

MARINI

Marin's
JAZZ
History



Wellness 
2023

FEBRUARY 2023

FEBRUARY 2023

CONTENTS

JAZZ

**32 A HISTORY
OF BLACK
AMERICAN
MUSIC IN
MARIN**

FEATURES

32

Jazz in Marin

Did you know that Duke Ellington spent some time playing in Marin? Learn about our county's unique jazz history.

38

Pickleball

Kirsten Jones Neff first reported on this "new trend" back in 2017. Six years later, she updates us on this popular sport that has caught the world's attention.

42

Shortcuts to Longevity

The latest in healthy living life hacks.



BY OWEN CLAPP

JAZZ

**A HISTORY OF BLACK
AMERICAN MUSIC IN MARIN**

IN THE 1960S AND '70S

especially, Marin County had a thriving music scene that featured international and local artists alike. Marin's rock and roll history is better known, with some of its famous practitioners still actively performing today. But Black American Music (BAM) — more commonly known as jazz — in Marin is a lesser-known, yet rich part of the history of arts in this county.

Historians of this music have identified some early instances of jazz performance in the Barbary Coast neighborhood of in San Francisco as early as the 1900s. This includes what Stanford University historians seem to have identified as one of the earliest uses of “jazz” in a group's name: Sid Le Protti's So Different Jazz Band, which played at Purcell's Cafe at 520 Pacific Street in the 1910s. Before that, Will Johnson's Creole Jazz Band performed in San Francisco in 1907. To put this into perspective, Louis Armstrong's rise to stardom came from his work in Chicago with King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, which was formed in 1922.

THE PAST

As a weekend escape from San Francisco and Oakland, Marin County had an early reputation as — believe it or not — a party town. Some of the Bay Area's favorite spots for dancing and revelry included Larkspur's former Rose Bowl, Fairfax's Pavilion and picnic grounds, and the San Geronimo Valley's dance halls. These locations were made easily accessible in 1875 with the completion of the North Pacific Coast Railroad, which connected visitors from San Francisco and the East Bay with train stations in South, Central, and West Marin via a ferry to Sausalito (there was also a ferry to Point San Quentin, and a train to San Rafael from there.) The completion of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1933 ushered in a new era in Marin's suburbanization, but the early days of train travel could lead to rowdy events.

Case in point — the opening party at the Fairfax Pavilion in May 1921 brought residents and visitors to hear the jazz band of Art Hickman, who was brought out from San Francisco for the occasion. Hickman's group was a big band, a format popular at this time, and included “New Orleans-style” instrumentation substituting the sousaphone/tuba for an upright bass. Another major group that visited the Pavilion early on was the Original Dixieland Jazz Band in November 1922. This was one of the country's most popular jazz groups at this time, and if the promotional advertisement is any indication, music lasted into the morning. Since these first shows, the Fairfax Pavilion has hosted hundreds of concerts in its 100-plus years of existence — jazz in its early days, and rock and roll (Sons of Champlin, Janis Joplin, Grateful Dead, to name a few) in the second half of its life.

Moving southwards, Marin City was the hometown of the late great jazz fusion keyboardist George Duke. He lived in the Golden Gate Village apartment complex when he signed a contract to perform at The Trident, a renowned club in Sausalito, at 19 years

old. Duke was born in January 1946 in San Rafael but grew up in Marin City and attended Tamalpais High School. He played music in church at First Missionary Baptist Church, which still operates today at 501 Drake Avenue in Marin City. Duke studied trombone and double bass at San Francisco State University, but went on to play keyboard for Frank Zappa, and to win two Grammy Awards accompanying jazz vocalist Diane Reeves.

Just south of Marin City, The Trident in Sausalito was earlier known as The Yacht Dock and was a strictly jazz venue — and a unique one at that. Boaters could dock their yachts on the bay side of the restaurant and disembark to enjoy music in the venerable room. Later, after the name changed to The Trident, some of the United States' preeminent jazz musicians cut live records in the



Harold Jones



The Arts

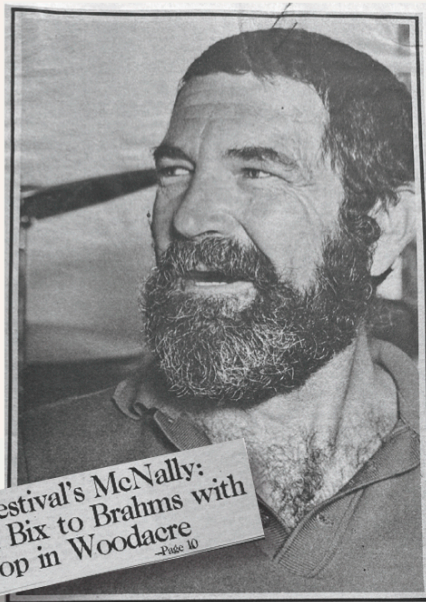
Whether your forte be the theatre, literature, art or music, **The Marin Guide** offers this column to you, its readers. We invite your news and views. Address all releases to Art Editor, P.O. Box 127, Sausalito.

'Jazz on the Mountain'

Duke Ellington and his orchestra will headline The Athenium's third annual "Jazz on the Mountain" concert Sunday, August 28 at 3 p.m. in the Mt. Tamalpais amphitheatre. The concert will include the first public performance of the Athenium Jazz Quartet, headed by Jerry Olds. The Athenium, a regional arts foundation, gives direct assistance to individual artists.

FAIRFAX PAVILION OPENING MAY 28

FAIRFAX, May 18.—G. F. Bidwell, chairman of the board of trustees in charge of the new Fairfax park and day that through the courtesy of the management of the St. Francis Hotel, Art Hickman and his rose room orchestra had been secured for the formal opening Saturday night, May 28.



Inverness Festival's McNally:
From Bix to Brahms with
A Long Stop in Woodacre
—Page 10

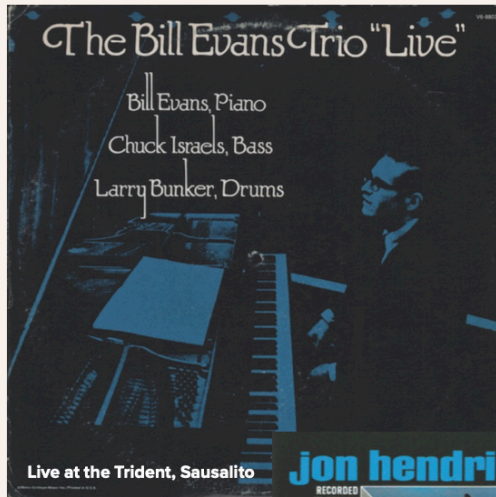
MASKED CARNIVAL BALL

SOL. WEISSMAN PRESENTS
Original Dixieland Jazz Band
Music that will make your feet wink
Nine colored artists with Tom Henderson (himself) famous musician clarinetist. — Played two years at Ziegfeld Follies Roof Garden, and Waldorf Astoria Gold Room, N.Y. You've heard them on your phonograph. You can hear them in person.
FAIRFAX PAVILION, Fairfax. SAT. NIGHT. NOV. 18
DANCING FROM 8 P. M. UNTIL MORNING

THE TRIDENT
SAUSALITO, CALIFORNIA
September 5, 1965
REFER TO BE ATTACHED TO AND MAKE PART OF CONTRACT TO BE FILLED BETWEEN GEORGE DUKE AND THE TRIDENT RESTAURANT/THOSE WHO KNOW AS EMPLOYER.
Employee grants employer three more options of 4 weeks each
1st. Option at \$600.00 per week to be picked up by March 1, 1966 and played by July 30, 1966.
2nd. - option at \$700.00 per week to be picked up by October 1, 1966 and played by January 30, 1967
3rd. Option at \$800.00 per week to be picked up by April 30, 1967 and played by August 31, 1967.
Notice of option pick-up to be given in writing to Lester George Duke at his home address
Lester George Duke, Manager
Steve's Banquet
200 Trident Restaurant
558 Broadway
Sausalito, California
George Duke Lester
George M. Duke
The George Duke Trio
59 Cole Drive Apt. 10
Marin City, California

room, including legendary pianist Bill Evans and trio, vocalese innovator Jon Hendricks, as well as local legend Denny Zeitlin (piano.) The Trident is special in that, much like the Fairfax Pavilion, it changed with the times to later become a popular rock and roll hang for artists like Janis Joplin. On the liner notes for Evans' 1964 "The Bill Evans Trio 'Live'" is written, "It is doubtful that one could find a more conducive atmosphere for creativity than the peaceful surroundings of Sausalito." Under the management of Louis Ganapoler — who had previously managed New York City's Village Vanguard — the Trident brought big names and high-quality artistry to Southern Marin. Robin Williams even worked as a busboy for several years while getting his start in standup comedy in San Francisco. The restaurant still operates today as The Trident after decades under the name Horizons.

Duke Ellington and his big band made at least three appearances in Marin during his career. The first show



was at Litchfield's Bermuda Palms in San Rafael within 10 years of its opening in 1949. Next, his big band performed at the Mt. Tamalpais WPA amphitheater at the Jazz on the Mountain festival in August of 1966 — then again at the festival in 1967. This festival was the work of musician and impresario Jerry Olds, and lasted for several years. Today, the Litchfield's building is visible from Highway 101 with restored illuminated signage on its roof. A more complete history of the scene at Litchfield's was documented by Marin historian Marilyn

Geary in an article on the Anne T. Kent California Room's Medium blog.

Drummer Tony Williams of Miles Davis' second great quintet moved to San Anselmo from New York City in the early 1970s. Williams' influence in the world of jazz drumming is tough to overstate. He burst onto the scene as a teenager first with saxophonist Sam Rivers, then with Miles Davis at the age of 17. During the time he lived in Marin



THE PRESENT

Today, drummer Harold Jones continues to live in Woodacre in the San Geronimo Valley, where he has made his home for decades. Jones is best known as the longtime drummer for legend Tony Bennett, who made famous the song "I Left My Heart in San Francisco." On many occasions, Jones has hosted big band concerts in Marin, most often at the now defunct San Geronimo Golf Course, where the large clubhouse accommodated a full big band that included players from across the San Francisco Bay Area. Jones generously contributed his talents to fundraisers for the Drake/Archie Williams High School music program hosted at the same golf clubhouse. Jones was also a member of the Count Basie Orchestra for five years, and has played with Frank Sinatra, Oscar

Peterson, Herbie Hancock, and many others.

The list goes on. Tenor saxophonist Noel Jewkes has made his home in Marin for several decades and has accompanied many noted jazz artists including Jon Hendricks on his "Live at the Trident" album, and veteran singer Mary Stallings.

Virtuoso tabla player Zakir Hussain has lived in San Anselmo since the 1970s. Hussain's collaborations span musical universes and include some of the greatest names in their respective genres, including jazz — George Harrison in the world of Rock and Roll, Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan in Indian Classical music, and tenor saxophonist Joshua Redman in the Jazz realm. One recent jazz concert of Hussain's was a special date at Stanford University in 2021 with a quartet that included Joshua Redman plus the amazing Joel Ross and equally virtuosic Belvedere/Tiburon-raised bassist Zachary Moses Ostroff — both in their 20s.

County, he kept a low profile, studying music in the East Bay with Dr. Robert Greenberg (then a graduate student at UC Berkeley), and frequenting the Lion's Share music venue on the Miracle Mile near today's United Market.

In Larkspur, the Lark Theater has hosted jazz/cabaret vocalists like Jackie Ryan and Paula West in their renovated performance space. Also, in Larkspur lived Pierre Joseph, a double bass luthier in the town for many years. He hosted internationally renowned bassists at his home, including Danish virtuoso Niels-Henning Orsted Pedersen, best known for his work with pianist Oscar Peterson. Joseph designed an electronic amplification system for the double bass that was popular in the 1980s called the "Pierre Joseph String Charger."

West Marin had a jazz connection to New York City via visits by pianist Lennie Tristano to the San Geronimo Valley where his son Steve Tristano attended school, in the Lagunitas School District. Lennie Tristano is today regarded as an innovator in jazz pedagogy and an important and idiosyncratic voice (along with Lee Konitz) during the bebop era in New York City. In another San Geronimo Valley connection, stride pianist Ralph



Sutton visited the Lagunitas School District to perform for students at an assembly where Ralph's son attended school. Sutton also played solo piano at the Oak Tree Inn off Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, which is today's Giaco's Roadhouse (previously the Two Bird Cafe.) This was during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

In a series of happy synchronicities, the town of Woodacre was noted in papers in the 1970s as having a vibrant music scene — specifically, jazz and improvised music. This micro scene centered around ragtime and music theater pianist Fae McNally, who made his home in Woodacre for several decades. McNally produced the Inverness Music Festival and was musical director of the American Conservatory Theater

company in San Francisco — better known as ACT. McNally's association with noted Harlem stride pianist Mike Lipskin was connected to Lipskin's move to Woodacre, where he lived for several years before returning to the New York City scene. Lipskin is a protege of Willie "The Lion" Smith, who is one of the forefathers of Harlem Stride piano, and Lipskin is recognized as an authentic and masterful stride player.

Alaska-born multi-reedist John Firmin of the Johnny Nocturne Band made his home in San Anselmo after leaving New York City, and made waves in the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond during the jump swing revival that hit the Bay Area in the 1990s. Firmin's soulful instrumental version of the jazz standard "Harlem Nocturne" was the most popular version on Apple's iTunes platform throughout the 2000s. He passed away in October 2021.

Internationally-renowned jazz violinist Evan Price — formerly of the Turtle Island String Quartet — makes his home in San Rafael and performs regularly with the Django Reinhardt-influenced Hot Club of San Francisco (also known as Le Jazz Hot), now in its third decade. DjangoFest at the Throckmorton Theater in Mill Valley has been the center of a "Gypsy Jazz" scene in Southern Marin that has at times over nearly two decades featured a jam session after hours in the upstairs of the building. Django

Reinhardt's music is mentioned in the film *Sweet and Lowdown*, where Sean Penn — who was then living in Ross — plays a jazz guitarist who fancies himself second only to the masterful Django.

Black American Music is often described as the United States' unique and syncretic art form. Perhaps in part due to Marin's demographics history of redlining and restrictive covenants, this African American art form now has less footing here than in other parts of California and the San Francisco Bay Area. Yet the county has some surprising ties to the history of jazz music. Some of these come in the form of veteran artists making their home here after establishing successful careers — others come in the form of Marin being the childhood stomping grounds of those who later went on to become legendary musical artists. Either way, the links between jazz and this now relatively quiet county are undeniable, even if less apparent.