

# arts/entertainment

## Earth, wind, fire and air influences jazz trio's music

By Bill Graf

Saturday night, The Leroy Critcher Trio played to a sparse crowd at Jesse's 14th Street Lounge.

"I think that it's disheartening that the university crowd doesn't come down and hear us. If they would listen to us, then decide they don't like the sound, I wouldn't be so bitter, but they don't even make the effort," Critcher, 27, said.

Bass player Andy Hall said, "You have to listen to jazz to understand it. Most people go to the clubs or discos to socialize

and their attitude is, who cares about the band, which is too bad. People are basically lazy, they would rather have a simple beat that they can follow so they don't have to listen to the music."

About disco, Critcher said, "It's for lazy minds, androids and air heads."

Drummer Jim Skomal added, "I'm not a member of the SLA or the PLO, but I'd like to throw a bomb in each one of those places."

"I don't blame the owners of those joints, anyone can see that they're making money. Instead I blame the musician's

union for allowing this to happen."

CRITCHER WENT ON to say that most of the people in the School of Music were "fairly hip". But he was quick to add, "the rest of them (students) are lazy minded, it's very discouraging."

The band kicked off the first set with Miles Davis', "Freddie the Freeloader."

The band that played Saturday night was sort of a hybrid of the Critcher trio and quartet. However, the performance was tight enough that any one who didn't know better would have thought that Critcher, Skomal and Hall always play together.

The evening's repertoire was made up of personalized arrangements of traditional jazz tunes.

Critcher's guitar style was bright, clean, precise and extremely fast.

Skomal's drumming was tasty and precise, a style that has grown out of nearly 30 years of experience as a professional drummer.

Hall, a French horn major at the UNL School of Music, plays the bass like few can. He treats the bass as an instrument capable of standing on its own, often escaping from the "time keeper" role that most bass players fill.

CRITCHER'S OTHER GIGS include playing banjo in a Dixieland jazz band called The Big Red Stompers, giving guitar lessons, doing recordings for the Back To The Bible broadcasts, writing music for Dances For Passers-By, doing a solo act, playing with a blues band called the Blues Boppers, gigging with classical guitarist Bob Popek and writing and performing with the Leroy Critcher Quartet.

Critcher said the quartet, which also includes keyboard player Tom Larson, drummer Jeff Johnson and bassist Andy Hall, is where he does most of his "laboratory work".

The quartet plays only original tunes, written by Critcher and Larson.

Critcher explained that his original tunes follow the basic form that modern jazz as taken in the last decade.

"Jazz has become simpler and more complex at the same time," he said. "The harmonies are more complex but the (chord) changes have become simpler, there's just more of them."

CRITCHER CITED the earth, wind, fire, water and air as the main influences on his music writing.

"I try to imitate both natural and unnatural sounds," he said.

As for the source of his licks, he said, "I listen to everything, I steal licks from local musicians, television, anywhere I can."

Critcher credits Victor Lewis with being responsible for getting him out of rock and into jazz.

"Victor taught me that a musician's first responsibility was to himself. Group efforts are like a marriage, if you jammed with some other musicians it was like going out on your wife."

However, Critcher still looks back on his rock 'n' roll days with a smile.

"I used to play with a band called Heaven. It was insane, there were 12 people that traveled with the band. There were always crazy parties, hotel rooms used to get destroyed, the roadies were always drunk, and I even discovered that there are small-time groupies."



Photo by MaryAnne Golon

Leroy Critcher, Jim Skomal and Andy Hall, the Leroy Critcher Trio, performed at Jesse's 14th Street Lounge.

## No practice before band's 'last tango'

By Cheryl Kisling

They mingle with the audience, they dance, they do magic, and once in a while, the Sweet Potato Band might even sing a song.

All of this, however, will not last for long because the members of Sweet Potato are doing what they term "the last tango in Lincoln" and everywhere else. Next Saturday at Suite 9 will be their last performance as a band, according to member Paul Newton.

Newton said the group, with other members Doug Dickeson, lead guitar; Jim Rupert, drummer; and Fred Meyer, bass guitar; has existed three years and only practiced twice during that time.

"This band never gave a day's worth of thought to itself," Newton said. "Our first practice was after we had been playing together for a year."

Dickeson said the informality has been a big influence on his guitar playing and he added that he likes performing that way.

"When a song is first played, it is very new and fresh," Dickeson said. "No one has played it. We add harmony and accents as we perform it more. The last band I was with had practiced it until the music was already stale when we played it."

Dickeson recently joined Sweet Potato on a temporary basis while he was in between bands.

Newton said the group was strictly a three-piece country band, but that Dickeson added rock to the performances.

Drummer Jim Rupert also joined within the last year, Newton said. He replaced Jeff Gallop, who thought up the name Sweet Potato.

Newton said a newsletter reporter from the company they were playing for came up to the band at their first performance.

"The reporter was concerned that he didn't have enough to write about our band since we had never played anywhere before, so Gallop told him things like we played in Las Vegas and that we were just on tour as the Sweet Potato Band," Newton said.

After Saturday, Rupert and Dickeson plan to turn their attention to their multitrack recording studio, West End Studios in Lincoln. Meyer said he intends to continue playing the bass guitar, but is uncertain of what group he might join.

Newton, who manages World Radio, said he isn't interested in joining another band right away. He added that he will miss the Sweet Potato Band even though "it never made a claim to fame."

## Show features local, female talent

By Mary Kay Wayman

From photography to prints and from macrame to mixed media, the University Program Council's women artists show in the Nebraska Union lounge gives local amateurs the chance to exhibit their work.

The show is a "forum for female artists," according to UPC committee chairwoman Bonnie Lutz. It is the first of its kind for UPC, she said, adding that the Women's Resource Center did a similar show a couple years ago.

"A women's art exhibit is one way to focus on art," she said. "It's something we hope will be continued." About 20 artists working in various media will exhibit their work until Nov. 3.

UPC posted advertisements for artists, Lutz said. After receiving as many as 20 to 30 pieces of work from some artists, her committee picked those that would be shown.

Not all the artists are students, Lutz said, adding that none of them could be classified as professionals.

"If they're not full-time artists, they don't have an opportunity to show their things," she said.

Black-and-white prints featuring small jagged creatures are the work of Carol Fay Hartman, a UNL graduate with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree.

Hartman works for the Lancaster Office of Mental Retardation. She said she hopes to combine her work with the mentally retarded with her art.

While working on her major, there wasn't as much time to exhibit her work in shows, Hartman said.

She said an artist who keeps her work to herself begins to think, "I must be doing this for some reason. I'm doing it for myself, but I'm putting it down for someone else to see."

Hartman said there is a need for communication between women artists, to see what others are doing. "It's nice to know that people are seeing what I'm doing," she said.

Laura Bantz, whose weavings are exhibited in the show, said the show is a big step for her. Bantz is a sophomore art major.

"I think it will really help with my experience," she said.

Bantz said her work is not for sale, but that maybe as a result of the show someone will commission her to do some work.

Bantz said he will become involved in more shows "when I feel it's right for me. When I feel I've accomplished what I want to accomplish with my work."

Bantz said she hopes to work as a college professor after receiving a master of fine arts degree. As a professor, she will show her work frequently, so this show is a start for her. She previously exhibited her work in high school.

Lutz said, the next show planned is a national touring show of paintings.



Photo by Mark Billingsley

These prints and other art works can be viewed until Nov. 3 in the Nebraska Union lounge as a forum for female artists.