

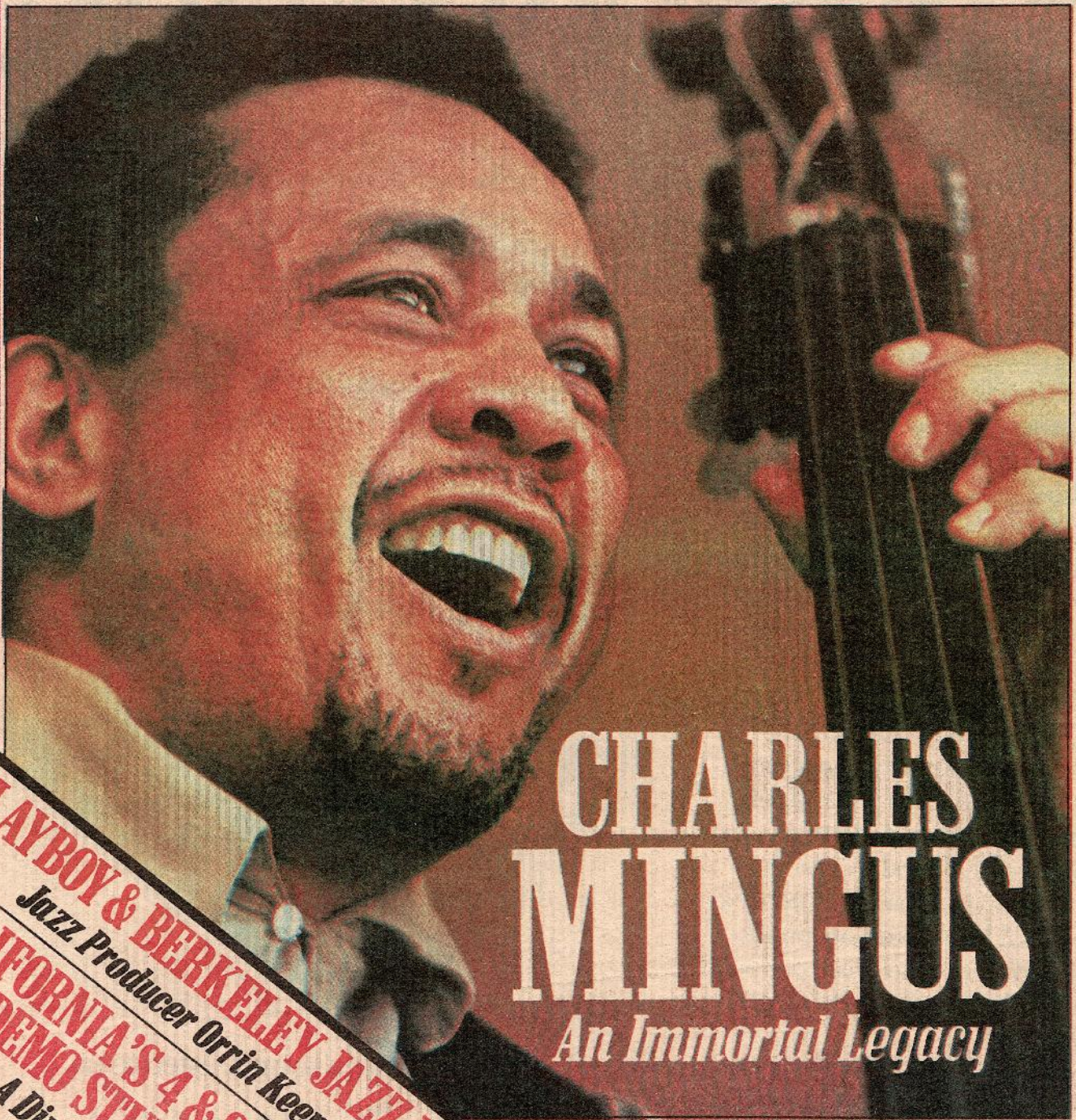


The California Music Magazine

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CHARLES MINGUS

An Immortal Legacy

PLAYBOY & BERKELEY JAZZ FESTS
Jazz Producer Orrin Keepnews
**CALIFORNIA'S 4 & 8 TRACK
DEMO STUDIOS**
A Directory

BAM

The California Music Magazine



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BERKELEY JAZZ FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

By Michael Zipkin

Photographs By Ed Perlstein

This year's UC Berkeley Jazz Festival, held for the 13th year running in the campus' 9,000-seat amphitheater amidst the eucalyptus, presented a mixed bag of beboppers and fusion flyers that guaranteed sold-out houses for two of the three shows. As might be expected, the younger crossover artists exhibited an unfortunate predilection for chops over substance. A performer like Al Jarreau, for example, who closed Friday night's show, possesses an absolutely awesome array of instrumental vocal effects. His breakneck, instrument-mimicking scats worked best when incorporated into the body of a tune, but too often seemed designed as ends in themselves.

Jarreau is an undoubtedly sincere and, in the final

analysis, entertaining singer (though his band didn't provide much fire), and his voice, while highly derivative—Al Green and Betty Carter are his most overt influences—is flexible, supple, and occasionally astounding. But to truly make his mark in jazz, he must transcend his technique that threatens to overshadow his most appealing asset: emotional transparency.

Blues rocker Robben Ford, a last-minute addition to Sunday's concert, suffered from some of the same excesses. Again, his was a professional and competent set—this time of polished urban blues and pop-rock vehicles—but his conception and delivery were too

Left: Betty Carter. Top right: Two views of Sonny Rollins. Bottom right: Jaco Pastorius.

commonplace and lacking in real *meat* to sustain much interest at this end. He closed with the classic "Driftin' and Driftin'," and did manage to burn his way through that gem.

One of the festival's truly inspired performances came Friday, when Betty Carter and the superb John Hicks trio took the stage. Following Tony Williams' rather bombastic set, Betty walked on scattling and never failed to breathe energetic life into everything she tackled, from Cole Porter's "Gentlemen Don't Like Love," to "Favorite Things." Without batting an eyelash, Ms. Carter brought her double-jointed sizzle down to deep, breathy airs, and just as effortlessly cranked it back up to double-time bebop, twisting time, melody, and accent with marvelous serendipity. Someone get this woman a contract.

JAZZ!



John Klemmer, backed by pianist Karl Shroeder, bassist Bob Magnusson, drummer Roy McCurdy, and percussionist Ray Armando, managed to swing in his own laid-back fashion. Klemmer's percussive interplay with Magnusson (the bassist was the band's true catalyst, hands down) was particularly dynamic. Overall, however, it was not one of the man's best performances, suffering from a rather peak-less sobriety.

Berkeley resident Art Lande greeted the Saturday sun and packed house with his Rubisa Patrol, and proceeded to weave his desert magic with the aid of trumpeter Mark Isham, saxist Bruce Williamson, bassist Bill Douglas, and drummer Kurt Wortman. Isham's *Bitches Brew* era Milesisms blended with pianist Lande's delicate yet forceful statements and Eastern flourishes to provide a music brimming with surprise and virtuosity.

Guitarist Pat Metheny and his crack band followed, opening with the shimmering "Phase Dance," and continuing with his tightly conceived brand of electric music that owes as much to country as it does to gospel or bebop: a sound largely defined by the interplay and unisons of Metheny and keyboardist Lyle Mays. The set went on for nearly two hours, however, and after a while the chops couldn't overcome the growing rhythmic and melodic predictability of the tunes. There's a lot of talent in that band, though, with plenty of room to grow.

A player of massive rhythmic power and bebop licks to supply the fuel, Sonny Rollins absolutely burned up the Greek with calypso fire and swing from his high top sneakers to his electric blue sun hat. Supported ably by

drummer Al Foster, pianist Mark Soskin, and electric bassist Jerome Harris, Rollins once again proved himself the king of funky swinging tenor. Except for a rather out of place disco bop exhibition, Rollins captivated the gathering with constant invention and playful quotations from everything from "Over the Rainbow" to "Oh, Susanna" to "Pop Goes the Weasel."

For all the dry ice, special lighting, and rock concert ambience, Weather Report still turned in a dazzling free floating program of tunes that stretched from a "Silent Way" Zawinul/Shorter duet, to their hit from last year, "Birdland." The band was loose and jammed quite a bit, and Wayne's considerable soloing was a pure joy to hear (though Pastorius' solo spot was an exercise in self-indulgent anti-climax). A segue from the eerie "Badia" into a cooking "Boogie Woogie Waltz" was the highlight of the set.

Local pianist Rodney Franklin opened Sunday's show with a professional and varied program of bebop and funk. His solo piano piece bowed considerably to Tyner, and the band's reading of Mingus' "So Long, Eric," while a bit sloppy, was a nice tribute to the late bassist. Franklin displayed a poise and conception lacking from his debut CBS album; at a mere 20 years of age, he's one to keep your eye on.

The aforementioned Robben Ford followed, yielding eventually to alto man Richie Cole. The spirit of the late Eddie Jefferson, who was to appear with Cole, was

everywhere during the smoking set, which opened with the Jefferson favorite, "Jeanine." A ten-person choir from Foothill College added Jefferson-taught vocals on "In the Still of the Night" and "Moody's Mood," contributing to that family feel the late singer always instilled. Cole himself, backed by a young five-piece band, uplifted Bird and Woods in a thoroughly enjoyable and virtuosic display. More and more people should find out about this emerging bebop giant.

Dizzy Gillespie led an electric band through a decidedly funky set that was down-home and familiar if not instrumentally brilliant. The hour and a half was heavy on electric blues—built acceptably by guitarist Ed Cherry and bassist Michael Howell—and near disco-ized funk. Dizzy played his patented trad bop; spewed Gillespian wit and humor; got the audience to sing "Salt Peanuts," Jimmy Carter style; and played congas and chanted Cuban rebop. Predictably entertaining.

Elsewhere in these pages you will find comments concerning Joni Mitchell's "Tribute to Charles Mingus" program, so we will pass here. Speaking of the singers represented at the festival, however—Jarreau, Betty Carter, Joni—a comment seems in order. Each, in one way or another, owes quite a debt to the late Eddie Jefferson, who was to return to Berkeley this year following 1978's show-stopping performance. It would have taken little effort for any or all to acknowledge that debt to the late innovator of vocal jazz, or for the festival itself to say even a few words in his honor, for that matter. We're losing the cornerstones of the music all too rapidly; let us not forget them. □

Top left: Joni Mitchell. Bottom left: Pat Metheny.
Right: Dizzy Gillespie