

two-part session recognizing Gene Norman's radio, recording and concert activity, via the Dave Pell Octet swinging strongly and an exuberant Jack Sheldon Big Band performing dynamic Tom Kubis arrangements.

The retrospective was produced by Ken Poston, who previously staged the first Jazz West Coast for KRON-FM radio.

—Patricia Myers

Molde International Jazz Festival

Molde, Norway

The European jazz festival scene grows by the year, with newcomers steadily entering the fray, high on hopes. But one of the hoariest members of the festival world, and one with an increasing profile, is tucked away in the small fjord-front town of Molde in Northern Norway. Next year, the festival will celebrate its 40th anniversary, making it one of the oldest festivals in the world, let alone Europe. Gray skies can scarcely hide the beauty of the place, overlooking the Romsdalsfjord, despite the fact that Nazi bombing nearly obliterated the place in 1942.

This year, the town of 23,000 population swelled up nearly four times its size, venues in the downtown hotels were densely packed, while the open-air spaces up in the hills offered inspiring vistas of the fjords below. Revelers stayed up into the wee hours, guided by light that never quite yields to darkness during the summer. Traffic was closed off downtown, where a large street fair included eats, goods, and music. One rainy afternoon, it was striking to hear wonderfully cacophonous/abstract drum 'n' bass improv from the young groups Kroyt and Wibutee, in public, no less. Where would that happen in the U.S.?

For at least one visitor, the gripping music came from "local" sources, and mostly from female musicians. Pianist Olga Konkova, originally from Russia but

now based in Oslo, is a marvel deserving greater exposure. With a unique expressive virtuosity, she reconstructs familiar tunes, turning "Norwegian Wood" into a thing of icy lyricism, and "Giant Steps" into a fascinating cerebral etude, rather than simply a chops foray.

ECM fans know of Norwegian vocalist Sidsel Endresen from her beautiful album *Exile*. But here, in a startling mime-theater-new music invention, "m'Alice in Wonderland," with theatrical collaborator Turi Tarjem, Endresen revealed gutsiness, extended vocal expertise (she has recently studied with Meredith Monk) and absurdist splendor and humor. ECM-connected violinist Lena Willemark joined Kirsten Braten Berg in a sensational and lustrous Norwegian folk music project, to be expanded here next year.

Free jazz with bite and crazy wit (a killer combo, and a seemingly European attitude) came from the group known simply as The Quintet, made up of young and old players from Oslo. And unapologetic, soul-warming romanticism came through the standards project of Metropolitan, featuring understated vocalist Beate S. Lech and the Halle/Eberson Sextet with strings on the side.

Carla Bley was one of the most impressive of the visiting American dignitaries, from a world of her own expressive devising. Bley's 4+4 ensemble—four rhythm sectioners, four horn players—is a little big band well-suited to her wit and musical wisdom. In that same small, crammed club, the Woody Herman Big Band, led by Frank Tiberi, showed up that week, higher on polish than invention, and Clark Terry, riding high on his link to Ellingtonia this year, exuded his expected, inimitable warmth.

The low point of the festival came in a bizarre incident during Ray Charles' otherwise fine set. A misunderstanding between a manager and Norwegian Television, and a demand for a videotape (equivalent to demanding a tape from NBC) regrettably became public when Charles threatened to stop the show unless the tape was surrendered. After a tense five minutes of waiting, Charles re-

sumed his set, but of course, it wasn't show biz as usual, and the Charles incident left a bad taste of Ugly Americanism in its wake.

In better news from the States, the all-star group of John Scofield, Joe Lovano, Dave Holland and Al Foster showed promise, if not a clear identity. Dee Dee Bridgewater, backed by Ray Brown's trio, showed up with her trademark admix of bluesy swagger, show biz flair, and jazz chops, hardly purist and bully for her.

Molde may not be a blockbuster festival on the circuit, but it's one with legs and a sure sense of itself. It's a festival enhanced by both the intensity of its cultural focus on jazz at large and by the unique strength of the indigenous music scene in this small, breathtaking country.

—Josef Woodard

Jane Monheit with the Barry Altschul Trio

The Caviarateria, New York City

In a sea of young, wannabe jazz singers, Jane Monheit is a refreshing change. I had read of her finishing as runner-up in the Thelonious Monk Competition, but actually hearing her was more than a pleasant surprise. When we walked into the Caviarateria at 310 West Broadway (right next to the Soho Grand Hotel), she was in the middle of a very convincing "Body and Soul." The ease of delivery and clarity of sound and diction was readily apparent. As the set went on, through repertoire and feeling, she proved to be a 20-year-old with the mind and soul of a jazz veteran.

"I Thought About You" echoed the attributes of "Body and Soul" and showed an ability to swing in an unforced manner, as did a later-in-the-set "I Wish You Love." Jazz musicians love to play songs at a variety of tempos and, generally speaking, good melodies can work at any speed. Add words to the mix and the equation may change. Monheit made her