

THE CAT'S MEOW



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Reggie Sullivan on Tap

Capital Senior Center at Maxcy Gregg Park (just off Pickens near Blossom)
2:30-5:00 pm Sunday, February 10, 2013

We missed Reggie last month but Jimmy Gibson, another graduate of the USC jazz program, filled in on short notice – very short notice actually. When Reggie couldn't make the gig, Dick gave his wife, Winifred, the task of tracking Jimmy down (he was at the laundromat). Jimmy hustled to get his bass and get here in record time. **Thanks Jimmy!** And he did an admirable job. What's more, the interplay between Dan and Jimmy was great fun.

That reminds me of another laundromat story, involving Kenny Davern, a guest here many years ago. Kenny and his girlfriend had gotten into a big argument about something. Finally she said, "I've got laundry to do and I'm going to the Laundromat". She was washing clothes when Kenny rode up on his bicycle, walked in, bowed, handed her a big red rose and walked out without saying a word. The other ladies said, almost in a chorus, "What was that all about?"

Kenny played clarinet and soprano for a while but eventually decided that the soprano was affecting his clarinet tone and went back exclusively to the clarinet. He and Bob Wilber (a protégé of Sidney Bichet) got together at Dick Gibson's Colorado Jazz Party and enjoyed playing together so much that they teamed up on several CD's, including "Soprano Summit". They had either Bucky Pizzarelli or Marty Grosz on guitar and Dick Hyman on piano. It isn't Dixieland but it is fine jazz. Kenny's goal was to be recognized after two or three bars and I think he achieved that. He had a distinctive tone and style that I enjoyed.

Kenny & Tommy

Kenny had the best high register tone of any clarinetist I've ever heard, always standing well back from the mike. But that projection (I think) helped give him that distinctive tone. On the other hand, Tommy Wix used the mike to great effect. He had a gorgeous low register tone and used the mike to project it all over the room.

In my opinion, Tommy made better use of the mike than any other clarinetist. And Tommy could have had a nationally reputation. He was touring with "Wee Bonnie Baker" (wee because she was 4'11" – and she had a hit with "Oh Johnny Oh") when he got a telegram from his father saying, "Come home! I've got you a job with railway express". Tommy came back because he was always interested in two things; someplace to play with a good bunch of guys and having a good time (remember "The Sheik of Araby"). Tommy would add the refrain "without no pants on" to each line. Wherever, he was, Tommy had a good time and was irrepressible. But he never let that interfere with his clarinet playing.

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Concerts are \$10 for non-members, \$5 for members, free for Patrons and young people under 18.

Of course, every jazz musician wants to be recognized by their own distinctive style and we have a great trumpet player in our band with a very distinctive style. It doesn't hurt that he can also sing and play bass & piano. Some people just seem to be born with a surplus of talent. But I suspect there's been a lot of practice behind the seeming ease with which he plays.

I got an email from Dan Levinson after the concert saying how much he enjoyed the gig. He added that he had gotten a nice email from Doug (We have great musicians who are also really nice guys). I've said it before but it bears repeating, "being a great musician and being a nice guy doesn't always come in the same package". We are really lucky to have both.

By having a special guest, we got added publicity, new people in the audience and it's fun for our musicians too. I would like to bring in Bria Skonberg but never got a chance to talk with her at the NC Jazz Festival. If you've not heard or seen her, she is a very pretty young lady who can really blow a trumpet and does a good job of singing too. As is true for almost all professionals these days, she does a variety of styles. But she plays a great traditional jazz trumpet because that's what she started with. She grew up in British Columbia and played in an all girl group called "Mighty Aphrodite". And here's a link to Mighty Aphrodite doing a fine version of "Some of Those Days", www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWHjZxhskhE. You can find out more about Bria at her website www.briaskonberg.com/.

Getting publicity in traditional media is getting harder and harder but bringing a young pretty woman who can really play the trumpet would make it easier. But it does cost extra money to get really good outside musicians here. Let us know what you think.

Red Smith, Editor

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