

# JUMPIN' JAZZ JOINTS

In case you haven't noticed, we have some new Jazz Joints around town. OK, three of them are in very elegant surroundings in the heart of downtown. But, to me, it's the sound that makes it a Joint. As much as I enjoy the elegant surroundings, if they have that sound, it's a Joint. And, when I hear that sound, I know I'm in a "Jumpin' Jazz Joint."

We are going to visit four venues that have recently begun offering jazz entertainment.

The first is an old standby that Kansas Citians have known for years, Jake Edwards Bar B Que, founded in 1950 on 51st and Main. Lela and Mike

Baker bought the restaurant in 2000 and in May of 2005 moved it to its new location at 8314 Wornall. They changed the name to **Jake's Smokehouse Bar & Grill**, but they still carry on the traditions of the original Jake Edwards Bar B Que, including the sweet potato fries, and the original recipes for their rubs, cooking, and sauce.

In September 2005, they built a patio to expand their capacity and to offer outside dining. Lela handles the front of the house and Mike makes sure that what comes out of the kitchen is "Original Jake's."

Then, in October, they took a fateful journey. Hurricaned out of a planned trip to Florida, they went, instead, to Memphis. There they visited the BBQ joints offering jazz and blues. Lela told me that she was knocked off her feet with the great food and entertainment and she said, "We heard the music and decided we had to bring a little bit of Memphis back to Kansas City." She came back, thought about it, talked to people, and made a decision.

The result was that, in May of this year, Jake's started offering jazz and blues on the patio on Friday and Saturday nights from 8:00 to 11:00. On July 2nd they had their first Annual Jam hosted by Millie Edwards and Lori Tucker. It was a smash—more players than you could ever imagine showed up. Lela told me that the music has helped their business, so, when the temperature drops and the winds blow and, maybe, even snow falls, Lela is going to move the music inside where it's toasty so that you'll still be able to enjoy the music brought to you by this addition to our jazz and blues scene. Their number: 816-444-1517.

Let's head up Wornall, get over on Main, and visit **1924 Main**—convenient, that's the address and name of this restaurant and jazz club. When we enter, we go downstairs to the **Cellar Gallery & Lounge**. As we enter the room, the first things we notice are the paintings and sculptures throughout this cozy and intimate setting. There to greet us is Arrika Brazil, the art curator and lounge manager. She selects the art objects—which are for sale—books the artists, and then gets behind the bar.

You can sit at the bar or on the couches and hassocks that line the room. The paintings hang from copper water pipes that encircle the room over the old stone foundation. The under-lighted striped bar is a nice touch. Even though the floor is concrete and considering the stone foundation, the acoustics are good—I'm sure aided by the low ceiling and the paintings covering the stone walls.

Rob Dalzell, after extensive renovations, opened 1924 Main about a year and a half ago. Subsequently the lounge opened and,

about three months ago, Arrika came on board and started bringing in the artwork and jazz artists. She's booking some of our best and better known Kansas City artists. Arrika is also a jazz vocalist who sings around town and, sometimes, sits in with whoever is playing at the Cellar. When I asked Arrika what her objectives were for the Cellar she said that "Our goal is to present Kansas City's best musicians and artists in an elegant and relaxing atmosphere." Well, they sure have done that. The

BY ED FENNER



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Cellar Gallery & Lounge opens at 6:30 on Thursdays through Saturdays. Music is from 7:30–10:30 on Thursdays, 7:30–11:30 on Fridays and 9–midnight on Saturdays.

So, if you just want to lay back, have a drink, look at great art, hear great music, and maybe snack on an appetizer, this is the place to go. 816-472-1924.

OK, now we're going to get over on Baltimore and head north again—disregard all the detours and roadblocks; it'll be worth it when it's all done. What's that I hear? Is it Satchmo, Frank, Sammy, Tommy, Benny, Glenn? Wake up Ed, you're either dreaming or hearing the ghosts of the past at the world famous **Drum Room** in the Hilton President Hotel at 14th and Baltimore.

Here is another great renovation job. First opened in 1941, The President Hotel was a prestigious hostelry offering the leading national big bands in the Drum Room. It closed in 1980 and the pigeons, rats, and others took up residency. Developer Ron Jury took on the \$45.4 million restoration project of this wonderful 14-story structure. The hotel reopened in January of this year and the Drum Room had its official grand re-opening on June 1st with Ida McBeth. The dining room/club seats 120 and accommodates 69 more in the bar area.

Jennifer Kramer is the Drum Room manager and is very excited about the club and the perpetuation of the Kansas City jazz legacy and tradition. She is bringing in the best artists that Kansas City has to offer. As she looks down the road, Jennifer intends to, occasionally, bring in national acts. She told me that the Drum Room was "Recreated with the vision of bringing back the famous musical history of the past into the room." She also said that they are very excited about being on the leading edge of the downtown Power & Light District Development when there will be some 425,000 square feet of restaurants, bars, and retail establishments, plus, of course, the Sprint Center arena and the AMC Theater.

After opening the Drum Room, Jennifer was confronted by a couple of items of concern to her constituents. One was a question of the "line of sight"—being able to see the musicians. The other was that there was no place close to the band to just have a drink and listen to the music. Well, she has addressed both of these issues. The bandstand has been moved over so that there is more visibility for the diners and those in the bar. Also, she has added four tables with open seating right by the bandstand for the non-diners.

So, take a step back in time and dream of what it once was. But, more importantly, enjoy the fantastic

jazz musicians that we have today right here in our town. Kansas City, here we come! 816-303-1686.

Leave the car parked. We're just going to go out of the Drum Room, hang a right, and walk up to **Truman's**, housed in the Clubhouse on Baltimore just a block away at 13th and Baltimore. The Clubhouse on Baltimore is what was once the famous Kansas City Club. The Kansas City Club has moved to 918 Baltimore and is in the old University Club building—they merged some 4 or 5 years ago.

The Clubhouse on Baltimore still retains the elegance, charm and atmosphere of the days of old. On the upper levels there are large banquet rooms and condos. As you enter and go to your left, you immediately find yourself in the huge lobby with its 30-foot ceilings. As you stroll over to the south you will find the bar and lounge area. They removed the walls that had originally sectioned off the offices. The area has a low ceiling and the acoustics are unbelievably good.

David Basse is the impetus behind this new jazz venue. When I asked him what he does there, other than sing and beat the skins on occasion, he said "I'm the drummer in more ways than one." David does the booking through his City Light Entertainment production company. Things kicked off on New Year's Eve, 2005, but the real Grand Opening was a big bash on March 28th to benefit the UMKC Conservatory of Music and Dance Concert Jazz Band's European Jazz Tour. Food, drinks, and music were available in several rooms on different levels. It was a great night.

Jazz is the thing on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights from 8:00 to midnight. Some of the recently featured artists have been New Orleans'—now Kansas City's—sax man Loren Pickford and bassist Micah Herman. In August or September Truman's will start offering lunch. Then what?

August 4th and 5th are going to be special. The Jazz Foundation of America sponsors appearances by displaced New Orleans jazz musicians around the country. They go to schools, nursing homes, and other places spreading the "jazz word." Well, after their day gigs on August 4th and 5th, they will be at Truman's. Mark your calendar and come in to hear these great New Orleans Musicians. 800-811-2469.

Well, my friends, that's the end of our new "Jumpin' Jazz Joints" tour. I encourage you to get out and enjoy a sampling of each of these clubs. It's you that keeps jazz alive in Kansas City. :||

on the flute yet. He told me who else [would be on the date], and they were the top guys in town. As they say, you're only as good as your last 8 bars. I kept working on the flute, [Clare] wrote some parts for me, then I got called to do a television show, in the 60s. I kept getting little bits of things, record dates. Maybe you're third or fourth call or somebody else can't make it. Often you get dumped into something you're not really up to, but you just have to swing.

**JAM:** You're telling me that if you have the chops, and you persist, and you get the usual breaks, you can have a really interesting and lucrative career.

**GARY:** It's much harder now.

Some colleagues who were great musicians moved out west with a composer-conductor named Peter Matz. He made a big splash with Streisand. He had done *Once Upon a Mattress* with Carol Burnett in New York. She wanted him in California. I met one of the Matz group, Joe Solder, who played the same instruments I did. Joe said, "I do contracting too, and I want to put you on this gig" I had worked real hard on flute by then. [Joe said, "I need a sub for a tenor player who plays bassoon. Is there any chance you could play the bassoon parts on the bass clarinet? You'll have to transcribe, the instrument is in a different key." Could I? Sure. Good old Don Scheib at KU! The next year, Joe moved over to be a contractor for TV. The contractor can't be one of the orchestra members. So Joe hired me to play first chair.

The Burnett show was the single most validating thing that ever happened to me. Starting about 1973, for Carol's weekly show, I did the last 6 years, 26 weeks, and reruns. I was working. I was happy, I was raising a family. Joe Solder and Peter Matz hired me to play the Carol Burnett Show and the phone started ringing. I've played the Oscars for 24 years. I think this year is the 24th. :||

**Editor's Corner, continued from page 3**

here, at UMKC and the Blue Room jam sessions. Some are as accomplished as Sonny was when he was a kid and already making waves with Bud, Miles, and Monk. Go hear them!

In the May issue I gushed over the exhibition of Dan White's jazz photography at the AJM. The exhibit closed in mid-July with concert and discussion of some of White's key subjects, including Luqman Hamza, Myra Taylor, Lucky Wesley, Ahmad Aladeen, Horace Washington, and Wallace B. Jones. I thank Dan White and the American Jazz Museum for making this wonderful exhibit possible. :||

