

# THE CAT'S MEOW



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## **It's Jim Hall's Turn**

**Lourie Center at Maxcy Gregg Park (just off Pickens near Blossom)  
2:30-5:00 pm, Sunday, November 3, 2019**

### **Remember - Daylight Savings Time ends today**

I asked Jim to tell me about his favorite musician and he replied, “it’s impossible to pick one favorite musician” (a point well taken). But Jim’s list of musicians he liked, was a surprise to me because it didn’t include famous drummers like Max Roach, Gene Krupa or pioneers like Zutty Singleton.

Instead, he named the Bob Mintzer Big Band, (a group I’d never heard of). Later on, Bob joined a quartet called the Yellow Jackets. If you are interested, you can find Mintzer on “You Tube” demonstrating what a tenor can do and discussing his musical philosophy. Then, if you like what you hear, he has lots of CD’s for sale).

Jim added that he had always been a big fan of Chick Corea and Chick led him to the drummer, Steve Gadd (again a name I’m not familiar with). Understandable perhaps because my heart has always been with the early pioneers of jazz. But I have an excuse. When I was a teen, during the height of the big band era, there was no internet or social media. To discover new musicians, I had to search through record covers in the store and then listen those who seemed interesting in a small booth. That’s how I discovered most of the musicians whose records I bought on my limited teen-age budget.

But getting back on subject, Jim had a chance to play concerts with a lot of well known musicians and to play TV & Radio Shows hosted by big names like Bob Hope, Red Skelton, Rich Little (and Barbara Eden??? – remember “I dream of Jeannie”). That last name was a surprise but when I googled “Barbara Eden”, I discovered that she was a singer when she first started out.

**THE CAROLINA JAZZ SOCIETY** was founded in 1958 to enjoy Dixieland Jazz, one of America's original art forms.  
Concerts are \$10 for non-members, \$5 for members, free for Patrons and young people under 18.

## **Jim Hall, Drummer Man**

Jim says that being hired to back Billy Eckstine was a big highlight for him (Eckstine was my college room-mate's favorite singer but there were a lot of singers well above Eckstine on my list of favorites).

Drums are seldom a student's first instrument and Jim was no exception. Jim started on the Ukulele, a present from his parents. But he quickly switched to guitar (maybe after listening to Tiny Tim's recordings???). Then, he switched to drums at North Texas State.

I asked Jim about venues and Jim told me about a concert with Dick's Quintet on an outdoor stage in South America. The stage had a thatched roof but that roof leaked like crazy during the concert (the life of a musician can have unexpected hardships).

But I was thinking in terms of acoustics when I asked about venues. I've always disliked lots of reverb, whether electronic reverb or reverb from the concert hall acoustics. I'd gone to concerts where the acoustics were poor. And in my naivety, I had assumed that an outdoor concert would be ideal. But that was not what I experienced at my first big outdoor concert. And upon reflection, my physics studies showed why. High frequencies lose energy quickly as these sound wave travel away from the source. But low frequencies carry for long distances. That's why in big tents with huge speakers, if you sit up front, the screech of high frequencies will dominate. And in the back you'll hear the boom of the bass (I learned to look for the sound man and sit behind him). These details are one of the reasons that concert hall acoustics are such an inexact science and why there are big arguments about the "best concert halls".

I picked up some other acoustical tidbits from a delightful prof at Penn State who, for lack of space, was given a desk next to mine in our large lab.

One of his instruments was a pistol loaded with blanks. He would set up mikes around a new concert hall and fire his pistol. After listening to the recordings from the various mikes, he would add sound absorbing material to some areas and sound reflectors to others.

And the shape of the room can have a big effect. Elliptical rooms have two special spots. If you stand at one spot and whisper, the sound can be heard clearly by someone standing at the other spot but not elsewhere in the room.

But when it all comes together and great musicians are playing together, the associated hardships can melt into the ground (at least that's my take as a non musician).

Red Smith, editor