
March 2015

A Midterm Report



We are halfway through the 2014-15 ATJS season. It's a good time to reflect on recent accomplishments and to look forward to see how we can make the Society better. We are most fortunate to have a thriving traditional jazz scene in the Greater Austin Area. We at ATJS hope that we are part of the reason for that success, through our concert series, publicity and outreach, and other activities. The strength of the Austin jazz scene helps ensure that the quality of our concert series is very high, and in fact from

an artistic standpoint we are off to a very good start in 2014-15. We have had strong performances by Silver Creek Jazz Band, La Grosse Tete, Mission City Hot Rhythm Cats and Thrift Set Orchestra. For those who missed it, Thrift Set gave a magic afternoon of tightly arranged hot jazz that sounded a bit like a series of recently-discovered recordings from the early 1930s.

The January 11 Jam Session drew about 170 attendees, of whom a record 35 performed. When the Jam Session idea was revived in 2003, it was combined with a record and CD sale, and a total of 12 musicians performed. It has turned into a very strong event, and part of its appeal is that after many years previously unknown traditional jazz musicians appear, meet other players and become part of the Austin traditional jazz scene. Sean Newton, Art Martinez, Jimmy Vence and Bill Troiano all come to mind. Strong performances were turned in this year by newcomers Don Denzin (clarinet), Dave Sloan (bass), Richard Golladay (piano) and Dave Hargett (trombone).

Attendance at regular concerts has been respectable but less than thrilling. All concerts have drawn better than 100 attendees, with Thrift Set leading the way at 143. It is puzzling as to why some bands draw well one year but not so well another, or why a band which appears to offer what the ATJS crowd wants does not do so well. Your Board of Directors has wavered between offering more events versus drawing events down until the remaining ones all draw well, then expanding once again. This year, at least, we are offering more events in the hope that good audiences can be found for them.

Bill Troiano, a recent addition to the Board, has done a terrific job of finding new Internet event boards to list ATJS activities. Despite the cost, ATJS has stayed the course with print advertising as getting concert news to the largest possible audience every month. It appears that no single method will gather in larger audiences, so we are trying a variety of methods. As opined before, in a metropolitan area with one million people, we should be able to find two hundred people who would like to hear traditional jazz events on a regular basis.

The rest of the 2014-15 ATJS season looks very strong. March and April feature two veteran jazz bands which are proven fan favorites: Second Line Jazz Band on March 8 and the Band Aid Jazz Band on April 12. Our special concert should be very special indeed. We have wanted to get Banu Gibson to Austin for a long time, and our opportunity has arrived. Banu's Hot Jazz ensemble is a group of all-stars, most of whom have dazzled Austin audiences before in other bands. A maxim states that the Chinese use the same pictogram for danger and opportunity. The Austin traditional jazz community has perhaps the chance of a lifetime to hear a jazz legend on May 17. At the same time, you get what you pay for, and the Society is going out on a financial limb to bring this group here.

We are asking support for a worthy cause. We could use help underwriting the concert, and by all means attend it and bring any friends who will come with you. Tickets are available through the ATJS website (www.atjs.org) and at the March and April concerts. Student admissions for the special concert are the same five dollars we ask for regular concerts. It's a great bargain for young people. We can hope that some of the new attendees will turn into lifelong traditional jazz fans.

Finally, the 2014-15 season will wind up with the traditional ATJS All-Star Concert on June 14. Confirmed players include Bob Krenkel on clarinet and saxophone, Mike Pittsley on trombone, Tommy Griffith on piano, Tyler Jackson on string bass and Butch Miles on drums. Other invitations are outstanding and will be announced shortly. This will be a very strong ensemble, as most ATJS All-Star groups have been.

So there you have it, halfway through the schedule. Your ATJS Directors hope you are enjoying your traditional jazz experiences with the Society and will help the Society continue to grow and prosper.

Sincerely yours,
Dave Stoddard
President

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Thanks to our Poster Hosts!

Every month, the Society puts up posters for its concerts. Here are our current poster venues.

Cedar Park Public Library

Leander Public Library

Round Rock Public Library

Lamar Senior Activity Center
2874 Shoal Crest Avenue
Austin, TX

Premier Music Academy
1400 E. Old Settlers Blvd.
Round Rock, TX

Half-Price Books
1601 South I-35
Round Rock, TX
(and occasionally in other stores)

Strait Music Company North
13945 Research Boulevard
Austin, TX

Strait Music Company South
2428 W. Ben White Blvd.
Austin, TX

Sam Bass Music
801 Brandi Lane
Round Rock, TX

Music and Arts
2541 South I-35
Round Rock, TX

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ATJS Musical Outreach

The Austin Traditional Jazz Society seeks to engage new groups of potential fans, especially school students. It has formed a speakers bureau to present traditional jazz awareness programs to interested groups. If your group would like to hear about the birth of jazz, how traditional forms took hold and have evolved, and how music impacts education and learning, give Martha Stoddard an e-mail at info@atjs.org. There is no charge for these presentations.

Enjoying San Francisco-Style Jazz

One of the interesting aspects of jazz is its fragmentation. There is a huge divide between traditional and modern jazz forms, but there are also large differences among various styles in the traditional jazz idiom. What's more, there are large differences between traditional jazz as played today and jazz as it was played in the Teens and Twenties. In many instances, the tunes are the same but the style in which they are presented is not.

One way of getting familiar with the traditional jazz songbook is to listen to performances of recordings in one of the two major styles prevalent today—Chicago and San Francisco. These names reflect where the styles started and not necessarily where they are played today. In this issue we will talk mostly about the San Francisco Style.

In 1939 a San Francisco trumpeter named Lu Watters decided that jazz, particularly swing, was getting away from its roots. He put together a traditional jazz band which sought to go back to the early days of jazz. The result was the Yerba Buena Jazz Band. It played the old tunes, but in a style which was noticeably different from early jazz performances. For a start, the piano-banjo-rhythm section was far heavier and more driving than those of early jazz bands. The front line played in a collective improvisation format much more familiar to today's Dixieland fans than anything which was played in the Teens or Twenties.

The apparent model for Yerba Buena was King Oliver and his Creole Jazz Band. Yerba Buena and the Creole Jazz Band had the same two-cornet front line format, but the Creole used a string bass in the rhythm section. The Creole Jazz Band's recordings are very ensemble-centered and sound a bit lumpy by today's standards, but at least part of this can be attributed to the acoustical recording methods of the day.

The Yerba Buena Jazz Band came along at a time when the art of improvised soloing had come a long way from 1923, when the jazz world was just beginning to hear the solos improvised by notable innovators such as Louis Armstrong and Miff Mole. In this respect the Yerba Buena harkened back to 1923. Their recordings are heavy, driving and very ensemble-based.

The Yerba Buena was an artistic and commercial success. It lasted until about 1957, when Watters broke up the band and retired from playing in favor of a career in geology. In the early 1950s, successful San Francisco jazz bands were led by two Yerba Buena sidemen, cornetist Bob Scobey and trombonist Turk Murphy. Scobey formed the Frisco Jazz Band in 1949 and led it until the early 1960s. He took with him the popular banjoist/singer Clancy Hayes. The Frisco Jazz Band name passed on to trumpeter and Murphy alumnus Bob Schulz.

Murphy's playing style has been widely imitated, especially by fellow San Francisco-style trombonists. He blasted much if not all of the time, producing a trombone style that lacked subtlety but was loud and driving. Unlike many of Murphy's imitators, the blasting was built on solid trombone technique. What's more, Murphy was a fine jazz composer. He wrote Trombone Rag in part to separate himself from the imitators, most of whom could not play the trombone solo passages. Murphy had a long career, keeping his band together until his death in 1987.

One of the most successful of all San Francisco-style bands started as a college Dixieland band at Purdue University in 1947. The group played college functions as the Peerless Jazz Band and paying gigs as the Salty Dogs. After the original generation of musicians graduated from Purdue, they settled in Chicago and continued playing as the Salty Dogs. Their successors at Purdue also played under that name, causing confusion until the Chicago group took its current name, the Original Salty Dogs.

The Salty Dogs are best known for their recordings from the 1970s, when they featured a front line of Lew Green on cornet, Kim Cusack on clarinet and Murphy stylist Tom Bartlett on trombone. They have now been together in some form for quite a few years and are well worth a listen.

An interesting San Francisco-style band has been together in Seattle for many years. This is the Uptown Lowdown Jazz Band, a hard-driving outfit. Like many traditional jazz bands in this day and age, Uptown Lowdown plays with various numbers of players in its lineup. The largest of these is the festival band. The band's trademark is having up to three performers who can play bass saxophone. At times all three bass saxes are going at the same time, backed back a strong tuba in the rhythm section. The results are quite interesting.

The festival circuit has also found room for the newest San Francisco-style band of note, John Gill's Yerba Buena Stompers. John Gill, a banjo player who lived in Austin for a few years, has assembled a band of heavy hitters including Tom Bartlett on trombone, Duke Heitger and Murphy alumnus Leon Oakley on cornet and trumpet, New Orleans notable Orange Kellin on clarinet and Clint Baker on tuba.

These bands give a good definition of the San Francisco style of jazz, but there are other San Francisco bands of note. Fans of the style would do well to develop a library of recordings. Many of the early LPs are available on CD and offer the bands at their best in recording studios. The recordings on YouTube vary from older studio recordings to videos shot at jazz festivals. These will certainly do to get you started. Happy Listening!

The following recordings are all on YouTube. To call them up, go to YouTube, enter the artist and the name of the tune, and you should be on your way.

Lu Watters' Yerba Buena Jazz Band – Irish Black Bottom
 Lu Watters Yerba Buena Jazz Band – At a Georgia Camp Meeting
 Lu Watters and the Yerba Buena Jazz Band – Minstrels of Annie Street (written by Turk Murphy)

Turk Murphy – New Orleans Stomp
 Turk Murphy – The Curse of an Aching Heart
 Turk Murphy's Jazz Band – Trombone Rag (written by Turk Murphy)
 Turk Murphy's Jazz Band – After You've Gone

Original Salty Dogs Jazz Band – New Orleans Shuffle
 Original Salty Dogs Jazz Band – Grandpa's Spells
 Original Salty Dogs Jazz Band – Georgia Swing
 Original Salty Dogs Jazz Band – That's a Plenty

Uptown Lowdown Jazz Band – Canal Street Blues
 Uptown Lowdown Jazz Band – Since My Best Gal Turned Me Down
 Uptown Lowdown Jazz Band – 1919 March
 Uptown Lowdown Jazz Band – Original Dixieland One-Step

Bob Schulz and the Frisco Jazz Band – Dallas Blues
 Bob Schulz and the Frisco Jazz Band – Oriental Strut
 Bob Schulz and the Frisco Jazz Band – Kansas City Stomps

Yerba Buena Stompers – Over the Waves
 Yerba Buena Stompers – Swing That Music
 Yerba Buena Stompers – Yerba Buena Stomp



The Second Line Jazz Band



The Second Line Jazz Band is a veteran traditional jazz ensemble with a loyal fan following in the Austin area.

When: Sunday, March 8, 2015 from 2 to 5 p.m. Doors open 1:00 p.m.

Where: Cap City Comedy Club, 8120 Research Blvd. (US 183) at Anderson Square in North Austin.

Admission: \$10, Students, with ID, \$5.00. Tickets may be purchased at the door.

Features: Good food (kitchen is open 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.), full bar to 5:00 p.m. (suggested minimum: 2 items, food and/or drink). Two dance floors, large free parking lot with unlimited overflow a block east. Hall holds up to 350 people — lots of room for all! ATJS concerts are Family-Friendly!

www.atjs.org

512-451-6350

ATJS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit
organization