

# arts/entertainment

## Jazz legend proves soul has no age boundaries

By Pat Higgins

Jazz legend Jay McShann put on a highly-entertaining display of his talent last weekend at the Drumstick. McShann was one of the originators of the seminal Kansas City sound that produced artists ranging from Count Basie to Charlie Parker.

During the 30s and early 40s, Kansas City was the jazz capital of the world. McShann is recognized internationally as one of the originals who has survived and prospered. Kansas City became a jazz Mecca with the help of a corrupt political machine that was the patron of Harry S. Truman.

### review

"Kansas City was wide open under Pendergast," recalled McShann. "Anytime you get that open, a sporting class develops. Where the musicians played, the gamblers and pimps would show up. There were special songs we did for the pimps and gamblers. It was really hot in those days, but when Pendergast got indicted, Kansas City became a church town."

McShann has played Lincoln and the rest of the Midwest for decades. He was a fixture for years at Lincoln's Legionnaire Club and many of his loyal fans were in attendance last weekend.

#### Very stylish drummer

McShann was accompanied by Paul Gunther, a very stylish drummer. Gunther used a deceptively minimal drum kit, but produced a solid beat. He has been with McShann for 16 years.

Vocals were provided by Cynthia Bowman.

"She's a real Kansas City girl," McShann said. Bowman has a very powerful presence on stage belting out blues influenced vocals. The other members of the band were recruited local musicians who appeared quite honored to be accompanying the legend.

McShann has usually been considered to be oriented toward the blues side of jazz, and that description seemed to be accurate, particularly when he cut loose with some boogie woogie piano riffs.

McShann appeared to be having the time of his life as he beamed exuberantly throughout the show. He had the look of someone who enjoys his work.

McShann is featured prominently in the highly touted movie, *Last of the Blue Devils*, a documentary that features the reunion of such Kansas City music giants as Count Basie and Big Joe Turner.

#### A lot of fun

"We made that movie at the musicians' local No. 627," McShann said. "It was a lot of fun. After the war we all went different directions. Most of the musicians went to

New York and Los Angeles. We don't run into each other very often. I stayed in Kansas City to raise my family. Kansas City isn't the jazz city it once was. We perform in Kansas City only a few times a year."

McShann is on the road quite extensively for a man of 64 years.

"We play all over," McShann said, "we play Kearney too."

McShann soon will be embarking on an extensive European tour, including the prestigious Montreux Festival.

"They're very aware in Europe. They really study what's going on over here. There are a lot of good musicians there that I'll be working with," he said.

#### New release

McShann has just released a new studio album recorded in New York titled *Last of the Whorehouse Piano Players*. With overdue recognition for McShann through *Last of the Blue Devils*, his new record may be more commercial-

ly successful.

McShann was one of the first band leaders to employ Charlie Parker, truly one of the key figures in jazz history.

"I met Charlie Parker in 1937 in the Ozarks. Even then Bird really had it. We worked together on and off till 1943 when I was drafted. My band ranged from a six piece to a full big band."

In an amazing piece of history, Charlie "Bird" Parker obtained his nickname on a drive to Lincoln with Jay McShann.

"We ran over a chicken about 90 miles from Lincoln and Bird took it into town and cooked it up. From then on, he was Yardbird," McShann said.

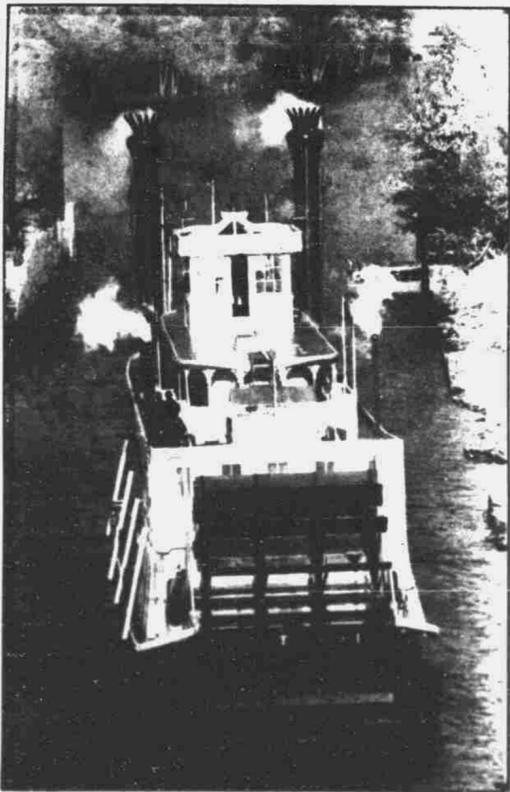
"I've always enjoyed coming to Lincoln."

It seemed that McShann was on speaking terms with a considerable percentage of the audience and he quite happily entertained requests. McShann's material was mostly great American standards, such as "Satin Doll," "Night Train" and "Yardbird Suite." McShann elegantly proved that soul has no age boundaries.



Jay McShann

## 'Life on the Mississippi' to come alive this week



*Life on the Mississippi*, a chronicle of a young man's coming of age on the Mississippi River, will be broadcast on NETV this week.

*Life on the Mississippi*, a two-hour film dramatization of Mark Twain's epic chronicle of a young man's coming of age on America's greatest river, will be broadcast tonight at 8 on the Nebraska ETV Network, and will repeat on Wednesday at 9 p.m.

Filmed entirely on location—largely aboard a genuine Mississippi steamboat, the program is a co-production of the Nebraska ETV Network and The Great Amwell Company of New York, in association with New York public television station WNET/Thirteen.

### entertainment notes

*Life on the Mississippi* is a fictionalization of eighteen months in the life of Mark Twain when, as a young man, he fulfilled his boyhood ambition to become a river pilot. After a difficult apprenticeship during which he braved the hazards of the deceptive, ever-changing river and a potentially disastrous brush with an egomaniacal pilot, he earns his license and, with it, a new maturity.

Robert Lansing stars as Horace Bixby, the experienced pilot who assumes the responsibility for "learning the river" to the eager, if often bumbling young cub, Sam, portrayed by David Knell. Knell's character Sam is based to some extent on Twain himself.

William Perry of the Great Amwell Company is executive producer of the program and Marshall Jamison of the Nebraska ETV Network is the series producer.

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The Annual Christmas Exhibition and Sale is currently taking place at the Mark Four Gallery through Dec. 20. The purpose of the Christmas exhibit is to give the public the opportunity to see a wide variety of works from a

number of area artists. The show includes several pieces by each of the artists.

The pieces represent some experimental and developmental techniques by the artist. The pieces include a variety of media and aesthetic approaches. Included are drawings, paintings, photographs and prints. For the most part the works are smaller scale, developmental or experimental and are appropriately priced for holiday gifts.

The Christmas showing is being organized by Rod Friedman. The list of exhibiting artists includes Janine Copple, Tony Crowley, Gary David, Rod Friedman, Ron Geibert, Fred Hagstrom, Susan Horn, Keith Jacobshagen, Brian Magee, Mike Nushawg, Denise Presnell, Dave Read, Paul Van Lith, Bill Weidner and Mike Whiteley.

The public is invited and there is no admission charge. The Mark Four Gallery, 1030 Q St., is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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The Foreign Film Series Council is showing the Spanish film *Cousin Angelica* tonight at 7 and 9 in the Sheldon Film Theater, 12th and R streets.

It is about one man's childhood memories, as revealed through flashbacks. The film also has a definite message about Spain's recent history and Spanish Catholicism.

The Foreign Film Series is sponsored by the University Program Council.

Series tickets are available in Room 200 of the Nebraska Union. Single admission tickets may be purchased at the door for \$2 for the general public, \$1.50 for UNL students.

The following is a list of the remaining films to be screened before the Sheldon Film Theater closes for break:

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