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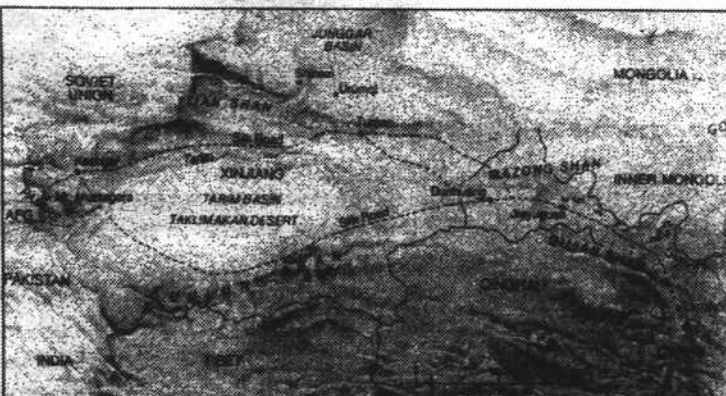
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Musical childhood set stage for Victor Lewis

By DANELL MCCOY
 Staff writer

Editor's note: In this weekly series, we explore the lives and works of notable Nebraska artists of the 20th century.

His love of music began at the early age of 10, when he began playing the cello. From that point on, there was no doubting the talent of Victor Lewis, or the fact he would one day become one of the best jazz musicians in the country.

Lewis, who was born May 20, 1950 in Omaha, grew up surrounded by music. His mother was a pianist and vocalist, and his father played the saxophone. Both of his parents were classically trained musicians who had performed with bands that toured around the Midwest in the 1940s.

As a child, Lewis and his father would go to local theaters to see performances by big bands, such as those led by Duke Ellington, Count Basie and Woody Herman, when they would pass through town.

Although Lewis wanted to study the acoustic bass, he was too small. Instead, he began to study the cello and piano.

Two years later, when he was 12, Lewis switched to the drums after seeing the percussion lines in the local drum corps marching in parades.

At first, his style of drumming reflected what he had seen of the band drummers, but after hearing a record by Miles Davis' Quintet, Lewis began to explore the sound and style of small-group drummers.

Because of his experience with the piano, Lewis had learned to read music, which helped him when he began playing Omaha's local scene at the age of 15. At that time, many of the older musicians didn't know how to read music, and the young Lewis was called upon to help with a variety of commercial jobs.

After graduating from high school, Lewis attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as a music major. Because there wasn't a specialized jazz program at the time, Lewis studied classical percussion.

Albert Rometo, a professor of per-

State of the Arts

cussion at UNL and a former teacher of Lewis, said Lewis' dedication to music was evident during his time at UNL.

"We studied classical percussion," he said. "There hadn't been much to study before then, because I was the first full-time percussionist teacher, but Victor would practice three or four hours a night. He was extremely dedicated and driven."

Tom Larson, a UNL professor of jazz history, met Lewis while he was still in high school when Lewis performed in a rock opera.

"By the time I had met him, he was already a legend in the Lincoln and Omaha areas," he said.

During his senior year of college, Lewis attended a Herbie Hancock concert and met the



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a cabaret show on its way to Minneapolis. A year later, in 1974, Lewis had earned enough money to move to New York.

His first performance in Manhattan was at Boomer's. There, he met trumpeter Woody Shaw. Lewis joined Shaw's group a few months later. Lewis made his debut recording on Shaw's album "The Moontrane."

Shaw also noticed Lewis' writing abilities and called on him to contribute to his albums throughout their relationship.

Lewis traveled with Shaw all over the world, developing his talents as a jazz musician, until 1980.

Then, Lewis left Shaw's group to join Stan Getz, a saxophone player known around the world for his talent. Lewis and Getz worked and traveled together until Getz's death in 1991.

While with Getz, Lewis first recorded his composition "I Wanted To Say."

Throughout the 1980s, Lewis composed and played with many artists, including Kenny Barron, Art Farmer, Mike Stern, Joe Farrell, David Sanborn and Bobby Watson.

Watson and Lewis formed a modern jazz group together called Horizon, which appeared at the Lied Center for Performing Arts on Oct. 1.

Larson said during the time Lewis was back, many of the professors and students he had worked with came back to visit him.

"He's the type of guy who you don't see for five years, but when you do finally see him, it's like only a week has gone by," he said.

These days, Lewis has been performing with the Kenny Barron Quintet, which he has done since the group began, as well as his own quintet, featuring Seamus Blake, Terrell Stafford, Stephen Scott and Ed Howard. Their latest release, from December 1997, was titled "Eeeyesss."

Larson said one reason so many well-known artists want to play with Lewis or have him write songs for their albums is because of what Lewis brings into the music.

"Most people stereotype drummers as all rhythm," he said. "But Lewis' drumming is fascinating in melody and in harmony."

"He does what he does so well, and he just makes every group that he performs with sound better. I think he's the one of the best modern jazz artists ever."

Recently, Lewis made his debut appearance in film, where he played a character loosely based on jazz legend Papa Jo Jones in the fictionalized movie "Kansas City," directed by Robert Altman.

Though Lewis has worked with his share of famous musicians, both composing and performing, Rometo says it hasn't changed Lewis.

"Many of the people that he knows here will say that he is a very sensitive player and a genuinely friendly person," he said. "Rubbing elbows with famous musicians hasn't changed him. Victor is Victor. He is just a genuinely nice guy who happens to be extremely talented."

Larson agreed, saying, "He has such a magnetic personality, but he's not overbearing. He's just a teddy bear."

Film has simple story with a twist

By EMILY PYEATT
 Staff writer

There's nuthin' tricky in "Trick." Instead, "Trick" is a simple romantic comedy about two guys attempting to have a one-night stand together. Other than the plot involving two guys instead of a guy and a girl, we've heard the ordinary story line before.

In order for "Trick" to work, director Jim Fall relies on characterization and attempts at a visually appealing style.

Gabriel (Christian Campbell, Neve's brother) is a shy musical theater writer who acts as though he is comfortable with his sexuality. Although he confesses that he has never quite fit in with the gay scene, it doesn't stop him from visiting a couple of New York clubs.

Clad in his clean-cut, button-down shirt and backpack, Gabriel awkwardly attempts to blend into the club scene.

At one club, he discovers Mark (John Pail Pitoc, in his film debut). Mark has a Botticelli-esque body and dances as a go-go boy in a red G-string. Attracted and enamored but embarrassed, Gabriel shies away from the

Film Review

The Facts

Title: "Trick"
Director: Jim Fall
Stars: Christian Campbell, John Paul Pitoc, Tori Spelling
Rating: R (language, sexual content, nudity)
Grade: C-
Five Words: Average boy meets boy flick

club with a disappointing frustration.

On the subway home, Gabriel finds none other than the attractive go-go boy, Mark. What follows is a night of flirtation and frustration. The guys attempt to find a place to have sex but are faced with people getting in the way throughout the evening.

Gabriel's roommate is a stereotypical, macho, straight guy full of sexual energy, and he keeps Gabriel locked out of his own apartment.

Gabe's friend (Tori Spelling) is a shallow, whiny actress who used to date Gabe when he was unsure of his sexual preferences. Spelling's character is ridiculously annoying, and one can't

help but wonder where the line between the character and the actress is really drawn.

One particularly interesting touch to the film is drag queen (Clinton Leupp), who is filled with vice toward Mark but humorously resembles Spelling.

Of course, after such a tedious night filled with rejection, Gabriel and Mark could just check into a motel room, but then we would have no movie.

Fall's visual style is like the film — ordinary. There is nothing spectacular about his camera work and directing, but Fall's simplicity is stylishly comfortable. His style is most evident and works best in the fast-paced club scenes, where characters come to life through color and pulsating music.

"Trick's" ordinariness does work for the film at times. Instead of an in-your-face "gay" film, "Trick" reveals gay and straight people interacting as real people do instead of just portraying the usual tensions. If anything, it is the straight characters who are the stereotyped outsiders. This change of orientation and the role reversal of Gabriel and Mark's relationship distinguish "Trick" from other one-night-stand relationship films.