

Zoo Bar to feature jamming jazz session



Courtesy of Russ Dantzier Management

Jazz elder Claude "Fiddler" Williams will perform at the Zoo Bar, 136 N. 14th St., Nov. 29-30.

By Robert Richardson
Senior Reporter

On Friday, four musicians are planning a jam session at the Zoo Bar. The group members have played together in the past, but are not part of a regular band. And the sound they'll bring is pure Kansas City jazz.

Claude "Fiddler" Williams, swing fiddle; Frank Smith, piano and vocals; Bryan Hicks, acoustic bass and vocals and Omahan Gayland Prince on drums will attempt to make beautiful music together.

concert PREVIEW

Smith, a Kansas City native who now resides in Overland Park, Kan., still occasionally plays with Williams and Hicks. Professional musicians, he said, can play with anybody, anytime.

"Good musicians don't worry about that," Smith said. "We have acquired a certain amount of skill, dexterity and knowledge on the instrument. So when we get together with some guy that's equally as proficient we don't have any problems."

Smith may be talking about Williams. An 83-year-old Muskogee, Okla., native, Williams moved to Kansas City in 1928. He's been making his living with music ever since.

As a young guitarist, one of the first gigs he played was with the original Count Basie Band in the 1930s. But the versatile Williams also had stints playing the mandolin, cello and ukulele. And now the fiddle, which makes up his nickname, is his weapon of choice.

But those who don't follow jazz music or history might not have heard of Williams who is somewhat of a legend in his own day. But Smith said that's not unusual and that he's disappointed that jazz isn't as hot as it was in the past.

"I was raised in this area and certainly music was here and prevalent," Smith said.

"So I had the chance to hear all the good players and be inspired by them.

This has certainly been a hub for good music for many years, but it's changed over the last 20 years. It's certainly not what it used to be."

But Smith, who has played all over the world and says he still gets nervous before he plays, said the music he plays isn't appreciated as much on the home front either.

"The thing that's very sickening and frustrating to me is that Europe and Japan and some of the other countries appreciate jazz much more than Americans," Smith said. "In other words, the people in this country just take it for granted."

However, the music that has given Smith a comfortable living is something that he feels can make a comeback, if people just have a chance to hear it. This is one of the reasons Smith plays for groups made up of school children, in a project called "Young Audience."

"This is primarily for school children," Smith said. "It's just amazing how much the kids really appreciate what we play. They never really get a chance to hear this kind of thing. They can get all the rap and heavy metal and all the other stuff and so what we play is really refreshing for them. And I think that would be the same thing with John Q. Public."

Playing music for any group is important to Smith. He likes to showcase his talents, which aren't limited to just piano and vocals. Smith also composes his own tunes. This, he said, is another thing he's happy to be able to do, and just might give him an edge on other musicians.

"Well, it gives you more of an outlet for various things," Smith said.

"You see, if I was just a player then I'd be playing other people's compositions, which is fine. But this gives me an opportunity to express myself even more so because I can write what I feel. And I write in various styles. I don't just write in one style. In fact, I don't really like to be called a jazz player because I play lots of different styles."

Smith and the others will play at the Zoo Bar, 136 N. 14th street Friday and Saturday. The cover is \$4.

Book satirizes simple college life

"I Went to College and it was Okay"
By Jim Andrews and McMeel Books

By Bryan Peterson
Senior Editor

Jim's life is not very interesting on the surface, but it is precisely because he is average that "Jim's Journal" has become a popular comic strip carried by more than 20 college newspapers.

Jim is a little stick-figure guy who goes to college, works, eats and does most of the other things we do. Except he records the dull events of his life in a four-panel comic strip peopled with characters much like his stick-figure self.

There is Tony, the obnoxious embodiment of cool who is Jim's first roommate in the dorms. Later, they move off campus with Steve, a mild-mannered friend of Tony's.

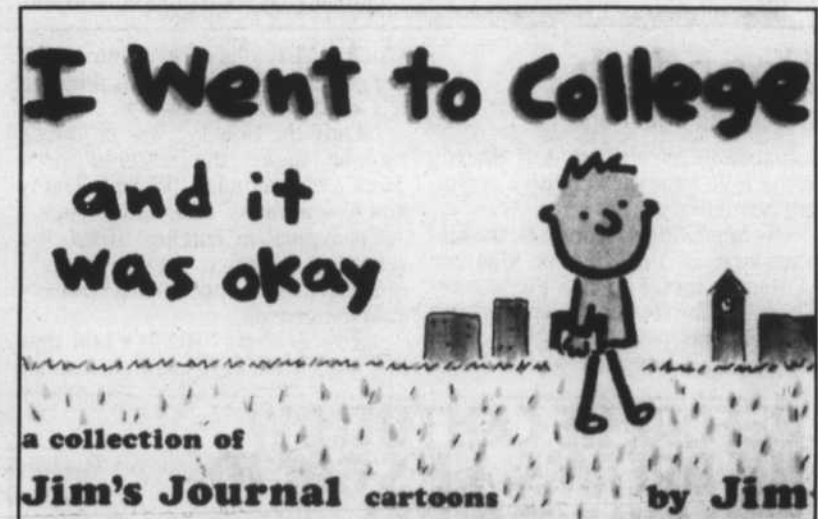
The journal follows Jim through the first two years of his life in college and picks up many of the transitions common to college students: moving off campus, looking for a job, going home on vacations and starting new classes.

The humor of Jim's Journal is reserved and dry, and sometimes the point of a cartoon is that, as with so many events in college life, there is no point.

Jim's Journal seems to evoke sharply divided responses from readers — people tend to love it or to hate it. When the cartoon was first run in the Daily Nebraskan a couple years back, a wave of anti-Jim sentiment spread across the campus.

Scott Dikkers, the creator of Jim's Journal, said that no such backlash occurred on other college campuses where Jim's Journal has appeared.

The strip is now more popular than ever and a second collection of Jim's



Courtesy of Universal Press Syndicate

Journal cartoons in book form is planned for 1992.

Fans of Jim can now purchase apparel from a variety of 12 T-shirts, boxer shorts and several coffee mugs.

Most of these items are emblazoned with slogans typical of Jim's view of life: "I'm kind of bored," "I went to class today even though I didn't really feel like it," and "It seems like I haven't done anything today."

Jim's life is pretty nondescript, and the funny part is that it so well resembles those of most college students.

He struggles to wake up in the morning, arrives to class late, feels sleepy during lectures, wishes he had read his text the night before, and ponders those surrounding him.

He works and eats, takes walks and plays with his cat, Mr. Peterson, who has mysteriously switched genders over the years. All of this Jim does with stunning mediocrity and dry observation.

At its best, Jim's Journal makes biting comments upon how dull we can let our lives become, such as when Jim spends all day working at the photocopy store and sees someone's career goals of personal fulfillment described on a resume.

There is a streak of romanticism running through Jim, one that enhances the strip. Jim is caught in the grind of student life and occasionally longs for an escape or diversion like taking a walk or playing with Mr. Peterson.

These are simple things, and one of the biggest complaints about Jim's Journal is that it is not really a comic. It is too simple and not very funny, its detractors say.

But that's the way life is in Jim's view: The best pleasures are simple ones and the funniest moments are often the most dull and mediocre.

By showing the averageness of our lives, Jim's Journal has a special appeal, one which calls even more loudly to those of us in college who have found it to be OK.

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