

NJNC Profile

Lunar Adventures

New Jazz, New City II
at New City Theater
October 27 at 8 p.m.

When Ornette Coleman, Ronald Shannon Jackson and James "Blood" Ulmer started experimenting with electric jazz in the late '70s and came up with their dizzying "harmolodic funk" concept, I was sure that at least one band in Seattle would launch into the same exhilarating groove. But alas, the sweet cacophony of harmolodics never materialized on the shores of the Emerald City. That's one reason *New Jazz, New City* has ventured across the 49th parallel this season, snagging from its usual orbit one of the best bands working the West today—Lunar Adventures.

With a name like that, you'd think these guys are strictly from the stratosphere, but while Lunar Adventures can definitely play far-out, moonstruck stuff, this band is also one of the most accessible, delightful and well-thought-out units working the area. The group was formed in 1985 in Vancouver, B.C., and, according to bassist Clyde Reed, has been rehearsing twice a week for two years, writing and working up new material. They have produced one tape for sale, *Full Moon*, well worth the price. Recently voted Best Jazz Performers of the Year by the Canadian Association of Recording Artists, Lunar Adventures consists of bassist Reed; drummer Gregg Simpson; tenor saxophonist Coat Cooke; and electric guitarist Ron Samworth. All of these musicians have worked together over the years in various configurations, but Simpson and Reed may be familiar to some Seattleites from their work with The Vancouver Art Trio and the New Orchestra Workshop. Simpson was the drummer in the Al Neil trio, and he and Reed also worked together in 1974-75 with the Sunship Ensemble, which recorded the album, *Pacific Rim* for CBC. Simpson and Vancouver pianist Paul Plimley performed in Seattle a couple of years ago at the New Melody Tavern at the invitation of Al Hood.

That is not the only connection Lunar Adventures has to Washington. Bassist Reed is actually a native of the "other" Vancouver, studied in the '60s with Jerry Gray at Cornish and with Ron Simon of the Seattle Symphony and got a Ph.D. from the U.W. in 1972—in economics, which Reed teaches at Simon Fraser University when he's not performing with Lunar Adventures.

The other two members of the lunar module come from a younger generation of Vancouver musicians. Coat Cooke, 34, has worked with the Paul Plimley Octet up at the Edmonton Jazz Festival and wrote the tune the band took for its name. Guitarist Ron Samworth, 26, has worked in adventurous Vancouver rock bands like Neophyte, as well as with Jazzoids and Chief Feature.

What do these guys sound like? Well, sometimes they get that edgy, electric, double-meter craziness of Ornette's Prime Time. Other times, Simpson delves into his Celtic heritage, blowing up a modal Highland

storm. At still others, a calypso beat sidles into their work. There is also a good deal of non-pretentious, good-natured theater to the Lunar show. The time I saw them at Vancouver's Railway Club, there was a television monitor behind the band playing somebody's home videos. Simpson also played an amazing improvised noise solo on his drum machine.

That should give an idea, eh? See you there.

Paul de Barros

Standifer (Cont. from Page 1)

ers like our own Northwest composers Jim Knapp and Chuck Israels. The rewards of chamber jazz are manifold: when you hear a classic be-bop quartet or quintet—the kind Floyd plays with at Patti Summers on Tuesday nights or at the New Orleans Restaurant on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays—you get burning swing, and long, story-telling solos. With a jazz octet you get something entirely different.

For starters, with more instruments to work with—or "voices," as musicians call them—you have a situation where the whole often equals more than the sum of its parts. Matching up different instruments on different notes in a chord ("voicing" and "orchestration") can yield unusually large and rich blends. In addition to blend, a larger band can put two melodies in motion at the same time (counterpoint, or "contrary motion"). And, of course, a large ensemble can punch a phrase with the kind of power that a quartet just doesn't have.

Look for all of these special ensemble qualities in Floyd's octet performance Tuesday night, as well as for strong solos by some of the area's finest: Buddy Catlett (bass); Marc Seales (keyboards); Bill Ramsey (tenor saxophone); Jim Coil (alto saxophone); Dan Greenblatt (tenor saxophone); and Floyd himself on trumpet and flugelhorn, with a trombone player and drummer yet to be determined at this writing.

"We'll be presenting the pieces as a kind of suite," says Floyd, "kind of the way Abdullah Ibrahim did when he was here. I liked that approach. Some of it's going to be abrasive and far-out, too," Standifer adds. "We're going to include some free improv. This isn't going to be vanilla."

As if we thought it would be.

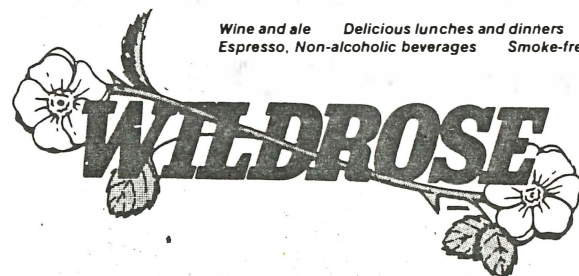
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