

«Nica's Dream»), Donald Byrd («Lex»), «Each Time I Think of You»), Lee Morgan («Side Winder»), Thad Jones («That's Thad»), Freddie Hubbard («Bird Like»), Art Farmer...

La prestation fut de haut niveau : mise en place irréprochable ; voicing et ensemble parfaitement maîtrisé ; construction équilibrée. Les solistes ont été brillants sans jamais en rajouter. Sauzay, a été généreux, chaleureux dans son langage oscillant, au grès de son inspiration, du Rollins des débuts à Joe Henderson ou Gonsalves («Prelude to a Kiss»). Fabien May excella dans son rôle de leader, tant en présentateur qu'en musicien. Il a acquis une belle maîtrise instrumentale lui permettant un développement rigoureux de son discours devenu plus serein : du Clifford Brown («Lex») mais également du Lee Morgan («Philly Twist»). La section rythmique a été parfaite dans son rôle de soutien mais également avec des solistes de premier ordre : Sylvain Romano a assuré, intervenant avec justesse ; Mourad Benhammou est un batteur idéal pour ce type de musique dont il connaît toutes les finesses ; Pierre

Christophe fut égal à lui-même, plein de feeling et d'intelligence dans son accompagnement et d'originalité dans ses interventions remplies de lyrisme pimenté. Soirée formidable ! FWS

La célèbre brasserie parisienne, **Le Bœuf sur le toit**, haut lieu artistique depuis l'entre-deux-guerres, renouait le 2 février avec le jazz, auquel il aurait donné l'expression «faire le bœuf». L'enseigne, créée par Cocteau, et le somptueux intérieur art déco, donnent l'impression d'entrer dans une comédie musicale hollywoodienne. En guise de Groucho Marx, on eut Frédéric Charbaud, ci-devant bombardé «directeur artistique» du Bœuf, lequel a annoncé une programmation mensuelle (Nico Morelli, Déborah Benasouli, Guillaume de Chassy, Anne Pacéo) dont le peu d'envergure surprend pour un lieu si prestigieux. En France, on n'a pas (beaucoup) de jazz, mais on a des idées... Le meilleur nous a été réservé pour cette soirée inaugurale par le trio de l'impeccable Pierre Christophe (p), chargé d'animer le bœuf. JP

C'est une bien chouette équipe qui a fait chauffer le **Caveau de La Huchette** le

24 février : à la tête de son quartet, Nicola Sabato (b) s'était entouré de Dano Haider (g), Ludovic de Preissac (p) et Sylvain Glevarec (dm). Dès les premières mesures, subtiles et colorées de Dano Haider sur «Georgia on My Mind», le ton était donné : un swing élégant, renouvelé par des arrangements ou des choix de répertoire originaux. Bel exemple avec «Never Can Say Goodbye», tube du rhythm & blues et du disco, judicieusement recuisiné à la sauce jazz ; un choix qui marque le bon goût de Nicola Sabato qui, sideman attentif, sait être un leader inventif. Sa patte délicate a d'ailleurs été le vernis de cette jolie toile. On en redemande, Messieurs ! JP

Jérôme Partage, Félix W. Sportis et Jean Slamowicz

Bastia

Arte Mare, 22 novembre

Dans le cadre du festival des cultures méditerranéennes, l'association Arte Mare accueillait une actrice chanteuse en la personne de Maria de Medeiros. Révélée au grand public pour son rôle dans *Pulp Fiction*, aux côtés de Bruce



Maria de Medeiros et Bruno Rousselet

Willis, l'actrice portugaise délaisse pour un instant le grand écran afin de se consacrer à la chanson brésilienne. De parents musiciens, son père est pianiste, compositeur et chef d'orchestre, l'artiste s'est nourrie des chansons des musiciens brésiliens en exil, lors de la dictature militaire au Brésil. Joli challenge que celui relevé par Maria, car de nombreuses actrices se sont cassé les dents en changeant de registre. Pour l'occasion, la brune jeune femme est accompagnée de Bruno Rousselet (b), Pascal Salmon (p) et Julio Gonçalves (perc). La chanteuse toute de bleu vêtue entame son concert par des reprises de Caetano Veloso. «A Little More Blues», écrite lors de l'exil en Angleterre du musicien brésilien, donne la couleur de la soirée. La voix de Maria

Montréal (Canada)

Festival International de Jazz de Montréal, June 26 to July 6

Like many jazz festivals, the Montreal International Jazz Festival often relies on big ticket items to subsidize the more specialized, lower key and more musically respectable fare. Unlike most any other festival in the world, the massive and always impressive Montreal festival comes equipped with enough density – several venues within a four – block radius, also spotted with free outdoor stages on downtown streets closed to traffic for 10 days – that discerning listeners can mold the schedule to their tastes.

That paradoxical situation, between the glittering marquee stars and the serious musical matters in humbler settings, was particularly noticeable in the 2008 model. For this listener, at least in the first five days when I was in town, the high points occurred where smaller venues and higher aesthetic stakes were involved.

Special kudos go to the multi-concert Hank Jones "Invitation Series," especially in duets with Brad Mehldau – probably the best show of the fest – and Charlie Haden the next, with Jones' sly humor and casually astonishing pianistic graces shining into his late '80s. On the Jones/Haden night, there was much less attention paid to "Steal Away," their beautiful spiritual duet recording, than hoped for, but the rapport ran deep, especially on "We'll Be Together Again." Early on, Jones accidentally played the David Raksin waltz tune "My Love and I" in 4/4, and Haden stopped the tune to correct the metric math. It was a comic

relief moment rather than a problem: we were all friends there. (Haden had included the lovely tune because it was in the film noir-loving repertoire of his Quartet West, which played it the next night).

On the more avant-garde end of the spectrum, we heard the adventurous and witty Dutch marvel Corkesta. Led by the quixotic Cor Fuhler, a benevolent ruler who invites free improvisation and happens in and around his written parts, the band also dazzled the crowd at the Victoriaville festival in 2007 and sounded even more enlightened and enlightening in the busy thicket of the Montreal festival.

Off in another corner, around midnight in the late night venue of the Gesu for years the site of many of this festival's more intriguing sounds – Mehldau put in an invitingly quirky solo set. It was as if he wanted to dodge expectations and the usual gymnastic single lines and contrapuntal flurries. Instead, he repeatedly explored experimental sonic and dynamic densities and obsessively rhythmic attacks on the keyboard, even on the familiar strains of "Secret Love" or Brian Wilson's "God Only Knows." Mehldau was heeding a restless muse that night, to memorable effect, and he then put in a "straighter" but no less commanding performance with his great trio the next night.

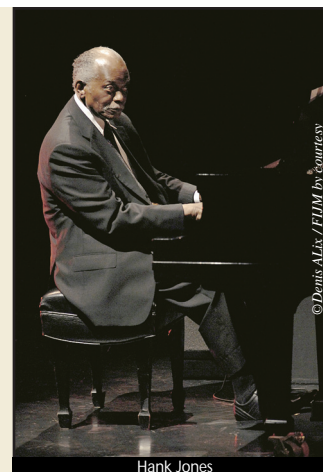
This was the year that Montreal native Leonard Cohen came out of hiding, for his first tour in fifteen years. His concerts just before the festival's official opening amounted to a grand homecoming event added onto the actual festival.

By contrast, two of the big ticket and high profile shows of the festival – Return to

Forever and Woody Allen – were also the least interesting, on musical terms. The much-buzzed-about Return to Forever reunion, heard here in the early stages of a long tour, pumped up the old fussy, chest-thumping style jazz-rock fusion circa the '70s. Unfortunately, the music, in which Chick Corea finally succumbed to reunite with the popular line-up with guitarist Al DiMeola, bassist Stanley Clarke and drummer Lenny White, didn't survive the flight into the 21st century with much grace or dignity. At one point, White took the microphone and boasted "in an era of boy bands, this is a man's band." In fact, the opposite was true. The music felt adolescent in its embrace of hubris and "romantic warrior" posturing, and much younger than other of Corea's projects.

Barely sufficient as a novelty item and tourist trap for visitors to his Monday night gig in New York City, Woody Allen's clarinet playing sounds especially bad in the context of a great world class jazz festival, which presumes to celebrate this great art. But here, the renowned filmmaker and infamously meager musician sold out two nights in the large Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier de la Place des Arts venue. Something was wrong with this picture, especially in a Francophile city where the clarinet figures so heavily in the ranks of respected musical instruments. On the other hand, if Allen the noodle brought an infusion of crowd-pleaser dollars into the machinery, more power to him.

Other highlights of the festival included the Saxophone Summit, with Joe Lovano, Dave Liebman and Ravi Coltrane coaxing heat and tasteful collective musicality from



Hank Jones

a context which could be a chaotic blow-fest. Marc Cary's trio offered a refreshing variation on the piano trio theme. The jazz vocal aspect ranged from the by-now legendary Dianne Reeves to an agreeably bright and wit-lined pop-jazz singer, Melody Gardot.

Montreal remains a prime jazz destination spot, a fine example of how a jazz festival should work – and that includes making some decisions based on monetary over artistic realities. Next year, the festival's 30th annual celebration, promises more pomp and musical circumstance, and a brand new venue in the expansive Place des Arts complex. On a sad, strange note, this year's festival program was the first without the fine old nightclub, the Spectrum, presently being demolished in the line of progress. But have no fear: all is indeed well in Montreal, progress and populism aside.

Josef Woodard