

Jazz And Blues Festival A Feast For Famished Fans

By Grant Shilling

THE FIRST Annual Pacific Jazz and Blues Festival, set to take place in Vancouver August 19-25, is destined to become a major cultural and historical influence on the city of Vancouver and the west coast. The Jazz and Blues Festival is the brainchild of John Orysik, former disc jockey for C-JAZ, and Ken Pickering, owner of the jazz record store Black Swan records. Pickering is the steadying but driving bass beat to Orysik's mad blowing sax energy. It is this combination, together with a 6 to 12 member board of directors, that will make the festival a success.

An interview with Orysik is akin to a heavy afternoon jam session. He is possessed by the project. The idea for the festival was planted in Orysik's and friend's minds over a year ago. "The people at Co-op radio were very interested in putting together a jazz festival in time for Expo

86," Orysik explained. "As the project got bigger we decided that we should sever the connection with Expo and incorporate ourselves." One link with Expo was maintained — the Expo Centre is the largest venue for the festival — and a board of directors established.

This was the beginning of many sixteen hour days for those involved. The board includes a cross section of people: Bob Smith, Vancouver jazz writer; Gavin Walker, long time local jazz musician; and Deborah Roitberg, owner of The Lazy Gourmet. A group of people, as Orysik puts it, "whose commonality is a love of jazz and also a love of our city." Orysik continues, "We see jazz as being a very exciting component culturally in this city and that is where the festival comes in."

One subject that arouses Orysik's ire is the belief that because C-JAZ has mutated into the nauseous Kiss FM it indicates a lack of interest in jazz in this city. Orysik claims that the opposite is actually true.

"C-JAZ was mismanaged. They did not put their best foot forward in terms of selling and marketing jazz. Don't forget, C-JAZ had a base listenership of 60,000 people. This indicates a great number of people are interested in jazz in this city. The problem at C-JAZ lay in management's desire to capture the C-FOX, CFMI market which is in excess of 200,000 people. That was unrealistic."

Over one hundred musicians from Africa, Europe, the United States and Canada make this truly an international festival. Musical influences range from the blues to avant garde, dixieland, swing, and funk. Highlights include: Obo Addy, a Ghanaian master drummer who combines rhythms of his native culture with Western influences of jazz and pop. Addy performs August 23 at the Expo Centre. Also at the Expo Centre August 25 is Hungarian bassist Aladar Pege. Although currently unknown to most in the North American Jazz scene,

Pege was voted top acoustic bassist in a *Downbeat* magazine poll.

Top Vancouver acts, including the Kate Hammet-Vaughan Quintet, the Paul Plimley Octet, and Lunar Adventures, will have an opportunity to reach a larger audience during the festival. The remarkable aspect of the festival is that with the exception of a few acts, admission to these performances will be free. The venues include the Town Pump, Classical Joint, Granville Island Band Shell, the Expo Centre and the Landmark Jazz Bar.

Ottawa and Edmonton — two cities considerably smaller than Vancouver — now play host to jazz festivals. Toronto inaugurated its first jazz festival this year to a great response, while Montreal plays host to one of the world's most respected jazz festivals. The Pacific Jazz and Blues Festival represents a chance for Vancouver to join that elite group.