

The VANCOUVER SUN

JAZZ CRITIC LOOKS AT CITY SPOTS

Bob Smith

There are at least four clubs catering to people of the Lower Mainland who have jazz-oriented tastes.

Last week I visited The Cellar, The Flat 5, The Harlem Nocturne and The Espresso and I was pleased with what I saw and heard. More important, I was impressed with the honesty and dedication of the many unpaid people who administer these places where musicians and listeners congregate.

From point of history The Cellar, near Broadway and Main, is the senior. It was opened in 1955 with a strong modern music policy. Many a current New York jazz great played his first Canadian solo here.

Said guitarist Jim Kilburn: "A partial list would include Ornette Coleman, Scott La Faro, Dave Pike and Don Cherry. Occasionally we booked established stars like Barney Kessel, Charlie Mingus and Harold Lang. But we're encouraging a broader policy now."

"Larry Goon, Dave Quarin and the rest of our executive want all Vancouver to know that The Cellar is open Friday and Saturday for any one interested in the performing arts, particularly musicians."

As visual proof of this policy, vocalist Barry Dale and the Mike Taylor Trio wailed "Every Day I Have the Blues" and a little later a one act comedy was presented.

The Flat 5, near Broadway and Alma, is barely three years old. As befits this youthful age, it has a vigorous, aggressive modern music policy and entertains many university students.

As manager Gary Keenan outlined in the club's policies and brief history, the Claire Lawrence Quartet played acceptable hard driving jazz as an obligato.

"We've enrolled some 600 members," enthused Keenan, "and we're open Fridays, Saturday and Sundays. Currently our executive has instructed me to pursue a strict modern jazz policy with occasional avant-garde plays like "The Connection."

"We're also directing every cent of profit after operating expenses into improvements, renovations, and safety precautions."

Like The Espresso, the young people in charge have let their good modern art tastes take over. It's a nice place in which to sit, listen, observe and socialize.

Ernie King keeps the doors of the Harlem Nocturne open every evening. As a trombonist he also leads the quartet that plays rhythm and blues nightly. Mrs. King and house manager Roy Brooks double on the door and fulfill many other duties.

The Nocturne, just east of Main and Hastings, maintains an energetic dancing and listening policy, quite different from other clubs.

Brooks is pleased with the support the club continues to get from UBC fraternities.

"Some of them have been coming regularly for the past four years," he says.

Mrs. King's favorite time is Sunday night after her church duties are over. She enjoys the Membership Dance Club that has the premises to themselves. She'll admit demurely to being "a pretty good twister."

Last stop was The Espresso, in the downtown area where nine different types of coffee are served and pizzas are the specialty. Regrettably owner-pianist Nield Longton was away on holidays but the staff were alert and eager to help.

The emphasis here is on spontaneous entertainment by entertainers who drop in after finishing other assignments. It's open from 11 a.m. daily except Sunday and closes when the performers run out of gas.

So tear yourselves away from the late late show and visit these inexpensive clubs occasionally. There's more happening in our town than you think.