as a valued partner, team member and stakeholder to the Jazz in June music series,” said Marthaelen Florence, chair of Jazz in June. “Under the tutelage of Butch Berman, Jazz in June was able to bring many of the nation’s most accomplished jazz artist to the stage. With the foundation’s generous contributions Jazz in June audiences



Courtesy Photo

The Dynamic Les DeMerle Orchestra will perform June 17 at Jazz in June.

have been afforded the opportunity to experience outstanding talent and the community’s has been educated through countless artist’s workshops.”

Before each performance this year, someone from the Lincoln jazz community will make a few remarks about Butch, his contribution to jazz in Lincoln and to Jazz in June.

As always, the free concerts begin at 7 p.m. every Tuesday in June on the plaza west of the Sheldon Museum of Art at 12th and R streets on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus.

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Tribute to husband, music lover, promoter

By Grace Sankey-Berman

Seven years ago, I met Butch at his house on a blind date. We were two different people from separate worlds. Butch, a hip musician, was witty and funny. On the other hand, I was a rather serious and up-tight woman from Africa. We seemed so different and yet it was easy for me to fall in love with him. I found him extremely honest and open about his lifestyle and who he was, and he was not defensive about the decisions and choices he made. It was very refreshing to hear such honesty from someone I had just met. I immediately felt safe with him and soon discovered that we both had a passion for great music and much more. And so began our wonderful love affair.

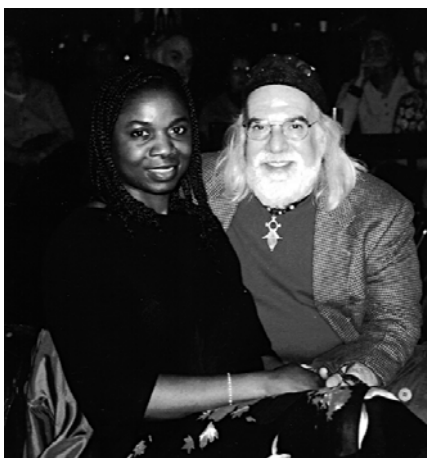
We found each other at a time when we were both ready for a serious relationship. My kids and I were very happy because Butch fit right in and we became a family. Butch was totally committed and did not shy away from the responsibilities that came with a new family. He became protective of us and provided for our every need in the best possible way. He loved my kids and tried to be a good male influence to the boys. As a result, he has made a lasting and positive impact in our lives.

But on Jan. 31, I lost my husband and lover. I could not have written this sooner because the pain was very intense and the emptiness I felt was deep. It is still hard to grasp that Butch is gone, and the finality of his death is immensely difficult to deal with. Butch was a free thinker who loved and celebrated life and I would like to honor that legacy. He lived and loved passionately and I feel privileged to have been a part of his life, no matter how briefly it seems.



Butch and Grace celebrate New Year's Eve 2001.

Let me seize this moment to talk about the life of the man I love, his love for music and vision to promote unique forms of music. Butch worked relentlessly, locally and across the nation, producing records with great artists who otherwise may not have been able to afford to cut a record. He sponsored live performances locally in venues like the Zoo bar, P.O. Pears and the Lied Center for Performing Arts, to mention a few, and in other parts of this country. The details about the work he has done are well documented on the BMF website. He wanted to educate people about the great music this country has to offer, the kind of music that may



Butch and Grace

not be at the top of the charts or be played on the popular radio stations. He spent countless hours collecting great records and succeeded in collecting an impressive array of musical gems. He was not only enthusiastic about finding new music, but generously wanted to share this music with whoever was interested in listening to it.

Butch clamored for information about music and musicians and was well versed with all the details of their art and lives. His radio shows were like music history classes, but more entertaining and in-depth. He played great music and would talk to his audience about the musicians and their musical journey and about the artist as man or woman. In other words he tried to humanize these great musicians. I regret not paying more attention to the wealth of information he tried to share with me. May be it did not cross my mind that he would depart so early.

His passion for music can also be seen in how well-organized the BMF museum, which is in his house, is kept. Even though he had thousands of records, Butch knew exactly where to find almost every one of them. He handled each record or CD very carefully, as if it was the last one. Every record was meticulously cleaned and preserved. He worked with almost surgical precision arranging and rearranging stacks of records and CDs and loved every minute of it. He derived a lot of satisfaction from the knowledge that everything was in order.

The BMF intends to keep his vision alive and I would like to invite all

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Again, the foundation will fund two of the four artists on the 2008 lineup—the Dan Thomas Quintet on June 10 and the Dynamic Les DeMerle Band, featuring singer Bonnie Eisele, on June 17. The other artists are the Darryl White Group on June 3 and the Lao Tizer Band on June 24.

“Jazz in June continues to value contributions of BMF and Butch Berman,” Florence said. “We also recognize that there was a great value in Butch’s decision to engage his foundation in the philanthropic process. When those who share a commitment to one another share an equally heart-felt commitment to something beyond the community both are enhanced.”

A jazz educator teaching saxophone and jazz history at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, Dan Thomas has been a favorite of the foundation for several years. He performed with his group in September 2004, as part of the Berman Jazz Series in Topeka, Kan. His recording “City Scope” was reviewed that same year, and “Musical Sanctuary” was reviewed on its release the following year. The Canadian-born jazz educator also was the subject of a feature interview in the August 2004 edition of the BMF newsletter.

The Dan Thomas Quintet includes Joe Parisi on trumpet and flugelhorn, Brandon Draper on drums, Roger Wilder on piano and Bram Wijnands on bass, in addition to Thomas on saxophone.

New to the BMF—and to Jazz in June—is The Dynamic Les DeMerle Band, a group that Butch Berman first heard at his bedside while still in the hospital after a seizure in early October. He was so impressed by the band that he wrote a review of its CD “Cookin’ at the Corner, Vol. 2” and made his pitch to bring the band to the Jazz in June stage.

A Brooklyn native, drummer Les



Courtesy Photo

Darryl White

DeMerle toured 12 years with big band trumpet master Harry James and has played with the likes of Lionel Hampton, The Manhattan Transfer and Red Allen. Vocalist Bonnie Eisele, DeMerle’s wife, specializes in renditions of jazz classics and breezy Brazilian ballads. The Florida-based band also features pianist Mike Levine and bassist Jamie Ousley.

Darryl White, professor of trumpet at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln since 1997, will make his first Jazz in June appearance as a leader since 2003. He will be accompanied by a diverse group of top-flight players—saxophonist Dave Pietro, pianist Jeff Jenkins, bassist Craig Akin, drummer Brandon Draper and percussionist Michael Pujado.

This year’s wild card is young keyboard whiz Lao Tizer, whose 2006 release, “Diversity,” displays his broad influences while remaining rooted in his smooth jazz style. The album reached Billboard’s Top 50 Contemporary Jazz chart. Backed by a hand-picked band, he has performed with Isaac Hayes, Wayne Shorter, George Benson, The Rippingtons, Bruce Hornsby and Spyro Gyra.

Jazz in June 2008 promises to be a welcomed return for the Berman Music Foundation.



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Trustee: Tony Rager

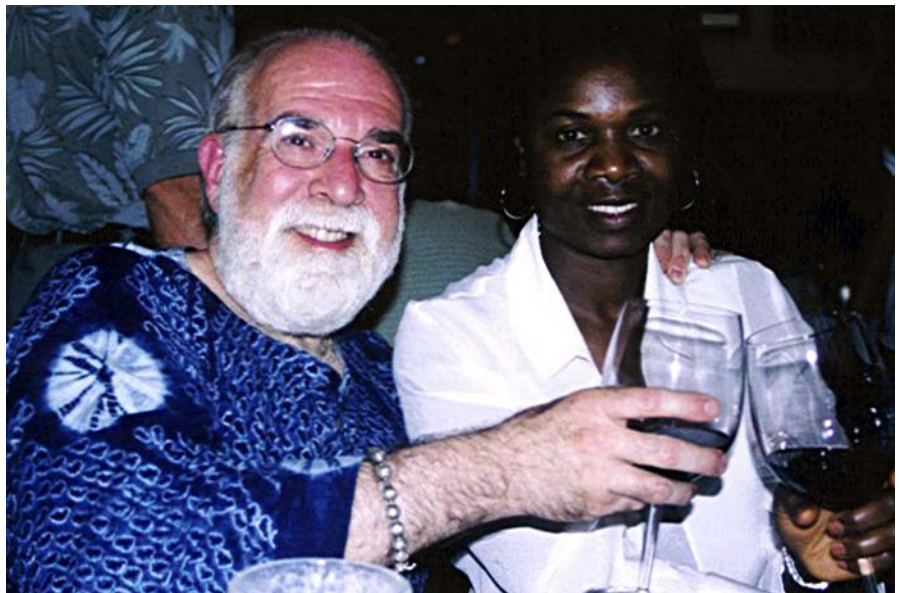
Consultants: Grace Sankey-Berman, Russ Dantzer, Kay Davis, Dan Demuth, Norman Hedman, Tom Ineck, Gerald Spaits, Leslie Spaits and Wade Wright

Grace continued from page 2

of you to join us in this effort because, with your support, together we can accomplish a lot. We will dedicate our efforts to promoting music education and live performances. We have an immense opportunity to take Butch's vision to a different level.

Butch listened to music constantly in his house and in the car. His musical palate included rock 'n' roll, soul, country, jazz and every thing in between. He was an equal-opportunity music lover. But most of all he enjoyed playing and making music with other musicians. Some of his best memories included playing with Charlie Burton, Dave Robel and Otto Spalti in The Megatones. Even in later years, he was always tickled and excited at any opportunity to play with those guys. Of course, he had a lot of fun playing with many other musicians, like his last band, The Cronin Brothers, who were kind enough to play at Butch's celebration of life on March 23. I had a lot of fun the last few years listening and dancing to their music. Not only did he enjoy playing with other musicians, but he looked forward to the camaraderie with them. He continued to practice with The Cronin Brothers up to just two weeks before his death. He was not about to let a damned tumor stop him from playing. He kept practicing and planning for the next gig, which was a few days away. But it was not meant to be. That is the kind of guy Butch was, an eternal optimist.

Butch loved musicians and was respectful of their individual talents. He understood how much work and dedication it took to be good. He always advocated for the better treatment of musicians, and insisted that they be paid better. He was a good host and went out of his way to make sure they were comfortable. He would always take them out to dinner before or after gigs. Most of all, the



File Photo

Butch Berman and Grace Sankey-Berman on their 2003 honeymoon in Chicago.

musicians were amazed at his hospitality and generosity. Once during dinner with singer Sheila Jordan, she said, "I have never been treated so well in my musical career. Butch, you are the first sponsor that ever took me out to dinner." When Butch passed away, Alaadeen, a horn player from KC, sent me a card that said, "The music family has lost a great man."

Butch was a good friend. I know because he was my best friend. Most of his friendships were life-long. He spent countless hours on the phone talking with his friends, such as Wade Wright in San Francisco. I was always amazed at how well he nurtured his friends, constantly keeping in touch with them, remembering their birthdays and spending time with them whenever possible. He enjoyed fried

chicken and good food with his friend Rich on Thursday nights. He loved the game of Ping Pong and looked forward to Saturdays when he played with his friends Brad Krieger and Daniel Nelson for many years. Butch was always thoughtful and generous. He spent the last days of his life planning a benefit concert for his dear friend Norman Hedman, who is currently in remission from cancer. He was worried about Norman's illness, but never complained about his own illness. That benefit took place April 14 in New York.

Above all, he was always very attentive and loving to me, never missing a chance to show me or tell me how much he loved me. We had a lot of fun being together and creating memories that I will forever cherish. Our goal was to listen to every record he had and watch all the movies in his collection. We could not accomplish that goal, but we sure had a lot of fun trying. Living with Butch was an American cultural experience. For a girl from Africa, it was the classroom I never could have dreamed of.

I am comforted by the fact that Butch lived a happy, full life without compromise. I am touched by the



File Photo

Butch and Sheila Jordan in 2003

outpouring of support from friends and strangers. A lot of you have reached out to me at this difficult time by phone, cards, letters and visits. I want to say thank you for every thing you have done. Many of you brought meals or took me out and made sure that I ate. Your care and support has been of immense help to me.

Butch was loved and touched by many. I got notes from total strangers who were touched when they read about his passing in the paper. Some joined us to celebrate his life. Arleen Fowler, a delightful lady whom I had never met before, came by Butch's house when she heard about his passing. She informed me that she was the secretary at The Famous, a ready-to-wear store owned by the Berman family from 1946 to 1976. She took time to tell me about Butch's family. She had known Butch from birth and had watched him grow up while she worked at The Famous. She obviously was fond of him and enjoyed his sense of humor and wit. She could not get over how talented he was and how his ideas were not always what his mom wanted, but he believed in himself enough to stick to his own beliefs.

That is essentially the core of the man I knew, fell in love with and married. He was not afraid to go against rigid sub-cultures, regardless of the price he may pay. He taught me that to be an individual or to be vulnerable is empowering, not diminishing. That was the key to him having such a happy life.

Therefore, Butch remained honest almost to a fault. He did not make a lot of friends that way. But in his style, he always managed to get

people he dealt with to come around, even if they only agreed to disagree. He was the first to reach out and apologize for anything necessary.

Thanks to all the musicians who donated their time to play at the celebration of Butch's life. Special thanks to The Cronin Brothers, his fellow bandmates who worked hard to make Butch's day special. Butch was proud



Butch and Grace in Northern California in 2003.

to play with such great guys. Thanks to Michael Opoku and Ashanti African Root band for playing the African drums that Butch loved so much, to Kansas City musicians Gerald Spaits, Joe Cartwright, Ray DeMarchi, and Alaadeen for taking time from their busy schedules to play great jazz and to Karrin Allyson, who graced us with her presence and great music. To all the Lincoln musicians, I want to thank you for all you did. I am sure Butch was watching and loved every minute.

Most importantly, I wish to thank all the care providers who were at the frontline, working to make Butch comfortable during his illness. They came by to see Butch at home after busy days in the office. They include Dr. Kevin Coughlin, Butch's personal physician, the "hippest doctor in town," as Butch liked to say; Dr. David Lauer, his chiropractor, who understood Butch very well; Kassi Riordan, Butch's missus who is the most generous person I know; and Joyce Latrom, Butch's longtime friend, who was always generous and willing to lend a hand or a shoulder to cry on.

To the BMF family, I thank you for making it a lot easier for me and Butch. Thank you, Tony Rager and Kay, for helping me keep it all together. I also wish to thank Tom Ineck for working tirelessly to keep the website updated. Your thoughtfulness and hard work over the last few months have not gone unnoticed. Butch and I enjoyed your radio show immensely, and we greatly appreciated the dedications you made to Butch. Thanks to Ruthann, Paul, and Matt, who spent hours to put together the slide pictorial for the celebration of life.

Special thanks to my friends Kim Jasung, Rose Spencer, Cathy Moss and Mousa Drammeh for being there when I needed them the most.

I feel privileged to have been married to Butch. He was a great husband who did his best to navigate through this journey called life. I love you, darling, and miss you dearly. I remain eternally grateful for having been loved by you. Rest in peace, my love.

Memorial

Butch's life celebrated in grand style

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—Hundreds of Butch Berman's friends, family and fans were on hand March 23 for the six-hour celebration of the life of the legendary Lincoln musician and founder of the Berman Music Foundation.

The main ballroom of The Cornhusker Marriott Hotel in downtown Lincoln swarmed with fellow musicians, family members, associates of the foundation and other folks who were touched in some way by the ebullient lover of life, who died Jan. 31 at age 58. Those in attendance expressed a mixture of joy and sadness—joy that they had known Butch and sadness that he was not able to share this grand event in his honor.

Both jazz and rock musicians paid their sincerest respects by participating in the Easter Day celebration of life, with jazz music relegated to the 4-7 p.m. slot and rock music



Photos by Tom Ineck

Headliner Karrin Allyson pays tribute to Butch Berman.

extending well past the scheduled 10 p.m. closing time.

The stellar Kansas City rhythm section of pianist Joe Cartwright, bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Ray DeMarchi set the mood for the afternoon with

a set of familiar tunes. KC saxophonist and longtime BMF friend Ahmad Alaadeen fronted the band for a heart-felt rendition of the classic "Body and Soul."

Headliner Karrin Allyson, the first artist that the Berman Music Foundation brought to Lincoln—back in March 1995—performed a stunning set that included the appropriate "Live for Life" and Randy Newman's "Guilty," which she recorded on her 1992 Concord Records debut, "I Didn't Know About You." Cartwright and company gave a wonderful reading of a bop tune that was one of Butch's favorites, Charlie Parker's "Yardbird Suite."

Singer David Basse of Kansas City, who also has had a long association with the BMF, put everything into his performance of the classic farewell ballad, "I'll Be Seeing You." He turned to the blues for "The Eagle Flies on Friday," with Ed Love of Lincoln on tenor sax, who also joined the band for Cole Porter's "I Love You."

To begin the segue from jazz to rock, The Lightning Bugs contributed a set of their trademark swing, with vocals inspired by the sweet harmonies of the Mills Brothers. Among the classics of the genre performed by guitarist Steve Hanson, bassist Jim Pipher and drummer Reynold Peterson were "Glow Worm," "Satin Doll" and "Moonglow." For Butch's widow, Grace Sankey Berman, they dedicated the touching "Be My Life's Companion."

The wonderful band Ashanti had dozens of people taking to the dance floor for a set of reggae numbers that included the Bob Marley compositions "Trenchtown Rock" and "No Woman, No Cry."

Of course, any celebration of Butch's life and love of music would have been incomplete without the



David Basse with Joe Cartwright, Gerald Spaits, Ray DeMarchi and Ed Love



Two-year-old Ella Jane Lounsbury swings to the sounds of Ashanti, playing popular reggae tunes.

participation of legendary rockabilly singer and songwriter Charlie Burton, who was accompanied by fiddler Dave Fowler, bassist Dave Boye, drummer Dave Robel, and special guest Steve Hanson on guitar. Appropriately, their set included “Rock ‘n’ Roll Behavior” and “Guitar Case,” tunes first recorded by Charlie Burton and Rock Therapy (with Butch on guitar) in 1976 and 1977, respectively.

The mood returned briefly to a more jazz-tinged style with the Hot Club of Lincoln doing “It Don’t Mean a Thing (If It Ain’t Got That Swing).” The brainchild of fiddler Dave Fowler, the gypsy jazz en-

semble also included Bill Lohrberg on guitar, Craig Kingery on bass and Don Holmquist on drums carried on like troopers, with Brian Hull capably taking on the keyboard chores once handled by Butch. Kelly McGovern and special guest Sean Benjamin contributed additional vocal and guitar.

Early on, the

Cronins performed “Trinidad Rocks,” a rocking instrumental written by Butch many years ago. Then it was time for their own take on classic rock, with great renditions of “Dirty Water,” “Five O’clock World,” “Little Sister,” “Peter Gunn,” “Secret Agent Man,” “Slow Down,” “Sleep Walkin’,” and “Lucille” McGovern delivered impas-

sioned vocals on the bluesy “One Way Out” and the Traffic masterpiece “Feelin’ Alright.”

A sort of “shrine” to Butch on display near the back of the ballroom featured a recreation of his familiar basement retreat, including a centerpiece table with a full glass of wine and a sampling of his favorite collectibles and kitschy memorabilia. Throughout the event, a photo slide show documenting Butch’s entire life was projected on a screen, making his presence (in spirit) even more palpable.

Between sets of music, friends



A sort of “shrine” to Butch Berman featured a recreation of his familiar basement retreat, including a glass of wine.



The Cronins perform with Butch’s beloved Fender Telecaster on display front and center.

took the stage to share stories at the microphone. Among them was Arleen Fowler, who related her long experience with The Famous, the women’s ready-to-wear shop where she worked for the Berman family from 1948 until it closed Jan. 31, 1976. She recalled the day in March 1949 when she first heard the news that Byron Lee Berman had been born to Harriett and Alfred Berman.

Most touchingly, Grace took the microphone to thank everyone for showing their love and support—especially the participating musicians, who gave the greatest gift of all. May the music never end

Photo Gallery

Hundreds gather to celebrate Butch's life



Gerald Spaits



Joe Cartwright



Ahmad Alaadeen



Dawn DeBlaze



Kay Davis and Terry Schwimmer



Tony and Tammy Rager and children



Alan Smith, Warren Rudolph and Marthaelen Florence



Dave Fowler



Dave Boye



Charlie Burton



Dave Robel and Don Holmquist



Jayne Sebbly, Deb Higuchi and Tad Fraizer



Friends and family of Grace Sankey-Berman



Grace Sankey-Berman expresses her thanks to everyone who attended the celebration of life.

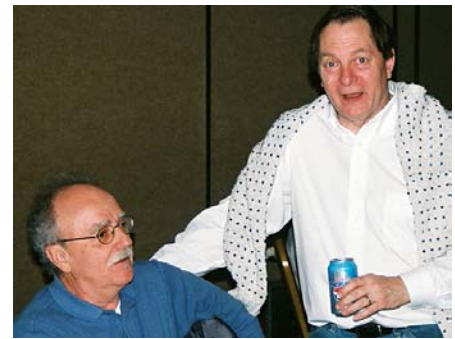
Photos by Rich Hoover



Ed Love and John Horn



Ray DeMarchi and Joe Cartwright



Doug Fenton and Dave Landis



Lightning Bugs Jim Pipher, Reynold Peterson and Steve Hanson



Gale Cooper, Richard Sullivan and Tom Dayton

*Benefit Concert***BMF attends benefit for Norman Hedman**

By Tom Ineck

NEW YORK, N.Y.—When Butch Berman heard the news that his good friend, master conguero and Berman Music Foundation consultant Norman Hedman was ill, he began to help with plans to sponsor a benefit concert to defray some of Hedman's growing medical expenses. Unfortunately, Butch himself was unable to attend the April 14 benefit concert. He died Jan. 31.

So it was with mixed sadness and hopeful anticipation that an entourage of BMF associates traveled to New York—sadness that Butch was unable to join us and hope that Norman would soon show signs of recovery after treatment for acute myelogenous leukemia.

The support for Norman in his time of need was inspiring. Often struggling with their own financial worries, the generous musicians of New York rallied around their comrade to perform for "Rhythm Relief," a two-show event at Jazz Standard,



Photos by Tom Ineck

Kay Davis, Tony Rager, Andrienne Wilson, Norman Hedman and Grace Sankey-Berman gather at Norman's midtown Manhattan apartment.

116 E. 27th St. Hosted by WBGO Radio's Rob Crocker, the event was produced and sponsored by 8 Bar Management and the **Berman Music Foundation**.

Hedman was diagnosed with AML in January, while rehearsing with Alicia Keys for her upcoming world tour. Since then, he has been undergoing rounds of treatment at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

On the day before the benefit, we were able to visit with Norman for an hour or so at his midtown Manhattan high-rise, his residence of many years. At his side were his wife, Michelline, and his manager and friend Dawn DeBlaze of 8 Bar Management. Joining us later was drummer and upstairs neighbor Horacee Arnold and Andrienne Wilson, singer-flutist and longtime friend of Norman's, who had just arrived from

her home in the Pacific Northwest.

Though much thinner than the last time we had seen him, Norman was in his usual high spirits, despite having completed a six-week series of cancer treatments and preparing for yet another. Downplaying his own dire condition, he expressed sadness at the sight of so many children with cancer at Sloan-Kettering, noting that he had already lived a full life, but that they had barely begun theirs.

Because of his compromised immune system, Norman could not attend his own benefit for fear of possible air-borne infection. But his presence was palpable that night, as so many friends and fellow musicians gathered to show their love and support.

Featured musicians included bassists Ron Carter and Buster Williams, vibraphonist Joe Locke, drummers Horacee Arnold and Will



Jazz Standard club in Manhattan



Norman Hedman's Tropique performs at Jazz Standard. From left they are Misha Tsiganov, piano; Alexei Tsiganov, vibes; Mario Rodriguez, bass; special guests Brad Mason on flugelhorn and Elliott Mason on trombone; Willie Martinez, timbales; and Cristian Rivera on congas, sitting in for Norman Hedman.

Calhoun, percussionists Ray Mantilla and Steve Kroon, singer Kendra Shank, pianist Frank Kimbrough, saxophonist T.K. Blue, singer Queen Esther Marrow, singer and flutist Andrienne Wilson, trombonist Dick Griffin, guitarist B.D. Lenz, and—of course—members of Norman Hedman's longtime band Tropique (music director Willie Martinez on timbales; Misha Tsiganov on piano; Alexei Tsiganov on vibes; Roger Byam and Craig Rivers on saxophones; Mario Rodriguez on bass; and Cristian Rivera on percussion). An

online auction was initiated to raise additional funds.

The contemporary R&B singer Alicia Keys, though on tour, offered a video salute to Norman as the event began. Appropriately, Kendra Shanks and pianist Frank Kimbrough got the music off to a start with a stunning ballad rendition of "Blue Skies." Then it was time for Tropique to take the stage.



Grace Sankey-Berman, Kendra Shanks, Tony Rager and Kay Davis at Jazz Standard

for a rousing rendition of the Juan Tizol classic "Caravan." Bringing down the tempo, Martinez and Wilson crooned "The Nearness of You" to each other, as Dick Griffin assisted on trombone.

Queen Esther Marrow, a versatile blues, jazz and gospel singer who has performed with everyone from B.B. King to Bob Dylan, ranged from the gospel fervor of "Walk With Me" to the jazz ballad beauty of "In My Solitude," which she once performed with Duke Ellington, to the funk of "Elijah Rock."

Tropique returned to the stage for a first-show finale featuring a per-



Singer Queen Esther Marrow and her band performed gospel and jazz favorites.

Norman continued on page 12



An all-star percussion ensemble performs "Afro-Blue."

Norman continued from page 11

cussion ensemble that included Martinez, Steve Kroon, Ray Mantilla and Chembo Corniel churning the polyrhythmic waters of Mongo Santamaria's "Afro-Blue."

The second show began with the all-star quartet of Joe Locke on vibes, Eldar Djangirov on piano, Ron Carter on bass and Horacee Arnold on drums. This masterful ensemble worked their magic on such standards as "You Don't Know What Love Is" and the Miles Davis classic "All Blues," which contained a brilliant interpolation of "Willow Weep for Me."

It was a somewhat mournful set of tunes, but played with an abundance of energy, hope and musicianship.

Tropique took the stage for a series of vocal guest appearances, first with the fabulous singer Ada Dyer on "Closer (To Your Heart)," from the band's most recent release, 2006's "Garden of Forbidden Fruit." Wilson returned to sing "Alone in Love with You" from the 1996 Tropique debut recording, "Healing Hands." Finally, D-Train Williams performed an inspired rendition of "Angel of the Night," a tune from "Forbidden Fruit" that was initially dedicated to Grace Sankey-Berman. At least for those of



D-Train Williams sings "Angel of the Night" with Tropique.



Singer Erika Rose is Norman Hedman's niece.

us who knew the connection, it was a very moving performance.

Another highlight of the evening was the performance of "Stolen Moments" by an ensemble consisting of alto saxophonist T.K. Blue (formerly known as Talib Kibwe), guitarist B.D. Lenz, trumpeter Wayne Cobham, bassist Buster Williams, drummer Will



Eldar Djangirov, piano; Joe Locke, vibes; Ron Carter, bass; and Horacee Arnold, drums, started the second show.

Calhoun and pianist Misha Tsiganov. Norman Hedman's niece, promising rock and R&B singer Erika Rose, sang a tune in honor of her beloved uncle.

As always, Martinez was the master of poise and sensitivity, managing the difficult task of assigning the brief sets, getting everyone on the schedule without ruffling any feathers. Bravo, Willie!

On behalf of representatives of the Berman Music Foundation who were in attendance (Grace Sankey-Berman, Tony Rager, Kay Davis and myself), I thank everyone involved, especially Norman Hedman for his resilient spirit and all the musicians who donated their time and talent for the cause.

Editor's Note: *The latest on Norman's condition is that he has completed two chemotherapy treatments, arriving home May 26 after four weeks in the hospital. He is*



Misha Tsiganov, piano; Buster Williams, bass; B.D. Lenz, guitar; T.K. Blue, alto sax; Wayne Cobham, trumpet; and Will Calhoun, drums.

still very susceptible to illness and will undergo tests to determine if he is still in remission. If so, he and his sister will begin bone marrow transplantation at the end of June or July. Norman sends his thanks to the Berman Music Foundation

for the support of "Rhythm Relief." The concert, auction and donations have so far netted \$7,571.

If you wish to donate, visit www.normanhedman.com and click on "Rhythm Relief Fund."

Tomfoolery

Springtime in New York is season of change

By Tom Ineck

NEW YORK, N.Y.—Springtime in New York is legendary for good reason. It is the season of rebirth and rejuvenation in the most exciting city on the planet. But with hopefulness comes an inevitable sense of change, the rather discomfiting sensation of living on the cusp of an unknown future.

So it was with mixed emotions that the Berman Music Foundation entourage arrived April 12 in the great metropolis to attend an April 14 benefit concert for the ailing Norman Hedman. Without our dear friend and BMF founder Butch Berman at our side and with just three nights and two full days in the city, we were determined to make the most of our brief stay.

While in this fabulous city, there is no better guide than 20-year resident Russ Dantzer. A Lincoln, Neb., native and longtime friend and consultant for the foundation, Russ also is a devoted jazz fan and advocate who has been manager and publicist for many artists over the years, including Claude "Fiddler" Williams, Benny Waters, Valerie Capers, Houston Person, Earl May, David "Fathead" Newman and the Statesmen of Jazz.

On our arrival Saturday, we checked into our rooms at the venerable Park Central Hotel near 57th and Seventh Avenue, and then headed to a nearby Italian restaurant to meet Russ. With his usual enthusiasm and encyclo-



Photo by Russ Dantzer

Kay Davis, Grace Sankey-Berman, Tom Ineck, Mary Jane Gruba and Tony Rager in New York at night

pedic

knowledge of the city, he later led us on a brisk walking tour through Mid-

Tomfoolery continued on page 14



Russ Dantzer and Tony Rager on the Staten Island Ferry with NYC skyline

Tomfoolery continued from page 13

town Manhattan to a former speakeasy for after-dinner drinks.

Russ shifted into high gear Sunday, herding the BMF party to the subway for a ride to the Staten Island Ferry. From there, despite overcast skies, we would get a decent view of the Statue of Liberty and the city skyline before returning to Lower Manhattan. We strolled through Battery Park and visited Trinity Church and St. Paul’s Chapel, which miraculously survived the collapse of the nearby World Trade Center towers in 2001. We maneuvered our way through the milling crowd on



Cafe Loup



Ron Affif, Santi Debriano and Bob Kindred at Cafe Loup

Wall Street, past the art deco Woolworth Building (closed to tourists), to our jazz brunch destination, Café Loup, at 105 W. 13th St.

We had chosen to dine here primarily because of the entertainment, saxophonist Bob Kindred with Ron Affif on guitar and Santi Debriano on bass. The only table left happened to be right in front of the bandstand! I forget what I had to eat because I was too busy listening to the music—which included dining-friendly renditions of “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes,” “I’ve Never Been in Love Before,” and “Moonlight Serenade.”

Between sets, Kindred visited our table to chat and extend his condolences on Butch’s death. The two had gotten to be pretty good friends during the years that the BMF covered the Topoka Jazz Festival, where Kindred was a regular. Kindred’s wife, the wonderful singer Anne Phillips, also was at Café Loup that day to listen to her husband and we had a chance to visit. Only in New York!

That evening, we attended “Rent” at the Nederlander Theatre, where it is scheduled to close Sept. 7 after an amazing 12-year run of some 5,000 performances. That will make it the seventh-longest-running Broadway show in history. Despite its undeniable financial success, I found it only slightly memorable. As they say, everyone’s a critic.

After that disappointing diversion, I was ready for more live jazz, so we made our way to Russ’s apartment to catch a bite to eat before the two-minute walk to Birdland. The Chico O’Farrill Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra was holding court, as it does every Sunday night when it isn’t on the road. Directed by pianist Arturo O’Farrill since his father’s death in 2001, the 19-piece band is a genuine Afro-Cuban powerhouse.

Among the tunes they played were “Mambo America,” “Cantina,” and “Pure Emotion,” the title track of a



Chico O’Farrill Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra at Birdland

Photos by Tom Ineck

1995 release. On this occasion, it was dedicated to Arturo’s mother, Lupe O’Farrill, who was sitting at the bar next to us. “Samba for Carmen” was dedicated to the memory of Carmen McRae,” and “Something to Smoke” was an aptly hot number.

On a sunny Monday morning, we ventured out on our own to Rockefeller Plaza for some shopping. As if to remind us again of spring’s arrival, tulips were in bloom everywhere and a work crew was removing the ice from the world-famous skating rink for another year. Heading north, we spent much of the afternoon strolling through Central Park, where the grass was a vibrant green, the trees and bushes were budding and the squirrels were feasting and fattening on hoarded nuts.

The next day, we were headed home. We had, indeed, made the most of our first springtime in New York.



Workers remove ice from the skating rink at Rockefeller Plaza.

Concert Review

NJO salutes Russ Long and Butch Berman

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—The salute to Russ Long that Butch Berman had been planning long before his death in January finally came to fruition May 23, when the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra and select Kansas City musicians performed Long's music for an audience of 230 at Embassy Suites. The concert also served as a memorial for both Berman and Long, who died Dec. 31, 2006.

The legendary Kansas City pianist and composer had had a long and productive relationship with the Berman Music Foundation, which had sponsored several live performances and two CDs by Long. That relationship again was acknowledged when the BMF agreed to bring KC musicians to Lincoln for this special tribute. On hand were bassist Gerald Spaits and drummer Ray DeMarchi, who for more than 20 years were the other two-thirds of Long's trio.

Also featured were pianist Roger Wilder and multi-reed virtuoso Charles Perkins.

Just for the occasion, six of Long's



Photos by Tom Ineck

The Nebraska Jazz Orchestra at May 23 season finale

tunes received big-band arrangements, three by Spaits and three by members of the NJO. The KC players performed additional tunes by Long during a small combo set. In all, eight of the 15 tunes included on the "Time to Go" CD were performed, plus the classic Long composition "Save That Time." High energy and friendly improvisational interplay were the keys to a sterling concert.

The NJO got things off to a rousing, rhythmic start with Neal Hefti's "Whirlybird," with Paul Haar taking the lead tenor role brilliantly. Throughout the two-hour concert, everyone performed at a very high level, including tenor saxophonist Andrew Janak, the 2008 NJO Young Jazz Artist. For his showcase, Janak chose three tunes by masters of his instrument, Wayne Shorter's "Witch Hunt," Sonny Rollins' "Tenor Madness" and Stanley Turrentine's "Sugar."

NJO trumpeter Bob Krueger joined Janak at the microphone, as guitarist Peter Bouffard doubled the melody line of the Shorter tune. The small group setting, with only the rhythm section accompanying Janak and Krueger, put the spotlight directly on the

*Gerald Spaits, Ray DeMarchi and Charles Perkins*

young saxophonist, who still is a senior at Gross Catholic High School in Omaha. He was powerful, confident and imaginative beyond his years on Rollins' challenging piece. Bouffard's arrangement of "Sugar" also included a tricky flugelhorn soli.

Appropriately, the Long tribute began with the title track of his final

Long tribute continued on page 16

*Andrew Janak and Bob Krueger*

Long tribute continued from page 15

CD, "Time to Go," released just weeks before his death. Perkins, taking the lead on alto sax, did justice to the tune in an arrangement by NJO saxophonist Mark Benson.

Delving into the ever-popular changes of "I Got Rhythm," the band launched into Bouffard's clever arrangement of "Meatloaf," with occasional quotes from other tunes known for their "Rhythm" changes—"The Flintstones" theme song, Rollins' "Oleo," and, of course, the Gershwin composition that started the whole thing. Superb solos came from Krueger on trumpet, Haar on tenor sax, Wilder on piano and Perkins on bass clarinet. "Parallel," a simple but beautiful series of chord changes with a new arrangement by Spaits, served as the break song at the end of the first set, allowing for some nice keyboard harmonies.

The KC rhythm section was joined by the NJO's Scott Anderson on trombone for the dreamy ballad "Serenade," again with Perkins on the rarely heard bass clarinet. Spaits took a wonderful solo reflecting the piece's gentle nature. Things went uptempo and Perkins switched to flute on "Shoemaker," a showcase for DeMarchi, who was all over the drum kit, switching from sticks to bare hands to mallets to brushes and back to sticks in a masterful, well-timed



Roger Wilder, Peter Bouffard, Gerald Spaits and Charles Perkins

display of his skills.

Back on alto sax, Perkins played the touching melody of Long's most famous tune, "Save That Time," which has been recorded by singers Joe Williams, Karrin Allyson and Kevin Mahogany. Even without lyrics, Perkins "sang" the standard through his horn.

The NJO returned for Spaits' arrangement of "Woodland Park," with Perkins taking the first solo statement on alto, followed by Todd Thatcher on trombone and Bouffard on guitar. Dave Sharp's arrangement of "I Don't Care Who" had Perkins stating the melody on flute and solos by Thatcher on trombone, Sharp on alto sax and Perkins.

Finally, the uptempo rendition of "Can City," arranged by Spaits, gave



Charles Perkins on alto sax

solo space to Krueger on trumpet and Bouffard on guitar before turning loose Perkins and Benson on dueling altos, trading fours with gusto and wit.

Several members of Long's family were in attendance, including his widow and others from the KC entourage. The Berman Music Foundation was well represented by many friends and associates and by Butch's widow, Grace Sankey-Berman. With such mutual respect, love and support for their memories and their achievements, it is no surprise that the spirits of Russ Long and Butch Berman also seemed to be present.



Roger Wilder, Gerald Spaits, Ray DeMarchi and Charles Perkins

Concert Review

Monty Alexander shifts gears at Folly concert

By Tom Ineck

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—Versatile pianist Monty Alexander has long taken sly pride in the fact that he can—and frequently does—shift stylistic gears without a moment's notice, leaving the listener dazzled and breathless.

He did it again May 10 in concert with his trio at the beautiful Folly Theater in Kansas City. Accompanied by longtime bassist Hassan Shakur and drummer George Fludas, Alexander ranged from the island rhythms of calypso, ska and reggae to the more traditionally American song forms of Broadway, blues, pop music, Ellington and the Great American Songbook.

Alexander positions the piano so that he can easily communicate visually with the others, and the three exhibit a telepathic degree musical interplay, signaling with a mere shrug or nod the difficult metric changes and the mind-boggling segues from tune to tune.

The pianist began with an unnamed calypso melody, quoted from Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm," then shifted to "Young at Heart," a tune associated with Frank Sinatra. He moved through a series of Broadway melodies with a whimsical wantonness, gliding from a stride piano style to blues funk before settling on "Fly Me to the Moon."

"Sweet Georgia Brown" was taken at a breakneck pace that set the stage for a dazzling drum solo by Fludas. The trio exhibited a true talent for jazz improvisation on another piece, which began as a bluesy gospel number. Fludas laid down a New Orleans-style drum roll, then into a straight blues shuffle. As they continued into the next tune, Shakur bowed the bass and Fludas switched to mallets for a moody introduction. But, not to be taken too seriously, Fludas played a funky bass solo



Monty Alexander shifts gears at Folly.

and quoted "These Boots are Made for Walkin'," perhaps another sly Sinatra reference.

In the second half, Alexander took up the hand-held melodica to begin "The Banana Boat Song," the Harry Belafonte hit. He soon switched to piano to segue into the Johnny Mandel ballad "Close Enough for Love." Alexander's own "Trust" began as a ballad, moved into a funky mid-tempo and segued into "Take the 'A' Train."

"Good Life," which Alexander recently recorded in a tribute to Tony Bennett, was taken at a breezy, swinging mid-tempo, just the way Bennett would have wanted it. From there, the pianist paid tribute to his own home country with Bob Marley's "No Woman, No Cry" and "Running Away," on which he sang the opening title phrase before turning to the keys.

Finishing with an uptempo blues, Alexander and company were imme-



Photos by John Nollendorfs



diately greeted with a standing ovation that brought them back for an extended encore, a medley of tunes associated with the American West or, as Alexander joked, "a tribute to Roy Rogers and Gene Autry." Beginning with "Happy Trails," the pianist even whinnied in equine delight, eventually playing familiar passages from "Ghost Riders in the Sky," "I'm an Old Cowhand" and "Home on the Range."

The trio's performance, which drew a large and enthusiastic crowd, was the last concert of the Folly's year. The 2008-2009 season begins next fall and is sure to showcase another stellar lineup.

Concert Review

Stefon Harris nonet achieves rare balance

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—In its synthesis of jazz and classical styles, the Stefon Harris nonet achieves a rare balance of technique, soul and improvisational skill.

That perfect music fusion was on display April 19 at the Lied Center for Performing Arts, as the vibraphonist and his eight colleagues performed a repertoire largely consisting of Duke Ellington compositions. Though first recorded and performed by the Ellington orchestra more than 40 years ago, the pieces sounded as fresh and timely as your morning newspaper.

In addition to Harris, pianist Xavier Davis, bassist Earl Travis, drummer Terreon Gully and trombonist Roland Barber, the ensemble included cello, viola, clarinet and flute, a foursome that is frequently used for its orchestral harmonic effect but is also capable off solo improvisation.

The opener, “Thanks for the Beautiful Land on the Delta,” was drawn from Ellington’s “New Orleans Suite.” Harris immediately revealed his virtuosity on combined vibraphone and marimba, sweeping across both instruments with ease and imagination. Barber contributed a soulful solo.

From “The Queen’s Suite,” Harris chose the beautiful “Sunset and the Mockingbird,” which was given a funky twist by Gully and Harris. The 21-year-old Travis delivered a very mature, imaginative and lyrical bass solo. Vibes, drums, bass and piano took up the tune and set up a solo for the clarinetist, who had a wonderful tone.

Rather than come to halt, the tune segued neatly into the Harris ballad “Memoirs of a Frozen Sum-

mer,” a haunting piece inspired by the vibraphonist’s early struggle between a career as a classical pianist and his desire to take

up the vibraphone and emulate the heroic jazz trailblazer Charlie Parker.

“African Tarantella,” the original title track from Harris’ most recent release, was a rhythmically swinging, upbeat and thoroughly danceable tune with Harris creating some bluesy lines on the vibes after a stunning piano solo by Davis. At times, Harris did, indeed, sound like the



Stefon Harris

Courtesy Photo

Charlie Parker of his instrument.

Gully performed an incredible drum interlude entitled “The Other Side of Silence,” leading into two more selections drawn from the “New Orleans Suite,” the rhapsodic “Bourbon Street Jangling Jollies,” and the intensely bluesy “Portrait of Wellman Braud,” which featured a plunger-muted trombone solo that moaned and growled. Harris played a marimba solo against a walking bass line with a hesitation phrasing that heightened the blues effect.

For an encore, the band returned to the stage sans strings for a rousing rendition of “Caravan.”

The only disappointment of the 90-minute performance was the fact that only 400 people were in attendance, an embarrassingly poor turnout for such a major artist.

BMF donates 200 CDs to Lincoln Schools

LINCOLN, Neb.—The Berman Music Foundation (BMF) recently donated 200 jazz CDs to Lincoln Public Schools to be used for music education in the city’s 10 middle schools.

The CDs are copies of the 2001 release “Never Let Me Go” by the Russ Long Trio of Kansas City, Mo., for which the BMF provided essential funding.

With this gift to Lincoln Public Schools, funding for the NJO concert, and support for this year’s Jazz in June concert series, the Berman Music Foun-

dation rededicates itself to the preservation and promotion of jazz music in Lincoln, despite the recent death of BMF founder Byron L. “Butch” Berman. Berman, 58, died Jan. 31 after a four-month struggle with brain cancer.

Since its inception in spring 1995, the BMF has sponsored dozens of jazz concerts throughout the Midwest. It has funded many recordings and maintains a local museum that includes a library containing thousands of music recordings, videos, books and magazines.

Concert Review

Trumpeter Wendholt shines with jazz orchestra

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—The bright and sunny music of Neal Hefti seemed perfectly apt for a bright and sunny Sunday afternoon April 20 concert by the Nebraska Jazz Orchestra. Hefti's Nebraska roots made it even more appropriate.

But it was special guest soloist Scott Wendholt—like Hefti, a trumpeter—that made the concert so magical. It was his second appearance in Lincoln this year, having visited in February as a member of the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra for a performance at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. This time, Wendholt was placed squarely in the spotlight.

The orchestra warmed up with the Hefti original "Splanky." Like many off the composer's best-known tunes, it was written for the Count Basie band in a suitably swinging style. The bluesy, but upbeat "Teddy the Toad," also ritten for Basie, featured the trombone section in the riffing style that was the Count's trademark.

Wendholt took the stage for the popular standard "Just Friends," quickly demonstrating his piercing tone, clean articulation and octave leaps at a quick tempo. He took a more straight-forward melodic stance for the ballad "Round Midnight," which was contrasted with unusual brass harmonies and an accelerating tempo in an arrangement by Ian McDougall. "A Night in Tunisia" was taken at a fast pace from the get-go and contained some bravura playing by the star trumpeter.

From the Thad Jones songbook came "Three and One," which Wendholt often performs with the Vanguard band. In its original arrangement, Wendholt's trumpet was paired with the baritone saxophone of Scott Vicroy for



Courtesy Photos

Scott Wendholt

a stirring rendition that also featured a saxophone section soli and some spirited give-and-take between the principals. Slowing things down for a return to the Hefti oeuvre, the orchestra brought out the venerable "Lil' Darlin'," a masterpiece of poise and easy-swinging grace that again showcased Wendholt's brilliance on trumpet.

Pianist Tom Harvill delivered a hard-swinging intro to an uptempo version of the standard "You Don't Know What Love Is," and Dave Sharp's edgy alto solo set the stage for another remarkable Wendholt statement. The closer was Hefti's bright and bouncy "Sure Thing," a simple riff with a distinct resemblance to the repetitive blues pattern of "Shake, Rattle and Roll." Paul Haar on tenor sax and Peter Bouffard on guitar delivered fine solos, followed by Wendholt, weaving dissonant trumpet lines through the brass harmonies and digging ever deeper into the blues.

Haar appeared earlier on the program as director of the University of

Nebraska-Lincoln Jazz Ensemble I, which performed three tunes before the NJO portion of the show. They began with Sonny Rollins' "Oleo," as arranged for the Maynard Ferguson big band. The old standard "Whispering" got a new lease on life with an intricate arrangement by Eric Richards, the new professor of composition at UNL. Finally, the wonderful Victor Lewis tune "Hey, It's Me You're Talkin' To" brought Wendholt to the stage to join the younger players in Dave Sharp arrangement.

The ensemble turned in exemplary performances, with plenty of energy, fiery ensemble playing and solo technique. Among the outstanding soloists were saxophonists Brandon Holloman, Gabriella Praetzel and Chris Steinke, trumpeter Paul Krueger, trombonist Tommy Van den Berg and guitarist Luke Polipnick. Their elders in the NJO may have to start practicing to meet the challenge of these young upstarts.

Surprisingly, the mid-afternoon concert drew about 250 people to the Embassy Suites ballroom on a spring-like day that might otherwise have found them laboring in their yards.

Jazz on Disc

James Carter reaffirms his status among the greats

By Tom Ineck



JAMES CARTER
Present Tense
EmArcy Records

The music of James Carter is characterized by a prodigious technique on all reed instruments, coupled with a hard bop edge, a bluesy attitude and a willingness to stretch beyond conventional jazz to create a truly exciting listening experience.

So it is with his latest release, “Present Tense,” an aptly named project that impresses from the get-go as an in-the-moment, no-holds-barred throw-down involving a very compatible group of like-minded musicians. Just listen to the opening track, Dave Burns’ “Rapid Shave,” and see what I mean. Carter blows a mean baritone sax while pianist D.D. Jackson roves and slams the keyboard in a style reminiscent of Don Pullen.

The tempo slows for the start of Carter’s “Bro. Dolphy,” but the music is as adventurous as ever, with the composer—on bass clarinet—paying tribute to the iconoclastic genius of the title. Trumpeter Dwight Adams enters with a fury as the tempo increases to a frenzied pace.

Django Reinhardt’s “Pour Que Ma Vie Demeure” gets a true ballad treatment, with Carter switching to soprano sax for a Sidney Bechet-style sound. A lovely bass solo by James

Genus and some understated piano work by Jackson is followed by a virtuosic solo by Carter, who eventually hits and holds a stratospheric note to the end. Guitarist Rodney Jones enters the fray for Carter’s “Sussa Nita,” which swings with a mid-tempo Latin feel. Carter, on tenor sax, employs his most burnished, full-bodied tone to give it the emotional thrust it requires.

The Victor Young standard “Song of Delilah” is turned into a funky tour de force pitting Carter on tenor sax against Adams’ trumpet as drummer Victor Lewis provides the essential rhythmic anchor and Jackson contributes his dazzling pianistics. Jackson states the introduction to the breezy “Dodo’s Bounce,” by Dodo Marmarosa. Carter on flute and Adams on Harmon-muted trumpet are delightful sparring partners on this whimsical number, with Lewis swinging lightly on brushes and occasional kick-drum punctuation. Jones delivers a lively guitar solo.

“Shadowy Sands,” by Jimmy Jones, exudes an exotic Latin rhythm, and Carter’s outrageous bass clarinet performance heightens the exotica with its deep, woody tones. Adams adds a crisply constructed flugelhorn solo as Lewis, percussionist Eli Fountain, Jackson and Genus urge him on. All the stops come out for Gigi Gryce’s classic “Hymn of the Orient,” taken at a furious tempo and featuring Carter wailing on baritone sax. Adams and Jackson also turn in dazzling solos before everyone trades fours with Lewis in a spectacular display of musicianship.

Carter’s “Bossa J.C.” lightens the proceedings somewhat with its

soulful tenor sax, acoustic guitar and assorted percussion instruments, but Lewis pours it on with his crackling drum work, and Adams on flugelhorn gives the tune an edge. Again on baritone, Carter caresses the harmonies on “Tenderly,” the familiar melody of which is stated on muted trumpet by Adams, who also gets a lengthy, well-deserved solo spot before the leader shows his stuff in a wide-ranging solo on the big horn.

With “Present Tense,” his first release in three years, James Carter reaffirms his status among the greatest jazz saxophonists of all time.



ED REED
The Song is You
Blue Shorts Records

From the opening salvo of the title track, we know that singer Ed Reed is not simply reprising his momentous debut recording of last year, a gorgeous collection of ballads called “Ed Reed Sings Love Stories.”

The performance is a powerful, joyous reading of the popular standard, with Russell George adding the unconventional sound of jazz violin to the tonal palette. In fact, George plays the introduction on the second track, a lush version of

Ellington's "It Shouldn't Happen to a Dream."

What is consistent with "Love Stories" is the prominent role of multi-talented, multi-instrumentalist Peck Allmond, featured on trumpet, tenor sax, flues, cornet and clarinet. The rest of Allmond's backing sextet includes guitarist Jamie Fox, pianist Gary Fisher, bassist Doug Weiss and drummer Willard Dyson.

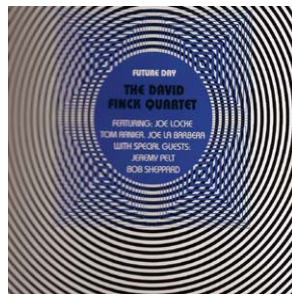
At nearly 80 years of age, Reed continues to amaze with his unique tone, broad range, near-perfect intonation and unusual phrasing. The 13 tracks vary greatly in tempo, length and style, but Reed maintains a confident attitude.

"Where or When" lightly swings in mid-tempo for nine minutes. Reed duets beautifully with Fox's guitar accompaniment on the brief "I'm Through With Love." Ellington's "All Too Soon" gets a relaxed treatment highlighted by brief statements from Allmond on tenor sax, George on violin, Fox on guitar and Fisher on piano.

Reed returns frequently to his forte—the romantic ballad—with "I Get Along Without You Very Well," "Don't Like Goodbyes," and "It Never Entered My Mind." In all, the Ellington songbook yields four tunes here, including "I Didn't Know About You" and "Don't You Know I Care," where the singer stretches the phrases caressingly to a mellow Latin rhythm.

Considering his new-found fame, Reed seems to state the obvious with an ebullient take on "Lucky to be Me" and the philosophical reflection of "Here's to Life."

With nearly 70 minutes worth of music, "The Song Is You" is a generous sampling of Ed Reed. With two recordings in two years, the San Francisco-based septuagenarian seems to be making up for lost time.



DAVID FINCK QUARTET
Future Day
Soundbrush Records

It's hard to believe that "Future Day" is bassist David Finck's debut recording as a leader. Stretching back nearly 30 years, he has been the bass player of choice for the likes of Mark Murphy, Rosemary Clooney, Phil Woods, Eddie Daniels, Paquito D'Rivera, Claudio Roditi, Harry Connick Jr., Sheila Jordan, Natalie Cole, Gladys Knight, Rod Stewart and dozens of others in the jazz and pop world.

It's about time, and Finck makes the most of it. For "Future Day," he has chosen a stellar lineup that includes the prolific and immensely talented vibraphonist Joe Locke, pianist Tom Ranier, and drummer Joe La Barbera, with additional support from special guests Jeremy Pelt on trumpet and Bob Sheppard on saxophones.

All four of the principals contribute compositions, making this a pretty democratic affair. Ranier's hip, brooding "I Know" opens the project and demonstrates how well this quartet works together, especially the unique harmonizing between piano and vibes.

Finck's "New Valley" is a breezy jazz waltz with some brilliant bass interpolations and a brief, but lyrical solo by the composer. The evergreen "Nature Boy" gets a new coat of paint in 5/4 time.

Pelt and Sheppard lock in with Locke on the melody of the hard-charging, flag-waver "Four Flags." Pelt takes the first solo, followed by Locke and Sheppard, before the tune comes to an abrupt stop after less than three minutes.

Roger Davidson's "Ballad for a Future Day" is the stunning centerpiece, with its gorgeous chord changes, the quartet's sensitive interplay, and Finck's absolutely beautiful bowed bass solo.

Wayne Shorter's "Black Eyes" again provides a vehicle for the piano-vibes harmonies and, especially for Ranier's imaginative and confident playing. Pelt on muted horn and Sheppard on soprano sax return for Finck's clever stop-time Latin swinger "Look at You." Always a heart-renderer, "For All We Know" is taken at a very slow ballad tempo, which Locke expertly caresses with long vibrato-rich lines before passing it to Ranier for a tender solo.

The drummer's contribution is a lilting little number called "If Not For You." After Locke states the theme, Finck digs in with a note-perfect solo, followed by solos by Locke and Ranier and some very nifty drum breaks. Locke's "Appointment in Orvieto" is a rhythmically and harmonically challenging tune that the composer sails through with aplomb as the tempo accelerates. In fact, the whole band seems inspired here.

Ranier also penned the lightly swinging "Transparency," with La Barbera showing his skill on brushes. The uptempo Cedar Walton tune "Firm Roots" closes the set with gusto.

With "Future Day," the David Finck Quartet is deserving of an encore.

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Jazz on CD continued from page 21



DELIRIUM BLUES PROJECT
Serve or Suffer
Half Note Records

Delirium Blues Project is the brainchild of pianist Kenny Werner and singer Roseanna Vitro. Once you get past the gimmicky concept, this live recording has real merit. While not a straight jazz recording, it does contain some exciting performances by jazz masters of their instruments, including trumpeter Randy Brecker, tenor saxophonist James Carter, trombonist Ray Anderson, bassist John Patitucci and guitarist Adam Rogers, plus the lesser-known but equally capable Geoff Countryman on baritone sax and Rocky Bryant on drums.

Recorded at the Blue Note in New York in August 2007, “Serve or Suffer” is a bluesy session featuring an interesting mixture of pop and soul material with innovative Werner arrangements and heartfelt playing. The listener gets a good idea of what he’s in for with the opener, a new take on the old Tower of Power classic “What Is Hip?” that derives from the fusion influences of Miles Davis, Weather Report and Return to Forever, with a smoking solo by Rogers.

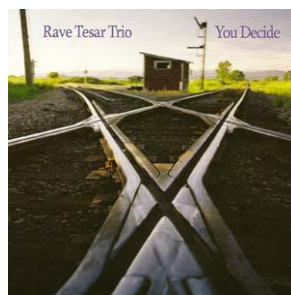
Vitro deserves kudos for her choice of the obscure, but wonderful “Goodnight Nelda Grebe, the Telephone Company Has Cut Us Off,” from the 1968 release “Living with the Animals,” by the eclectic rock band Mother Earth, fronted by singer Tracy Nelson. The original lasts less than three minutes, but here stretches beyond nine minutes,

with pumping horns, rock-solid rhythm and Vitro’s soulful vocalizing. “Blue” receives a lush, romantic take, with smoky nightclub piano and a very hip, moaning tenor solo by Carter.

Joni Mitchell gets her due when Vitro pays tribute with “Be Cool.” Rogers rips off another hot solo, this time sounding a bit like Larry Carlton. Another well-deserving tune is “Half Moon,” best known for Janis Joplin’s early ‘70s version. Here it is a showcase for the horn section and Vitro’s smoldering delivery, much more restrained than Joplin’s wail.

“Cheater Man” is Vitro at her bluesiest, and the horns delve again into the punchy Tower of Power sound. Mose Allison’s “Everybody’s Cryin’ Mercy,” one of the great indictments of hypocrisy, gets another worthy interpretation, and Anderson’s mournful, plunger-muted solo is the highlight.

The music is so much fun that Werner and Vitro can be forgiven the pretensions of “Serve or Suffer,” which include comic-book artwork, blurbs promising “True Thrills!,” “Madly Popular!” and “Fearless Musicians!” and a statement that all the music was “conjured live at the Blue Note.” The music is its own justification and doesn’t require hype.



RAVE TESAR TRIO
You Decide
Tesar Music

Even after nearly 40 years listening to jazz and more than 20 years writing about it, I still get an occasional thrill when a fabulous new

artist hits the scene. Pianist Rave Tesar is the latest favorite, and his debut as a leader is a gem. The fact that “You Decide” is on Tesar’s own label and features his brother Bill on drums adds to the intrigue. Who is this guy?

Tesar’s compositions and keyboard style come from the vastly influential Bill Evans school, but with more modern harmonic and rhythmic excursions. The result is a set of 10 beautifully realized pieces of clever construction (“The Scale Song”), tenderness (“Minor Mood”), and dazzling technique (“Have Some More”).

The title track is a brooding, mysterious eight-minute exploration of chord changes and harmony. “The Vision” is a driving, rambunctious tune, while “Everyone But Me” lilts along in witty, care-free fashion. “Nobody’s at Nobody’s” struts in a soulful mood, reminiscent of Bobby Timmons or Les McCann and features a wonderful solo statement by bassist Kermit Driscoll. “Someone Else’s Spell” is, indeed, a spell-binding, impressionistic foray that begs comparison with the best of Keith Jarrett.

Rave and brother Bill work together well on the Latin romp “Midas,” and “Helium,” the finale, is an uptempo workout for the entire trio, again displaying their sure sense of three-way interplay.

Throughout the recording, Driscoll, who has recorded with such innovative jazz artists as Bill Frisell, John Zorn, Wayne Horvitz and Henry Kaiser, adds an improvisational edge that acts as the glue that binds the Tesars together.

By the way, a little research reveals that Tesar is a New York-based pianist, composer, recording engineer and producer who has been active in the pop and jazz worlds since the early 1980s, one

who obviously has not gotten the recording opportunities as a leader that he deserves. Brother Bill Tesar has performed with Angela Boffill, Bob Berg and Mark Feldman.

I've already decided. Rave Tesar's debut recording is a joy to listen to. But don't believe me. Track down the CD, buy it and "You Decide."



RAYA YARBROUGH
Raya Yarbrough
Telarc Records

My first impression of Raya Yarbrough was that, at best, her vocal style is an acquired taste that I hadn't yet acquired. At worst, I thought, the Southern California-based singer is just another mediocre talent hoping for the kind of instant crossover stardom that Norah Jones achieved with her recording debut in 2002.

After half a dozen listens, however, I'm convinced that Yarbrough's self-titled, major label debut is the real deal and that she is a genuinely gifted songstress with a unique approach to the music. Like Jones, she has a lovely voice, mixes genres and writes and arranges much of her music and lyrics (she penned eight of the 12 tracks here). But she also appreciates the standards without slavishly adhering to the "acceptable" ways of interpreting them.

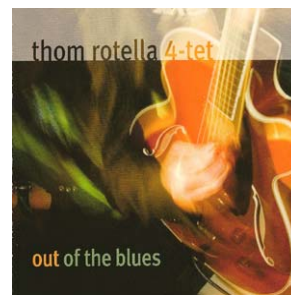
"Lord Knows I Would" is a soulful opener with a gospel tinge and folk instrumentation, and "Your

So Bad for Me" employs a reggae beat. Yarbrough's rendition of "Joy Spring" breaks the mold as she whispers the lyrics to a moody rock beat before a string section and electric guitar enter the picture. The result is a fascinating new look at an old evergreen.

"Dreamer's Ball" is a somewhat understated acoustic blues, with Takeshi Akimoto on rhythm guitar. A gospel choir enhances the traditional sound and Akimoto cuts loose with a nifty solo. All the while, Yarbrough and the harmony voices interact with satisfying results. "Sorrow's Eyes" is a jazz waltz with the Yarbrough lyric, "If it holds true that love's eyes are blind, sorrow's eyes are wide open. If your lonely eyes are open, hold me in your sight for awhile."

First-time listeners may not immediately identify Yarbrough's imaginative take on "Mood Indigo," with her voice initially accompanied by bass only. It soon becomes apparent as the rest of the band chimes in. The sole remaining standard, "Early Autumn," gets a more conventional, if mournful, reading from Yarbrough, and she is backed by a string quartet that gives the performance the feel of a classical tone poem.

"Hollywood Love" is a dreamy Latin number, with subtle horns and percussion setting the mood as Yarbrough's voice soars above. The singer shows her considerable skill at the piano on "'Round We Go," which has an irresistible rumba beat. "Vice and Vanity" also utilizes a Latin rhythm, but the music is less interesting. The closer, "Better Days," is a cleverly constructed tune with rapid-fire lyrics and a hip-hop attitude, but the chorus is strangely appealing.



THOM ROTELLA
Out of the Blues
Four Bar Music

Too many of guitarist Thom Rotella's previous recordings left me cold with their light-weight, so-called "smooth" jazz sound, so "Out of the Blues" came as a pleasant surprise. For this 2007 release, he largely eschews the forgettable melodies and lackluster performance for a set of standards and bluesy Rotella originals played with a sense of urgency, and the result is very hip and very enjoyable.

It doesn't hurt that the guitarist has gathered around him a group of very capable players—pianists Llew Matthews and Rich Eames, bassist Luther Hughes and legendary bop drummer Roy McCurdy. They perfectly complement his Wes Montgomery-style fretwork.

The Montgomery influence is evident from the outset, Rotella's swinger "Who Dat?" where he employs the familiar octave chords to great effect. The blues and the word-play continue on "Bluze 4 Youze," a more conventional blues shuffle with nice keyboard comping by Matthews. Hughes, best known for his long tenure with bluesy jazz pianist Gene Harris, provides a solid walking bass line and takes a tasty solo.

"My Foolish Heart" is one of three standards included, and it gets the ultra-romantic treatment, with long and lush lines at a very relaxed tempo. Rotella and Matthews trade solos,

Jazz on Disc continued on page 24

Jazz on Disc continued from page 23

while Hughes and McCurdy, on brushes, assist with admirable skill and sensitivity. "The Dr. Is In" returns to the bluesy Montgomery references at a quicker tempo, and "Never Say Goodbye" evokes a dreamy Latin world with excellent mallet work by McCurdy and Rotella's languorous, single-note lines and alternating chords.

Jerome Kern's timeless "The Way You Look Tonight," is taken at a

medium tempo that emphasizes the tune's gorgeous melody and danceable waltz tempo. While Rotella and Eames trip the light fantastic, Hughes and McCurdy shine in their essential supporting roles, especially McCurdy in his brilliantly brush-stroked solo. The band briefly switches to a lilting Latin beat for "All Ways," then returns to more familiar ground on the swinging standard "I Hear a Rhapsody," which features a passage of four-bar breaks that display the quartet's compatibility.

"Shimmer" is a lush ballad by Rotella that reflects the dappled sunlight-on-water imagery of its title. The guitarist sets the mood, and Eames delivers a similarly shimmering solo. The bouncy Latin closer, "Be Here Now," contains some unusual chord changes that resolve into a fairly conventional melody.

Here's hoping that Rotella continues to pursue the true jazz muse, such as he does on "Out of the Blues."

Concert Review

Brecker shows wit at April Fools' Day concert

By Tom Ineck

LINCOLN, Neb.—It was no joke when renowned jazz trumpeter Randy Brecker performed at an April Fools' Day concert at Lincoln Southeast High School.

Brecker, however, did display a sense of humor in his choice of repertoire and in his good-natured rapport with the much younger players who shared the auditorium stage with this master technician.

The evening began with a three-piece set by the Lincoln Southeast Jazz Ensemble I, under the direction of Bob Krueger.

"Skyhawk," by Fred Sturm, was followed by the Victor Young standard "Beautiful Love," featuring the director's son Tommy Krueger on flugelhorn. Brecker made his first appearance fronting the high school band on the clever "Southeast Six Step," a syncopated piece by Eric Richards that had band members clapping in time. Brecker deftly

pinched off the notes in his imaginative trumpet solo.

Next up was the University of

bass and guitar, and Brecker's ballad "Incidentally" was a showcase for his wonderful trumpet playing, including a final breath-taking cadenza.

The trumpeter effortlessly played double- and triple-time and hit sustained high notes on the samba "Tijuca." Brecker soared on his composition "Shanghigh" from his 2003 release "34th N Lex." The band finished with a rousing rendition of "Some Skunk Funk," a classic of the funk fusion genre first recorded by brothers Randy and Michael Brecker in 1975. UNO saxophone

professor Darren Pettit took the sax part.

With the death of his younger brother in January 2007, Randy Brecker still carries high the torch of jazz-funk fusion. This stylistic amalgamation will, no doubt, continue to make his music both exciting and relevant for many years to come.



Randy Brecker

Courtesy Photo

Nebraska-Omaha Jazz Ensemble I, directed by Peter Madsen, kicking things off with "A Little Minor Booze," a bluesy number in a minor key. With 1995's "The Sleaze Factor," composer Brecker directed his ire at a former record company. He played the tune with especially funky, nasty verve. The Tim Hagans composition "Boo" paired two trumpets with baritone sax,

Memorial

Understanding the sweet mystery of life

By Ruth Thone

“Ah, sweet mystery of life,” some wise man wrote. I suspect that “sweet mystery” is about death.

Surely I would be helped, or at least able to lighten up, if I simply considered death and dying a mystery, instead of intermittently felled by that fact of existence.

We all know, do we not, that all lives end in death, that fair price for the beauty and tragedy of living.

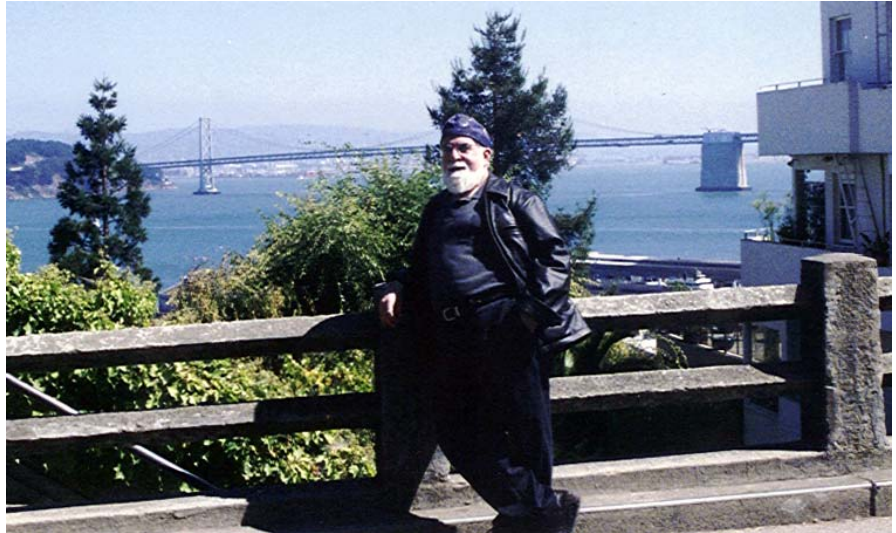
What I don’t get is why it’s so hard, why each new death in our short and sweet existence feels like an unimaginable wound.

A good friend left us, as we sometimes say, this winter after an accurate death sentence of four months, due to a malignant, inoperable brain tumor. He chose to live life cheerfully at the end—telling me that “being positive is hard work,” to which I agreed, telling him that I don’t even try.

A few of his friends, including me, knew of the four-month diagnosis but he did not want to talk about it endlessly or have to console his grieving friends during his last few months. Even so, I was shocked at his death, thrown into startling and uncomfortable grief.

One of the operating systems we all have in our characters is that of denial. Mine had certainly kicked into high gear as he and I visited once a week in the office of our friend and massage therapist, and at lunch with the four of us, old friend and his lovely wife, and therapist and myself. We’d been meeting for a Monday noon lunch a few times a year for several years.

My massage therapist friend called to tell me our friend had died the night before, so I’d not be more shocked to walk into my weekly appointment, to discover that he was no longer with us.



File Photo

Butch Berman in 2005 visiting San Francisco, one of his favorite cities.

Still, I have struggled with his death. Now I think of bidding farewell to him and his wife as we parted after lunch that day less than three weeks before he died. Never once did I think that would be the last time I would see him.

Another old friend tells of sitting at her dying unconscious father’s bedside, reading the “Tibetan Book of the Dead.” Another lent me her copy of “Good Life Good Death,” written by her Buddhist teacher Gelek Rinpoche.

My childhood Christian Science told me that “Sin, sickness, disease and death are unreal.” I know our old friend, in an African tradition, will be with us as long as the last person to know him is alive.

What I discover each day is the



Courtesy Photo

Ruth Thone

blank place he used to occupy, that vital, vibrant, joyously alive man.

My old friend existed with his beloved wife, Grace, in the world of his obsessions, as we all do, and that off loving friends, and richly in his enormous and generous devotion to jazz music.

I hate to whine; we all face death, lots of it as we age, and meet our friends at funerals. Maybe this death was just the tipping point for me, after a year of many losses.

Maybe struggling with loss and grief is simply what we are required to experience in exchange for the gift of life.

Editor’s Note: Ruth Thone, author of “Women and Aging, Celebrating Ourselves,” “FAT: A Fate Worse than Death,” “Women, Weight and Appearances,” and “Being Home,” can be reached at ruththone@msn.com. This article first appeared in the March 22 edition of *Neighborhood Extra*. It is reprinted here with the author’s permission.

*Letters to the Editor***Friends, fans and musicians send respects****Guitarist's music to be in upcoming film, thanks to Butch Berman CD review**

Dear Mr. Tom Ineck:

I just wanted send my condolences to the Berman family at Butch Berman's passing. He was very kind to me in reviewing my CD "Fearless Shores" back in 2004. Thanks in part to him and yourself, seven of the songs have been acquired and mechanical licensing agreements signed with GAG Order Films for the premier of their release "The Lawn Boy" and will be screening at the Hollywood Black Film Festival, June 5, 2008. Laemmle Music Hall 3, 9036 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills, Calif., at 7 p.m.

Thanks again for you review at the Berman Music Foundation and all the great work you do.

Respectfully,

*Richard Hart
Innervision Records
Jazz Guitarist*

Celebration of life keeps the music and memories alive

Tom,

What a fabulous celebration for a truly wonderful man. Bravo to you and everybody that made it possible. Best regards.

Peace,

*Don Holmquist
Lincoln, Neb.*

Editor's Note: Don Holmquist is the drummer and singer for The Cronin Brothers, the last band Butch Berman was in. The surviving members performed at the March 23 celebration of life.

Celebration of life keeps Butch's vision alive

To all who planned the Celebration of Life event,

What a grand celebration to honor the life of Butch Berman. Fabulous music, amazing people and great food. Thank you for continuing to keep his vision alive.

Sincerely,

*Marthaellen Florence
Chair of Jazz in June
Lincoln, Neb.*

"When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break their bonds; your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great, and wonderful world."

-- Patanjali

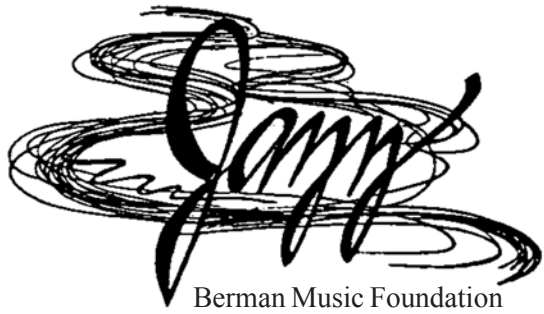
Editor's Note: The 2008 Jazz in June concert series is dedicated to Butch Berman.

Kansas City singer sends thanks for inclusion in celebration of life

Thank you, I had a terrific time.

*David Basse
Kansas City, Mo.
www.citylightentertainment.com*

Editor's Note: At the Celebration of Life, David Basse performed the classic farewell ballad, "I'll Be Seeing You," the blues tune "The Eagle Flies on Friday," and Cole Porter's "I Love You."



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From the Archives

**Butch is artistic director
 of 2005 Topeka Jazz Fest**



Photo by Dawn DeBlaze

After seven years (1998-2004), the Topeka Jazz Festival was struggling financially. Butch Berman was named artistic director of the 2005 festival, which featured Norman Hedman (left) and his band Tropique, who have had a long relationship with the Berman Music Foundation. As it turned out, nothing could save the Topeka festival and it folded after the eighth year. On the right is Rich Hoover, BMF photographer and close friend of Butch's.

How can you help the foundation?

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