

# ARTS ALIVE

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THE SOUTHERN NEVADA MAGAZINE OF THE ARTS

ALLIED ARTS COUNCIL  
APRIL/MAY/JUNE 1991  
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JOHN ABRAHAM'S RHYTHM NOTION

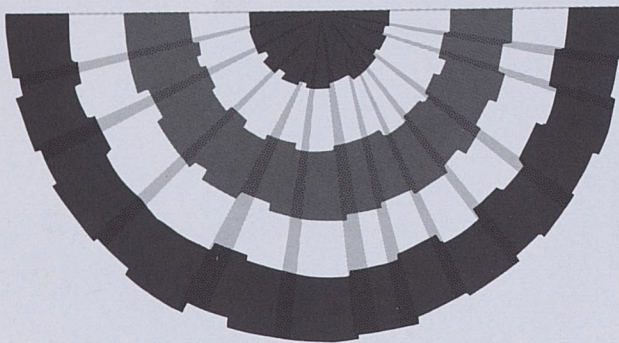
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RENAISSANCE MAN MARK WALTERS

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THE CULTURE IN BOULDER CITY

THE NEVADA STATE MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
PRESENTS  
AMERICA'S LIVING FOLK TRADITIONS



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1986 Fellows

April 13, 4:00 p.m.  
Lorenzi Park

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Museum Patio

**Chesley Goseyun Wilson**  
*Apache fiddle maker*  
1989 Fellow

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**Dewey Balfa  
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**Symposium on Regional  
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May 25, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Museum Auditorium

**Cajun Music Film  
and Discussion**

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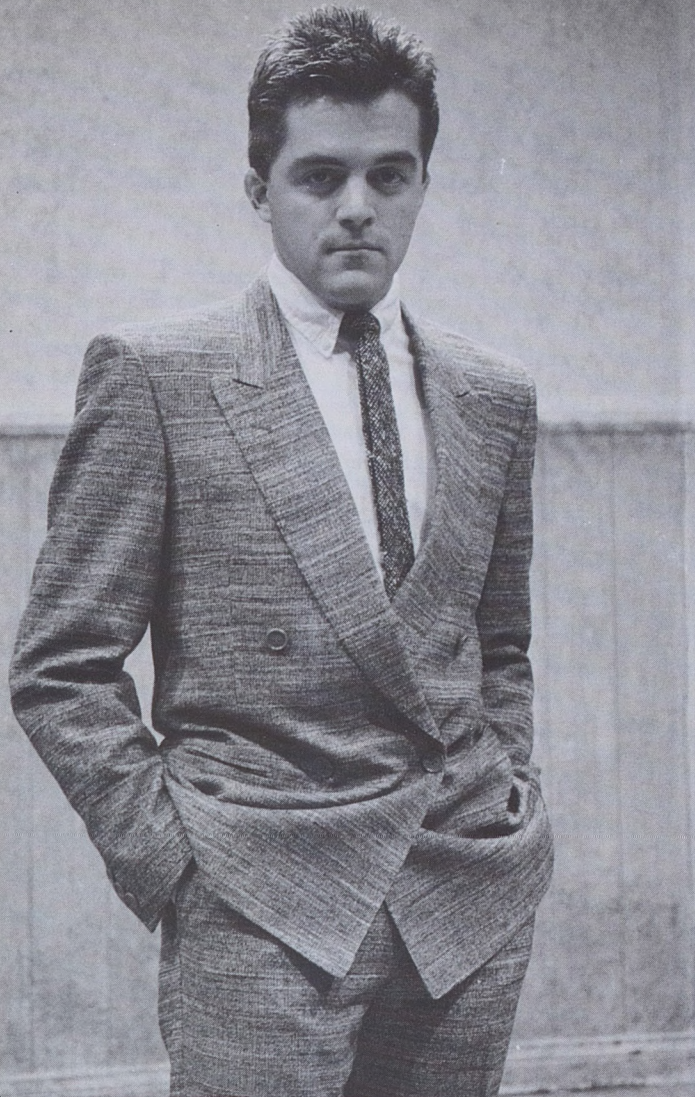
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Deadline for July-August-September issue is June 1.

ARTS ALIVE (752690) is published sixteen times a year at the subscription price of \$10 a year, only as part of regular membership dues, by the Allied Arts Council of Southern Nevada, 3750 South Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, Nevada, 89119-5619. Second-class postage paid at Las Vegas mailing office. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to ARTS ALIVE, 3750 South Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, Nevada, 89119-5619.



Mark-Louis Walters. Photo by Sylvia Hill. Story on page 22.

## ON THE COVER



John Abraham. Photo by Cheryl O'Gara. See story on page 18.

# WHAT CAN ALLIED ARTS COUNCIL DO FOR YOU?

You know what AAC does for the community -- presents artists in schools through the Class Act program, saves Nevada's classic neon signs for the planned Museum of Neon Art, presents Jazz Month in May, the Choreographers' Showcase in February and art exhibits in the Allied Arts Gallery all year long, as well as promotes and publicizes our cultural community through Arts Alive and weekly media calendars.

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# THE CONTRIBUTORS

DAVID RENZI is a feature writer for the *Las Vegas SUN*, a great metropolitan daily. This is his first and, we say with confidence, last article for *Arts Alive*, a magazine he holds in high regard. We wish we could say that of him.

Renzi wishes he could say the same of Scott Dickensheets, the publication's associate editor, whom he will loathe until he can write a better story than Dickensheets' account of UNLV professor Richard Wiley in the March-April 1990 edition.

Aside from this odious character flaw (which he is working diligently to maintain), Renzi, 28, is a questionable wordsmith for whom the human condition holds no fascination whatsoever.

He was moved (against his will) in 1964 from Phoenix to Las Vegas, where he has floundered since. A graduate of Chaparral High School and UNLV, Renzi

began his newspaper career covering Chaparral High football games for the now-defunct *Valley Times* in 1979 and 1980.

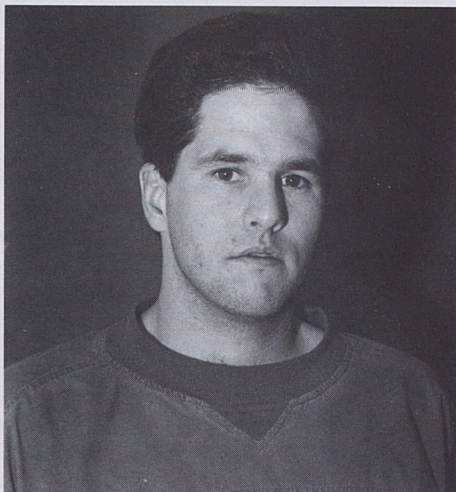
He was a stringer covering high school sports for the *Las Vegas SUN* from 1982-1984, then for the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, where he was tempted with full-time employment but ultimately disappointed, from 1984-87.

Lured back to the *SUN* with the promise of gainful employment with the first opening, Renzi covered sports part time for three months before getting his first full-time reporting job in April 1987.

After a falling out with then sports editor Mike Fitzgerald, who left unpaid a sizable bar tab at the Philly Pub upon departing Las Vegas, he transferred to the newspaper's features section where he currently works.

A jazz buff, Renzi has interviewed Louie Bellson (his favorite drummer), Maynard Ferguson, Jean Luc-Ponty, Milt Jackson and Billy Higgins among others.

*Editor's Note: This is what you get when you let writers compose their own contributor's notes.*



BILL MOODY braved the murky world of Las Vegas jazz clubs for his contribution to this issue's package of jazz stories. Moody has written a mystery novel and received a grant from the Benny Carter Jazz Research Fund for his non-fiction book, *The Jazz Exiles*. He has perhaps the strangest answering machine message of any of this issue's contributors.

ERIK JOSEPH had a tough time tracking down super-busy profile subject Mark-Louis Walters, but did manage to corner him long enough to conduct a brief interview. In real life, Joseph works for the Nevada Film Commission.

This issue's survey of the Boulder City cultural scene marks the debut in these pages of Boulder City teacher and writer FRAN HARAWAY. When not writing or teaching, she breakfasts with other Boulder City cranks and complains about the pending annexation of Boulder City by neighboring Henderson, and other problems unique to that city over the hill.

JOHN POWERS has written for San Diego's *North County Pages*, among others, and has acted in numerous theatrical and low-budget movie roles. This issue he looks at a recent boomlet in neon art in Las Vegas. His answering machine recently featured George Bush.

"The Love That Kills" is the latest installment of PATRICIA McCONNEL's *None of the Above* column. Recently awarded a Nevada State Council on the Arts writing fellowship, McConnel has holed up in Moab, Utah, where she is spending her grant period working on a novel and writing perceptive essays about life in that region of the desert Southwest.

KATHY KAUFFMAN, who reviewed the *A Common Thread* exhibit for this issue, owns a Ph.D. in Fine Arts/Women's Studies, and teaches a variety of art classes at Sierra Nevada College, in Incline Village.

KAMY CUNNINGHAM, who was born in Shanghai, China, and fled to Sacramento on a silk and spice boat to escape the Chinese Revolution, wrote about the Quiet Music Society for this issue. An English instructor at UNLV, she has recently completed a novel. She currently has a contract for a book-length critical study of women mystery writers. As far as we can tell, she doesn't have an answering machine.

EDITOR *Patrick Gaffey*

ASSOCIATE EDITOR *Scott Dickensheets*

DESIGN/PRODUCTION DIRECTOR *Leilani Austria*

CONTRIBUTORS *Kamy Cunningham, Sylvia Hill, Patricia McConnel, Bill Moody, Mary Whalen, Lee Zaichick*

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## REPORT

## ARTS AND THE ECONOMY

*Las Vegas arts groups assess the recession*

by SCOTT DICKENSHEETS

Earlier this season, its eye on the worsening economy, Nevada Opera Theatre decided to axe a planned production of *La Bohème*, scheduling instead a performance of *Tosca*, a move which saved the money-conscious organization a quick \$40,000 in production costs.

That's only one of several reactions by Las Vegas arts groups to the economic downturn of recent months. Now that even White House officials are using the word *recession*, many experts predict tough times ahead. But no one seems to agree how deep the recession will be or how long it will last, and cultural organizations – which depend largely on corporate donations and individual contributions – are taking or planning a variety of measures, even though most report few adverse effects traceable to the recession so far.

Nevada Opera Theatre, for instance, has lopped \$95,000 from this year's budget, according to director Eileen Hayes, including the money saved by the scheduling change.

To help compensate, Hayes and her board are putting some muscle into their once-languid corporate fundraising drive, pursuing those dollars with a new vigor. "If you're going to survive," she said, "you just have to have that kind of funding." She further noted that since NOT has now lasted five years, it is now eligible for a wider spectrum of grants, and a stronger program ad drive will net a few extra bucks.

Money woes won't keep the opera performers from doing their thing, however. NOT is diversifying, planning more outreach activities like concerts in local libraries and before civic groups. But, she noted, "The main stage season is being determined at this point mainly by economics."

Other organizations are taking less dramatic measures. The Las Vegas Symphony, for instance, hasn't taken out its budget knives yet. "The way we're going to handle this is to not grow much next year," said Judith Markham, the Symphony's director. "We're not increasing our requests to donors and patrons; we're keeping them at the same level."

She expects to encounter cost increases in areas the Symphony can't control, "but we think they'll be modest. The thing is not to get greedy, but to remain calm and steady."

Even in tight times, Markham doesn't feel corporate contributors will abandon the

group. "Contributors are getting something for donating to the symphony, so we think they'll still come through, because they get a lot of visibility. I don't really think they're cutting back their contribution pool."

"We're tightening our shorts," snorted Rick Romito in a moment of fiscal levity. The head of UNLV's Performing Arts Center, Romito is responsible for scheduling the venerable Charles Vanda Master Series. He's taking a wait and see attitude.

"It's having an obvious effect," he said of the recession. "It's having an effect on our planning, on the way we package programs, select discounts, and market the subscription series."

The real key to prospering, he says, is controlling perceptions. "People want a bargain now. Most people's paychecks haven't changed much. They want to feel they're getting more for their money." So Romito and his staff are rethinking the discounts offered to certain classes of patrons.

Romito acknowledged that economic concerns are playing into the artist selection process as well, mostly in subtle ways. "We're taking a long, hard look at high-ticket artists that, a year ago, I'd have been more comfortable booking. We're more cautious. We're currently booking for the season two years from now, so talk about shooting in the dark...." Who knows what the recession will look like then?

On the other hand, he pointed out that those long booking cycles help insulate the Master Series from short-term economic turbulence. If the recession lasts only a few months longer, the series will roll over it almost without feeling a bump.

"I'm confident that the long-term impact of the recession will be negligible. If anything, it will make us work harder at encouraging people to come to our events."

Sue Krieger of Nevada Dance Theatre also sounded optimistic, sort of. "Fundraising in the arts is always tough," she said. "But I don't think Las Vegas has been as hard hit as other cities." She says she hasn't seen a drop in ticket sales due to the recession, or anything else, but NDT hasn't had a performance since December.

In terms of retooling their fundraising approach, Krieger said NDT is going after small businesses, "looking for sources of new money. Everybody goes to the same people year after year." Baby boomers and working women will also be targeted, and the organization will beef up efforts to secure out-of-state foundation grants from such heavyweights as Philip Morris and AT&T.

Over at the Nevada Institute for

Contemporary Art, they're charging full speed ahead, recession or not. "We're creating more categories of membership at the higher levels," said NICA's Arlene Blut. "We can't bring in the kind of high-quality exhibits we're known for if we cut back. We're already committed to some expensive exhibits next year. We'll just have to double our efforts."

So far, however, despite predictions of rocky times for arts organizations, the recession hasn't packed much of a punch. Romito, who also oversees the university's performance halls, says non-subscription ticket sales for some groups using his venues have been sluggish, but not alarmingly so. "Ticket sales are happening much closer to the event," he said. "We're seeing sell-outs the day of the event, instead of several days before. People are waiting to see if they still have \$30 in their pockets."

"There have been drops in single-ticket sales," he admitted, "particularly for high-priced events. And people who were entitled to discounts but did use them are more inclined to use them now. We're seeing an increase in the use of discounts."

And John Smith, of the Nevada School of the Arts, reports spring enrollments are lagging behind projections, due mainly to the tightened economy. But he hasn't had to tinker with his budget yet, mainly because a drop in students also means a drop in instructor costs. The school's *return* student rate is the highest ever, he says; the drop is entirely in new enrollments, something Smith said he understands: "If I was a casino worker in danger of losing my job because of the economy, the arts might be the last thing I think of."

What about the attitude on the giving side of the equation?

Delores Neilson, who heads Southwest Gas's corporate giving program, said "What we're finding is that there are more requests for the available money. If we have any difficulty, it's trying to accommodate the various worthy causes. We're trying to be careful about how we allocate our funding." Is Southwest Gas cutting back its funding pool? "No, not to my knowledge."

Several people interviewed for this article seemed to feel the recession has already dealt its worst, that the economy will soon be surging forward. Either way, effects have been felt; as NOT director Eileen Hayes said with a sigh, "it will be a long time before we do another *Carmen*." aa

## REPORT

## SIGNS OF THE ARTS IN BOULDER CITY

*Things are happening on the other side of Railroad Pass*

by FRAN HARAWAY

If, while driving through Boulder City, your travel is interrupted by the town's only stoplight, look across the intersection to your left and read the community's cultural events board. There you might see information on the St. Patrick's Day concert of visiting pianist Pierce Emata and the Chamber of Commerce's annual Spring Jamboree, which will include a craft show, a bluegrass concert, and the Nevada Symphonic Wind Ensemble. No doubt there will also be an announcement of the Clark County Artists' Show – a two day event sponsored by the B.C. Art Guild and planned for Mother's Day weekend.

The sign itself is an example of the possibilities and problems facing the Boulder City cultural community. Erected on Department of Transportation land, it was originally agreed that the Chamber of Commerce would update the board while the Hoe and Grow Garden Club would supervise the desert landscaping surrounding it. As organization memberships changed through the years, those who regarded the sign as an important landmark have been replaced by others whose focus is elsewhere. The resulting friction over the board's upkeep is symptomatic of the town's divided outlook on the arts.

Although it teems with artists, writers and musicians, Boulder City has no single cultural focus. Chamber of Commerce director Nita Kay Pong – a lifetime resident and accomplished musician herself – says, "Outsiders look at the community and say, 'The potential is here. You have it all. Why can't you work together?'" The city is indeed divided on cultural issues. Some residents envision Boulder City as another Sedona or Santa Fe, while others heatedly oppose that concept.

The good news is that, despite internal disparity, culture manages to flourish in the "best town by a dam site." At the present time, the city has two art galleries – the Burk Gal'ry, now owned by Cynthia and Bill Miller, and Brent Thomson's workshop and showroom, managed by his wife, Connie. Both Miller and Thomson (a recent exhibitor at the Allied Arts Gallery) would like to see other galleries come to Boulder. "I wish we had about 20 more," says Cindy. "I'd like to see it happen. If people drive out from Vegas, it would be better for business if they could visit several of us."

Cindy and Bill Miller bought the Gal'ry a couple of years ago from long-time Boulder

art enthusiasts Darlene and Vern Burk. Cindy, whose love of western art was fostered by working for Darlene, maintains that the home-twon clientele keeps the Gal'ry door open. "At least 75 percent of our business is local," she declares. "I'd be sunk without Boulder City."

Locals also buy works from Boulder City Art Guild members who display at the Guild building on the Nevada Highway, next to the Chamber of Commerce dome on your right as you come into town. One Guild member says Boulderites particularly like paintings of local scenery such as Lake Mead and the surrounding desert.

The Art Guild, which has a membership of 62 active artists, is headed by retired investment officer Lew Genge. He oversees its varied activities, which include annual shows at the Boulder City Library and the Lake Mead Marina, a circulating gallery which displays member's works at the hospital, library, post office and banks and businesses around town, and the Clark County Artists' show held in Government Park each spring.

Guild activities include monthly meetings at which members present programs on all aspects of creating, publicizing, and marketing art, and an artist of the month display at the Guild headquarters. The group has recently initiated a new ongoing display – a juried art exhibit with new entries to be selected each month. Eleanor Beckert, October's artist of the month, sums up the organization's goal by saying, "Any time there's an art show, we try to be there."

Boulder City's (and all of Nevada's) cultural community sustained a great loss last fall with the death of artist/photographer Cliff Segerblom, who not only created memorable artwork, but also served on the library board and was, for many years, the local justice of the peace. Cliff's Monday Painters group, which consisted of artists and would-be artists from Henderson and Las Vegas as well as Boulder City, is still going strong. Lorraine Wayne, a former Boulderite who defected to The Lakes, comments, "We still critique one another's work, only now we say, 'Well, Cliff would have said...'"

A recent addition to the local culture scene is the Boulder City Museum and Historical Association, which, in its initial membership drive, garnered 400 members. Bob Ferrero, its current president, is a former mayor who is still a town councilman. He is guiding the association toward its goal – a new building which will be part of the Nevada State Railroad Museum in Boulder City – a complex already partially funded by

the 1989 legislature. The present facility is housed in the Six Company Store (named for the six companies who, working together, built housing for the dam workers) on the Nevada Highway. The museum is open daily, and curator Pat Lappin (a retired local teacher) continually adds to its collection of Dam Days memorabilia displayed near Roy Purcell's mural of Ragtown – a primitive settlement for families of builders of Hoover Dam.

The Boulder City Parks and Recreation Department is another outlet for citizens with a cultural bent. Year after year, Boulderites sign up for adult classes in ballet, metalcraft, oil painting, and jewelry-making. The department boasts a comprehensive writing program headed by writer and editor Anne Serzow, which includes a poetry roundtable, a creative writing class, a writer's workshop and a recently added course titled "Fiction and Film."

As is true of many larger towns, Boulder City's promoters of culture are involved in varied community activities. Several members of the museum's board of directors are also Monday Painters. Glenna Snow, who teaches watercolor classes for the Art Guild, shows at the Burk Gal'ry, and teaches art to youngsters through the recreation department. Alice Isenberg, the backbone of the Boulder City Arts Council, teaches a quilting class. Artist Eleanor Beckert is also a cellist with the Desert Strings classical music trio. And Cindy Miller's latest public triumph was as an elf in the Chamber of Commerce's Christmas tree lighting ceremony.

Boulder City's lack of a cultural focus may soon be rectified by the town government. The Planning Commission is attempting to include cultural goals in its new comprehensive plan – a document still in the discussion stages. One of the proposed goals is, "Consider the historic, cultural, aesthetic, and visual relationships in the planning of the community." If the town could take its large senior population, which doesn't choose to support the arts from retirement incomes, the increasing number of younger families whose work and social lives are centered in Las Vegas, and the many merchants and business people who, naturally, focus on economy rather than art, and imbue them all with the enthusiasm of the Arts Council, the Art Guild, and the Historical Association, then the city would definitely "have it all." Until that day, however, just watch the events sign (even if the stoplight is green you can give it a glance), because in spite of everything, the arts are alive in Boulder City. aa

# The Fine Art of Commitment

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RADIO

# "WE'RE CONSISTENT IN OUR DIVERSITY"

*Jazz, alternative rock, information...KUNV will air almost anything, as long as no one else does*

by SCOTT DICKENSHEETS

**K**UNV, the university-sponsored radio station, will celebrate 10 years on the air this April. The station tries to fill chinks in the local broadcasting scene by airing programming no one else does, from its popular alternative rock shows to jazz to hard-to-find information programs.

To mark its first decade, KUNV is planning a host of events: co-sponsoring and broadcasting portions of Jazz Month, in May; co-sponsoring the April 8 Winton Marsalis concert, the April 14 Las Vegas Blues Society Picnic (including live broadcasts), the April 23 Stephane Grappelli show and the May 3 Ramsey Lewis-Billy Taylor concert. Other activities will be announced, including a lecture by Helen Caldicott.

Below, KUNV general manager Rob Rosenthal discusses several aspects of his station.

## HISTORY LESSON PART I

We've come a long way in 10 years. The station started in a bathroom on the second floor, literally. There was a toilet, running water, egg cartons on the walls for insulation, a sink, and there were two turntables and a mixing board, and it just broadcast to this building. That was in the late seventies. The station signed on the air in 1981. I don't know the specific history, but the studios were located in various places around the building. There was a second studio at the Sahara; they called it the Manhattan Room, because they'd come in, have a Manhattan, and spin some jazz records. The transmitter was originally located on top of the Humanities building. We ran into some trouble up there. The transmitter was somehow affecting students in physics labs' tests, they'd be getting these odd readings. Jean-Luc Ponty was on campus one night. He plays a cordless violin, and the cordless violin broadcast KUNV instead of the notes he was playing. I guess it was at that time they decided to do something. In 1984, the transmitter was moved to Black Mountain.

## PHILOSOPHY 101

The station's philosophy is to provide an alternative to what else is on the radio dial. We try to pick up where other broadcasters leave off. So, if no one's doing jazz, it's up to KUNV to do jazz. If nobody's doing folk, well, somebody's got to do folk, so we'll take on folk. That's always been the philosophy

of the station, but I think we've fine-tuned that in the last few years, and expanded that concept, to encourage things, to try to address some things we thought needed to be addressed, to try to be proactive with the programming as opposed to reactive. We try to initiate new programs and find people to come up and do the shows. We thought, 'we should be covering 20th century classical music,' so we contacted someone in the music department. We thought, 'we should be doing musical theatre,' so we contacted folks in the musical theatre department.

I think some of the most important programming we have are the information shows, and that isn't to devalue the music programs. The information programs, though, are important because we try to provide programs that delve into issues and explore ideas that other radio stations and even TV stations won't go near with a 20-foot pole. We try to bring out some of the ideas on the periphery of American ideology.

## WHY ARE WE HERE?

The station is here for three reasons: Number 1: The programming. Number 2: Training, and it doesn't matter for whom. You don't have to be a student. Anyone can come up here and participate in the station. Number 3: To help promote and extend the goals of the university, and I think we do that through the first two items.

## AT KUNV, THE POWER IS ON


We have 15,000 watts, which means we cover the whole valley. There's a couple of gray spots...there's a rain gutter on Decatur

you can't hear us in, and that sort of thing. But we pretty much get around the valley. If you have a good antenna, you can pick us up in Indian Springs, Jean, Goodsprings, Sandy Valley, and 50 miles over the Arizona border towards Kingman, but no one lives there so it doesn't matter.

## HISTORY LESSON PART II AND FUTURE STUDIES PART I: PEOPLE

We've always had two full-time staff members, a general manager and a receptionist. The general manager changed just about every year, so a lot of wheels were created but no car was built. I've been here four and a half years, so at least we've had some consistency in that office. We've added a third full-time staff member, and we're hoping to add a fourth this summer. We've been accepted into a program by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the federal government's funding conduit for public broadcasting. Their initial grant of \$19,000 will eventually increase to about \$50,000. The first person we'll hire is a development director. Then, in a year or maybe two years after that, we'll hire a program director. We need some consistency there. There's always been student managers at the station, overseeing scheduling and programming, taping lectures, producing music programs and that sort of thing. Currently there are about 70 staff members, mostly volunteers. It's about 50-50 between students versus university staff and faculty members and community members.

See page 32.



*Demos Gallery*

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## VISUAL ART

# NEON, NEON, EVERYWHERE!

*Physics meets Picasso in a bent glass tube*

by JOHN POWERS

**NEON:** A chemically inert gaseous element occurring in the earth's atmosphere, used chiefly for filling electrical lamps, also called "neon lamps," in which a glass tube filled with neon emits a reddish glow when energized, used for nighttime advertising.

**ART:** 1) The quality, production, expression or realm of what is beautiful; 2) objects belonging to this realm; 3) field, genre, category of this realm; 4) illustrative or decorative material; 5) principles governing any craft, skill or branch of learning; 6) branch of study, esp. one of the fine arts or humanities; 7) skilled workmanship or execution; 9) an artful device.

Kind of like calling your compact disc player a hi-fi, saying "neon art" – it does have high fidelity, but that's only part of the story. Gases other than neon are used, and much of neon luminescence is not art. But just as actors do commercials, and composers write jingles, there is neon art being created. It is merging the ancient glass blower's craft with electric power packs, forming neon art, some of which may require computers to give them life.

Artists studying physics and engineers revealing their latest work at the neighborhood art gallery? Physics meets Picasso?

Welcome to neon art!

Perhaps the odd, close-circuited, sun-worshipping, semi-conscious few, who steal into Vegas for three or four hours to visit Grandpa, could remain oblivious to it, but one needn't even be in Las Vegas to accept it as the neon capital of the world. That fact alone may explain what has attracted some neon resurrectionists to the valley with dreams of resuscitating this dying art form.

Crazy, gaudy, repetitious patterns of megavolts down whole boulevards has little to do with actual neon art, save one thing: it's the means of survival. Neon's vast commercial uses prevented the doom of neon art and artists in two ways: commercial work (which many neon artists go to great lengths not to admit committing) allows the artist to eat and shelter his or her children, and it supports the projects that spurred their desire to be and keep being neon artists. It also kept the craft of neon illuminated in the collective consciousness of the public, thereby providing a cult of aficionados to patronize the true artists.

Many past neon configurations are burned into our memory and are synonymous with our image of Las Vegas: the hitchhiking cowboy, originally on the Valley Motel; the proud orange profile of the white-feathered Indian chief with its arrow pointing at the Lone Pine Motel; the 5th Street Liquor Store hand, pouring a bottle (with three successive positions) into a glass; the now curiously relevant Bagdad Motel sign, done elaborately with a genie, Mosque tower, and onion dome, topped with a crescent moon.

Then there is more recent neon imagery, Caesar's Palace for instance, which has had work done by, among others, a Vegas transplant from Illinois and Texas, Don Beck.

A three-foot Zebra head of warm white (argon gas), circled in double-coated blue, greeted me through the window as I stepped past Beck's storefront, which is set into a pseudo-adobe flavored shopping center. "Come in," greeted me as I cracked the front door, testing it at this late hour. A homey, funky front room immediately put me at ease as a towering Mick Fleetwood-like character approached and introduced himself as Don Beck.

For the next 90 minutes, he illuminated the details of the neon craft and the impressions, scale, complexity and monetary

values involved in it. Because I was pummeled with such details in all the interviews – I must credit the artists interviewed for technical explanations – let me set forth some important facts here:

Neon is one of five gasses used in this manner. It is reddish-orange in color. Argon is a pale white-blue by itself, but when enhanced by mercury it is vivid blue. Xenon, helium and krypton are the others. The gas is ionized (the molecules sped up, excited) by electricity, producing a glow. The glass tubes used vary and are often coated on the inside with phosphorous, which produces, along with the different gasses, the various colors.

The gasses used are inert – harmless, breathable, non-explosive, and non-flammable. Neon is the most long-lasting and cost-effective of any artificial illumination and lasts longer than an electric bulb – important when the lights are nine stories off the ground.

Back to Mr. Beck. As I stepped deeper into his shop, I was entering the future home of the "Las Vegas School of Neon." Beck sees his mission in Vegas as establishing a center of information. He studied glass-blowing with Wes hunting in Chicago, and began neon art as a hobby.

"Everything from Art Deco forms to wild abstracts have fascinated Beck," claims his printed bio. From the University of Texas as a biology major to the Board of Trade as a Chi-town trader, and on to studies of plasma and gas discharge physics – such is the stuff with which neon artists mix their alchemical glow.

"Bad neon turns customers and potential customers off," Beck intones, referring to neon lights which fail within weeks or months, built with inferior materials, put together without the necessary tools or a surgeon's care. Being a glass blower, Beck emphasizes the delicate skill required to produce curvature in the tube. Antique blue glass, from Korea and the U.S., 30-plus years old, is laying in various states of preparation about his studio. "An item which may have \$12 worth of normal glass could cost \$100-plus made with this," he says, demonstrating the subtle rich glow of blue antique set next to the brash starkness of youthful blue tinted tubing.

One of the most fascinating artistic influences running through his work was revealed when Beck discussed some tattoo photos as his next project. It was no coincidence, then, that fire-breathing dragon, perhaps 10 or 12 feet long, hanging on the workshop wall. So, too, the nude silhouettes, so prevalent on the arms and chests of bikertypes. Not only is the loose definition of the edges of the sometimes complex renderings quite similar in both forms, but the blue-green of tattoos on the skin is reminiscent of the argon blue in neon. The other main color in tattoos, reddish-orange, is comparable to the tint of neon gas.

Due to the paucity of neon art creators, "there is literally only a handful of places to get information and learn perfect techniques." Beck wants his school to be one of them. Not only do you need years of experience to

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blow glass with an artisan's touch, you also need knowledge of state-of-the-art power packs and solid-state electronics. Knowing how electrical tools operate ("What knobs to turn") and the theoretical and physical knowledge of why the work is vital, and it separates the gurus from the initiates.

I was left with the distinct feeling that Don Beck believes he is a guru. He does have some impressive credits to back it up. His work is displayed on the Dallas skyline as well as on Caesars Palace. He replaced 9,000 feet of neon silhouette which lasted only weeks before he was brought in to redo it, and it still glows each night. He sponsored neon and art glass shows at his Dallas gallery, and two shows at the Dallas Museum of Modern Art. His 1980-founded Chicago studio supplied glass and neon to TV and movie productions, including 75 TV commercials. Besides lecturing at universities and various art groups, he's appeared on *PM Magazine* and CBS News features.

Yet Beck builds large, complex, expensive pieces of art. He would be happy, I felt, if neon art were a status symbol, a collectible of the rich. He is not touchy about his commercial commissions, acknowledging the financial benefits and its "necessity." After all, "I need a gas oven (for glass bending/blowing)," he says, "and Las Vegas needs a school of neon art."

I left with the feeling it would get one.

A few minutes on the freeway toward the big lake, through the dense suburban thicket of Green Valley, deep inside swamps of residential streets, lies the Neon Jungle. A unique tripartite hierarchy shares a garage well-organized into design tables, glass-bending tables, wood-working tools and benches, gas canisters, and a child's tricycle or two.

"Efficiency dictates the division of labor," explained Brent Heckler. "We all perform each function involved in our art, but each of us is well-suited to a particular portion of the process." His wife Sue is the main designer and finisher. Richard Jessor, who was raised at the knee of a glass blower and who, it is said, was carving wood before he could speak, handles the glass bending and woodwork.

With the Hecklers, their official background gives no clue to their present work. Sue was an English major at George Mason University in Virginia. Brent, after acquiring an associate degree in communications, worked in theatre doing set design and stage lighting. After a three year world tour with rock bands, he became a dinner theatre director. When Susan discovered the theatre, the two met and married.

Richard Jessor fills out the trio. Each piece created in the Neon Jungle is designed, fabricated and built on the premises, usually beginning with Sue's design drawing. From there Rick begins to bend the glass, while Brent starts the final structure. "We have a simultaneous assembly line process, which saves time" – and therefore money – "and increases productivity."

The design is taken from butcher block paper and transferred to non-asbestos fabric, then the glass goes to the bending table. Here begins vital and delicate parts of the neon art. Bending may take quite a few hours, and years of glassworking and experience pay off mightily. Electrodes are installed; one end is sealed and one left open, and it's on to the bombarding table. Here the tube is hooked to a manifold, sucked out, and cleansed with 15,000 volts of electricity. This purifies the tube. This is also where a drop of mercury is added if the argon/mercury mix is being used. Without this step, or if done improperly, the tube would collapse, but when done correctly, the tube is 20 times more durable than the electric light by which you're probably reading this article. "It should last generations," said Sue.

To the neon triumvirate, the quality of material and effort is foremost. As to the artistic outlook, the bywords are *simplicity, mixed media* and its electrical explorations. Brent spoke of consulting three UNLV graduate school electrical engineers in connection with one project. On a work table I saw "crackling" tubes, in which the ionization was interrupted by barriers, bits of glass. I was told that much experimentation was required to arrive at the correct size of the bits, to allow for the flow yet have it scatter to produce the unusual effect. "Controlled impurities."

They noted that Sue's favorite piece is an antique pachinko game outfitted with four contoured neon tubes, while Brent and Rick favor *Cassiope*, (Andromeda's mother), a mythological naked woman enshrined in a neon constellation. They had two pieces of a "Head" series (*In Over My Head* and *Head Start*) in which clear glass heads were worked with neon in humorous abstractions.

Their work meets their goal of art that is affordable. "Simplicity means affordability," Sue said. Their larger pieces are available for lease on special occasions. Word of mouth is their only advertising, as was the case with other artists. Eighty percent of the commissioned work they do is for private art purposes, not commercial. They attribute the growing demand for their work not to any sudden reawakening of the public's appetite for neon art, but to the growing reputation of Neon Jungle.

Certain constants seemed to emerge from

the neon artists I talked to. One is a deep respect for the generation which preceded them. Certain names came up repeatedly, such as Nikoli Tesla, the genius who came to America from Easter Europe with ideas which were stolen by Edison and other "original thinkers."

Where there were once an estimated 15,000 neon creators in America, in the 1940's, there are perhaps 300 working today. According to the artists, after World War II, neon fell from favor with the advent of plastics and fluorescents, which were cheaper to make.

Nostalgia could explain some renewing interest raising the demand for neon, but the artists I spoke to denied there is a sudden surge of interest. The Hecklers speculated that any new demand for their art has been a gradual trend, increasing only because word of mouth has been spreading geometrically, as is its nature.

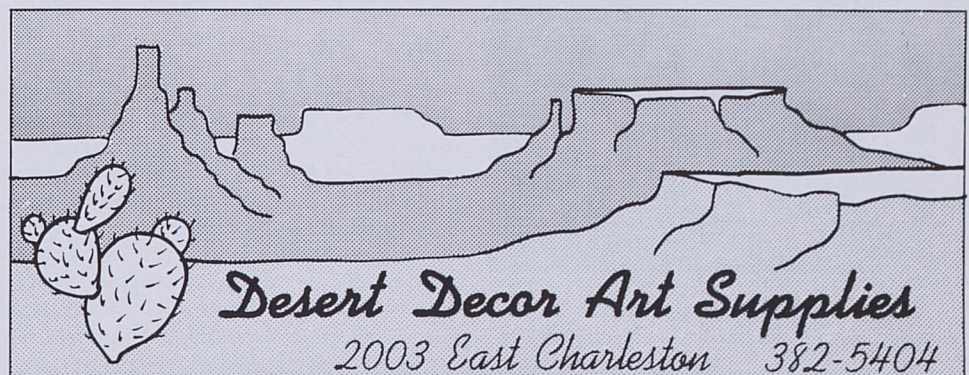
Another vital mutual concern is a quest for technical excellence, which demands a continuous exploration not only of the latest electronic components which fire the lights, but also a self-perpetuating curiosity – a desire to dissect and understand the laws of physics which govern the (hopefully) expanding borders of the gaseous glow.

Our artists all agree on the marvelousness and necessity of getting a neon museum off the ground, specifically the ground near Cashman Field and the old Elk's Lodge, which the city has earmarked for the Allied Arts Council project.

Fundraising is proceeding under the auspices of the Council's Neon Museum Committee, and dismantled signs which commercial establishments replace or outgrow are being collected and stored. There are problems storing the signs, especially the more massive units, many of which must be stored outside. Moving them is equally problematic.

Perhaps the biggest tragedy would be to get beaten to it. The Japanese, for instance, have shown a strong interest in gathering contemporary neon.

In part because of America's auto culture and the ability of neon to catch the passing motorist's eye, neon belongs to American culture. That we grow to appreciate it in our homes as well as on the horizon is only natural. **aa**



## FOLK ARTS

# LIVING FOLK

*Nevada State Museum hosts massive folk arts show*

An exhibition featuring work of recipients of the nation's highest award for folk artists opened March 2 in the Nevada State Museum and Historical Society, in Lorenzi Park. A mix of displays, performances and a symposium, *America's Living Folk Traditions* continues through May 31.

This show, organized by Santa Fe's Museum of International Folk Art, marks the first substantial collection of work by National Heritage Fellowship winners. The fellowships are handed out by the National Endowment for the Arts' Folk Art Program. The Nevada State Museum is the first stop on the exhibit's national tour.

"This is an exhibition of national prominence and we are delighted that Las Vegas will be its opening venue," said Arthur H. Wolf, director of the Museum. He noted that Las Vegas is one of only two western stops on the tour, the other being Tucson. In all, *America's Living Folk Traditions* will appear in 10 museums across the country.

National Heritage Fellowships, first awarded in 1982, were conceived to honor exemplary practitioners of traditional folk

arts. They are given annually to artists in a wide variety of visual and performing traditions. The awards are meant not only to recognize craftsmanship, but also dedication to practicing, continuing and furthering a particular folk art. Many fellowship winners recipients are involved in apprentice programs around the country, helping to ensure the survival of traditional arts and crafts.

Nominated by their peers, eligible artists must be actively participating in their craft and demonstrate authenticity, excellence and worthiness of national recognition.

The awards are one-time-only grants of \$5,000, presented annually in Washington, D.C. One hundred twenty three artists have been won fellowships since 1982.

Because the exhibit showcases the diversity of America's folk heritage, Wolf feels it will have wide appeal to Las Vegas and tourists alike.

"Bess Lomax Hawes, who directs the NEA Folk Arts Program, has noted that the arts featured in this exhibit represent the dynamic and ongoing nature of traditional arts practiced by our nation's folk artists in their respective regions of the country.

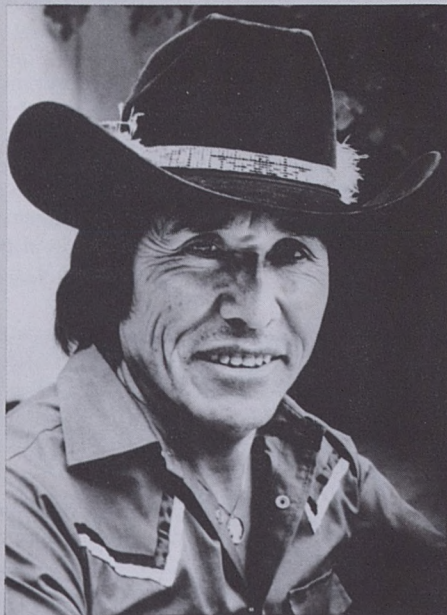
The exhibit focuses on these local traditions, which, when viewed together as they are here, represent a picture of our national artistic diversity."

Wolf pointed out that a partial roll call of the artists' names alone hints at the ethnic diversity displayed in *America's Living Folk Traditions*: Duff Severe, Periklis Halkias, Emily Kau'i Zuttermeister, Yang Fang Nhu, Canray Fontenot and Alice New Holy Blue Legs.

Visual artists are represented by one or more selections of their work, and performers by photomurals, quotations and through a series of free performances at the Museum.

A further discussion of regional folk traditions will take place in a symposium at the Museum on May 24 and 25.

*America's Living Folk Traditions* is sponsored by the First Interstate Bank of Nevada Foundation, Nevada Power Company, and the Nevada State Council on the Arts. Additional support was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts Folk Arts Program, Nevada Humanities Committee, Southwest Airlines, Rio Suite Hotel and Casino, and the City of Las Vegas Parks and Leisure Activities Division. **aa**



Chesley Goseyun Wilson

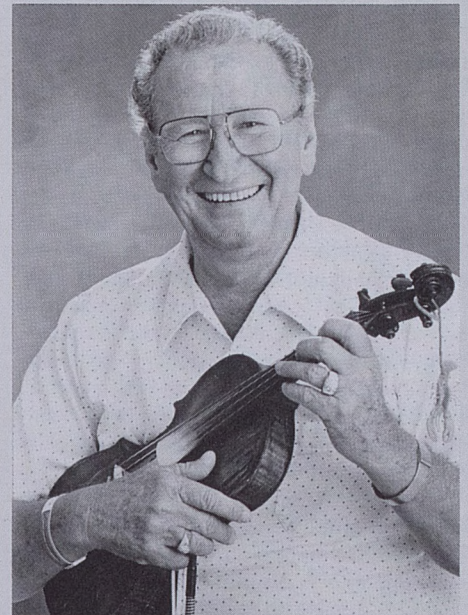
## performance schedule

April 13, 4 p.m., Lorenzi Park:  
Bois Sec Ardoin and Canray Fontenot's French Band.

May 4, 2 p.m., Museum Patio:  
Chesley Goseyun Wilson, Apache fiddle maker.

May 5, 2 p.m., Museum patio:  
Jimmy Jausoro, Basque accordionist, and the Oinkari Basque Dancers.

May 25, 6 p.m., Lorenzi Park:  
Dewey Balfa, Cajun fiddler, and the Balfa Band. **aa**



Dewey Balfa

MUSIC

# A QUIET MUSIC STATE OF MIND

*Can a bunch of chiropractors be wrong?*

by KAMY CUNNINGHAM

Las Vegas, Entertainment Capital of the World, might also be a candidate for Noise Capital of the World. Millions of slot machines clang, a wall of sheet metal called traffic roars incessantly, the surrounding desert heaves and cracks with dryness, and the frenetic 24-hour pace creates a city that's never still. In short, Las Vegas shatters silence.

Well, now there's a peaceful spot. It's called the Quiet Music Society and it puts on "Music Banquets." Founded by Copperfield, a classical guitarist who divides his time between Las Vegas and Southern California, QMS is "a group that gathers to listen to live performances of classical music and experience the fine arts while enjoying luncheon or dinner prepared by world-class chefs."

Actually this "spot" is more a state of mind than than a place. Various artists sponsor the events at different restaurants. Membership is free, but guests pay for their own meals and add a gratuity for the artist.

In addition to Copperfield himself, artists in residence of QMS include Oscar Carrescia (violin), Jay Volney (oboe and woodwinds), Gina Testa (interpretive dance), Al Manfredi (percussion and guitar), and Chris Ward

(harpist).

In a telephone interview, Ward, who is also the harpist in residence at the Excalibur, commented that "traditionally music has been a part of celebrations – feasts, weddings, parties. It's a way of relaxing, making the evening more enjoyable. At our banquets, we're trying to create settings where there's more focus on the music. It's not just background. What we do is more similar to dinner theatre."

He added: "We're an approachable group and are adding new members all the time. The art scene in general seems to be blossoming in Las Vegas. People in Vegas are more and more interested in things that stimulate the intellect, in experiences that take you out of the realm of the ordinary. That's what art does."

QMS is only six months old and still finding itself. So far, they've mostly had gatherings at Cafe Roma, but are making plans for other restaurants. Scheduling and coordinating the events, plus the recession making people reluctant to spend money on luxuries, have presented some problems, according to Copperfield. But world-class chefs are in their future.

I talked with Copperfield at Cafe Roma, a small restaurant near UNLV known for its excellent coffee. Students were scattered about, sipping and studying at big, marble-slab tables, looking picturesquely sloppy. Despite a lot of windows, Cafe Roma seems dimly lit and smoky, due to low ceilings and dark floors. It looks like a neo-beatnik hangout, with a roughhewn, genesis atmosphere. A proper place for experiment and finding yourself.

Copperfield now completely devotes himself to music, but he was once a part-time college professor in both music and computer science. Members of QMS come from everywhere, he said, but they all have one thing in common – an interest in the arts and a desire to become patrons of the arts. "We have everyone from college students to carpenters and for some reason a deep well of chiropractors.

"When the artists play they're not trying for entertainment that hits you in the face or grabs you in a big, noisy way. No, it's a lot more subtle. We try to play quiet, polite, classical music – for quiet appreciation."

MORE: for information call QMS at 361-7018. aa

SCENES FROM A TOUR

## "SOMEWHERE IN TEXAS"

*Nevada Dance Theatre on the road:  
16 states, 35 cities, 200 shoes and roadkill a la carte*



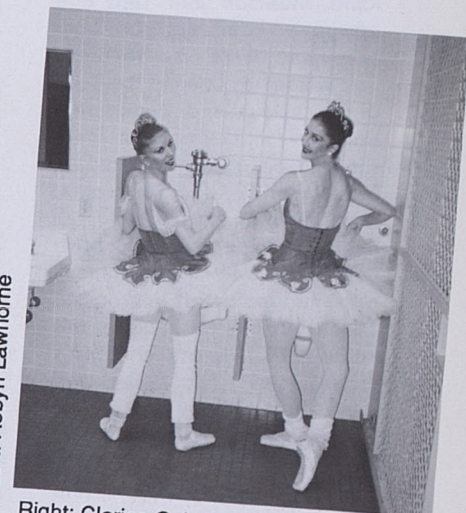
Our company is now into the routine of going from bus to motel to theatre to bus and travelling to our next performance place. Spirits are high and the dancers are performing beautifully. It is very rewarding for me to stand in the wings and see an enthusiastic audience of 1800 give the company a standing ovation.

By the time we return, we will have travelled 10,115 miles, performed in 35 cities and 16 states in a 47-day period. The dancers will have danced through 200 pairs of shoes, and our wonderful two-man

crew, Bill Kickbush and Keith Ladanye, will have created stagecraft and wizardry so many times that the Judy Bayley performances will be a snap.

Louis Godfrey has been delightful as touring ballet master. Thanks to him and his wonderful daily class and extra coaching, every performance sparkles. His marvelous sense of humor has been very much appreciated and I'm sure with his daily elocution lessons, we will all be speaking proper English soon.

Some of our hotels have been great, some so-so, and some just downright awful. The beds in one motel were so bad, I checked it out to find that the local morgue had closed and the motel bought the slabs to use as beds. The reason the Texas highways are so



Left: Robyn Lawhorne

Right: Clarice Geissel

clean is that the restaurants serve roadkill.

We have had three birthday celebrations. Bus parties with balloons and cake, but, alas, no ice cream. After hearing this merry band sing *Happy Birthday*, I have advised them not to give up dancing.

– Norman Cain, Nevada Dance Theatre general manager aa



Joanne Nivison

**ARTS AWARDS:** American Nevada Corporation and Joanne Nivison, head the City of Las Vegas' Division of Cultural and Community Affairs, received 1991 Governor's Arts Awards during a February ceremony in Reno. Musician John Lenz and arts patron Edna Morrison, both from Reno, were also honored.

Nivison has been at the helm of the city's cultural department since 1979. During that time, she and her staff have created more than 2,000 programs, reaching an estimated 1.5 million residents, a growth percentage of 97 percent, all with minimal staff increases. Those programs include the Rainbow Company children's theatre, the Civic Ballet and the Civic Symphony and others. The city also regularly presents concerts and performances, exhibits visual arts displays, and offers a variety of fine arts classes.

American Nevada has supported the arts for years, most visibly through the many sculptures sprinkled throughout their Green Valley properties, but also by helping form the Arts Advisory Council of Green Valley, sponsoring annual "Shakespeare in the Park" performances, donating land for

the Green Valley Library and Cultural Center, and building an outdoor amphitheater in the Silver Springs Community Center.

Honorees all received paintings from Mary Warner's *Night Blooming Cereus* series.

**CH-CH-CHANGES:** Artist Tom Holder stepped down as director of the Nevada Institute for Contemporary Art on January 1. He's now on sabbatical. Holder was NICA's founding director, and during his five-year tenure, the organization mounted a number of high-profile exhibits and experienced strong growth.

UNLV's Donna Beam gallery director Jerry Schefcik will hold down the fort as Interim Director, maintaining his Donna Beam duties as well, until a permanent director is named. According to NICA's Arlene Blut, no timetable for hiring this person has been established, though "it may coincide with some other big changes around here."

Meanwhile, Holder will keep busy with summer exhibits at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, the Pennsacola (Florida) Art Museum and a residency at the Nantucket Island School of Design and the Arts.

**DRAMATIC DEVELOPMENTS:** A pair of plays by Las Vegas, each about children and nuclear detonations, have received national recognition.

Rainbow Company artistic director Brian Strom, under his *nom de plume* Brian Kral, is one of four winners of the 1991 Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis Youth Theatre Playwright Competition. His *Paper Lanterns, Paper Cranes*, about a group of Japanese children who witness the Hiroshima bombing, was chosen from among 150 nationwide entries, and was given a staged reading at the Youth Theatre Playwriting Competition in Indianapolis on March 22 and 23.

In similar news, a play by Red Shuttleworth, a graduate student in UNLV's playwriting program, was among eight finalists in the Michael Kanin

Playwriting Award, sponsored by the American College Theatre Festival. *The Children's Hair Turned White*, also a drama about children witnessing a nuclear detonation – this one in the New Mexico desert – was performed at a regional branch of the festival, at Sonoma State University, on February 15.

**ARTS LISTING:** The *Las Vegas Review-Journal* and *SUN* will publish a pair of cultural tabloids – one this August, the second in January – detailing arts activities in the Las Vegas Valley. The Fletcher Jones Family of Dealerships is co-sponsoring the tabloid with the papers. To be included, send calendar information to the Allied Arts Council. Only valid non-profit organizations with current 501(c)(3) status, or governmental agencies, will be included. For more information, call the Allied Arts Council, 731-5419.

**PASSINGS:** Two figures in the Las Vegas cultural community died recently.

- Musician and one-time state Assemblyman Fon "Curly" Warburton died in mid-March at age 58. He was leader of the Warburton Family Band, a bluegrass ensemble that performed frequently around Las Vegas. In 1983, the band received a Governor's Folk Arts Award. In 1989, he was appointed to fill out a vacated state assembly seat, but lost his subsequent reelection bid. He worked for years in the local construction industry. He is survived by his wife, mother, two daughters, three sons, two sisters and 11 grandchildren.

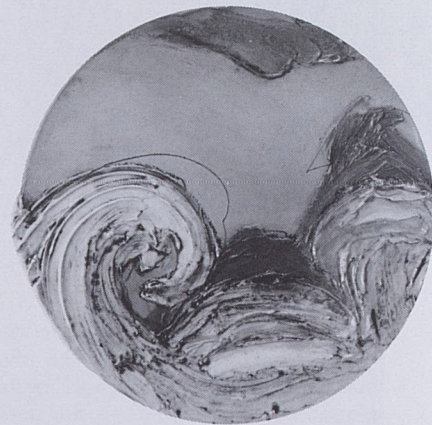
- Not long after performing as a featured soloist with the Nevada Chamber Orchestra on March 17, violist Lyndl Miller was apparently murdered by her husband, florist Bent Gorosch, who then killed himself.

Miller served as concert master of the Nevada Chamber Orchestra and principal violist of the Las Vegas Symphony Orchestra. She was present at the creation of the Symphony in 1980, and performed in several major showroom bands.

Gorosch was suffering from financial problems, said a relative, combined with the memory of his own parents' suicide in his native Denmark following World War II. Police, however, have not speculated on what caused Gorosch's actions.

**PLATTER TROUBLE?:** "Some of these platters are so far from functional they're deemed impossible to use," says ceramicist Tom Coleman, of the exhibit "Beyond Serving," currently in the Moira James Gallery. Coleman and wife Elaine assembled this show of platters that, for the most part, aren't really platters. Instead, most of the pieces use the traditional platter form as a point of departure. "Clay is just now changing from being a craft to becoming an art form; it's finally merging with sculpture."

Three artists in the show – Dave Shaner, Jim Leedy, Pat Slier – have received NEA fellowships, and, says Coleman, are doing outrageous things with clay. "The aim of this show is to show the variety of things happening in clay," he said. "Hardly any holds are barred, there are no boundaries, no rules. It's really opening up. There are very few pieces here you'd want to think about serving with." The show lasts through April 28.



"Fall Ocean" by Susanne G. Stephenson

**FINAL NOTE:** Lt. Governor Sue Wagner is looking for art to enliven her Southern Nevada office. For more information, call 486-4506. aa

“Tell me  
thy company,  
and I shall tell thee  
what thou art.”

*Miguel de Cervantes*

Those who support the arts do so not only for themselves, but for the pleasure it brings others.

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# I N T O T H E N I G H T

A guided tour of what there is of the Las Vegas jazz club scene.

BY BILL MOODY

*Be a secret agent; support jazz.*  
—Jon Hendricks

You're not the kind of guy who would be in a place like this at this time of the night. But here you are, and you cannot say the terrain is entirely unfamiliar, although the details are fuzzy. You think you're at a country and western bar. You think that because directly opposite you on the wall are six-foot square pictures of Willie Nelson, Kenny Rogers, and Dolly Parton.

But the music you're hearing isn't country. Jay Cameron, his baritone saxophone negotiating the changes of a Clifford Brown tune, is backed up by a rhythm section that met just minutes before the gig.

In the background, a TV tuned to some cop show drones on just under the music. The crack of pool balls echoes from the three tables in the back and punctuates the bass solo. I'm joined by three people at the bar; two of them are musicians. The third is, like myself, a jazz DJ from KUNV-FM. Now I remember. I'm at the Hob Nob, and if it's Tuesday it must be jazz.

That's the way the local jazz scene in Las Vegas is best chronicled — by the days of the week. In this "entertainment capital of the world" that can boast of some of the best musicians in the country, there are only three places where jazz can be heard on a regular basis. The Hob Nob on Tuesday and Wednesday; Pogo's on Friday; the Four Queens on Monday. Everything else is hit and miss.

"This place really has nothing to do with jazz," says Jay Cameron, who has been here since the inception of the Hob Nob's jazz policy seven years ago. Cameron also schedules the groups that appear each Tuesday. Wednesday belongs almost exclusively to another saxophonist and local legend, Jimmy Cook. Occasionally Carl Fontana drops in to play. "We're here playing, but the rest of it, well...." Cameron shrugs. "At least we have a place to play."

It's a late night scene. Nothing happens before 10:30. Musicians know about the Hob Nob, as do the city's hard core jazz followers, some of whom would belong to the Las Vegas Jazz Society if there was still one to join. Tourists probably couldn't find it, let alone feel comfortable here. Tucked

away in a mini-mall off Spring Mountain, on Highland, in an otherwise industrial district, the Hob Nob is not exactly a Strip attraction. On weekends, it features rock bands and fast food. The clientele is construction workers and pool servicemen. The decor is lighted beer signs, tiffany lamps hanging over the pool tables, a long bar, formica tables and leatherette booths.

The musicians put up with indifferent and sometimes non-existent audiences, the TV blaring, the crack of pool balls. They don't complain about the battered, suspect piano, not even Hank Jones, who was among the many visiting musicians who have found their way to this most out-of-the-way jazz places. "It's like a typical jazz club piano, I guess," Cameron says.

The Hob Nob, whatever its shortcomings, provides a steady place for musicians to meet and play and try out new charts. No one will request "Feelings" or "Tie a Yellow Ribbon," and that alone perhaps makes the next-to-nothing pay — usually a percentage of the bar — tolerable. At the Hob Nob, jamming is the thing.

Even further out, on North Decatur, is what drummer Irv Kluger calls "a dive that's so far from the mainstream it's not even mentioned in the papers." But for over 20 years, Pogo's owner Jim Holcomb has presented local jazz musicians with a place to play every Friday night. Until his recent illness, trumpeter Chico Alvarez served as straw boss, arranging for musicians, playing himself, or overseeing who sits in. On this Friday in March, Kluger, who has paid his dues with Stan Kenton and Frank Sinatra and numerous hotel house bands, is in charge but is sitting out a few tunes while a guest drummer kicks up things behind four horns and a rhythm section.

The music is swing era — standards, an occasional blues, a ballad here and there, and like the Hob Nob, no concession is asked for or made to the audience, who tonight gather round the horseshoe bar, tapping their fingers to the music and talking quietly.

According to Kluger, they play whatever they like. Holcomb greets the regulars and nods to them when they leave. The crowd is older here at Pogo's; they know what they like and this is the place to get it. Once in a while, a couple gets up to dance,

## WHERE THE JAZZ (MAYBE) IS

Four Queens Hotel  
French Quarter Lounge  
Mondays, 7:30, 9:30 and 11:30 p.m.  
385-4011

Hob Nob Lounge  
3340 South Highland  
Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 10 p.m.  
to 2 a.m.  
734-2426

Pogo's  
2103 North Decatur  
Fridays, 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.  
646-9735

"The Sorta Dixie Jazz Band"  
Gold Coast Hotel  
Weekdays, noon to 6 p.m.  
367-7111

"Tom Ferguson Trio"  
Las Vegas Hilton Casino Lounge  
Mondays, 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.,  
Tuesdays-Saturdays, 7 to 10 p.m.  
732-5111

"Mike DiBari and Street People"  
Big Al and Eddie's Restaurant  
4632 Maryland Parkway  
Midnight to 6 a.m.  
736-7808 aa



perhaps remembering the big band days of their youth.

The musicians on the bandstand are lit only by the glow from a Coors beer sign. The walls are lined with trophies – billiards, golf – the pool tables are covered tonight. The club is dark outside the light of the bar and one or two couples occupy the booths in the back. Nobody seems to mind when the band gets into a long discussion over what tune to play next. They finally decide on a ballad and everyone, musician and audience alike, is happy.

"We play whatever we like," Kluger says. "The boss loves us, we're nurtured. It's fabulous." That's Friday night at Pogo's.

"What time does Tom Ferguson come on?" I ask one of the cocktail waitresses.

"Who?" she says.

"Tom Ferguson. You know, the trio?"

"Oh, you mean those instrumental guys, what is it, jazz?"

"That's the ones."

"I think about seven," she says. "I don't really know." She spins off with a tray of drinks, bound for the blackjack tables.

It's early evening in the Las Vegas Hilton's Casino Lounge. A tuxedo-clad threesome led by pianist Tom Ferguson romps through a set of standards, blues, and jazz evergreens. They are clearly enjoying themselves. They listen to each other. Occasionally they become aware of a few appreciative customers at tables nearby, whose polite applause is duly noted by Ferguson. The majority of the audience would probably be surprised to learn they're listening to a world-class jazz pianist. During the day he is Dr. Tom Ferguson and heads up the music department at Community College of Southern Nevada.

The small bandstand is back from the lounge itself in a kind of alcove that shields the musicians from the roar of the gaming tables just a few feet away. They're finished at 10 and clear out quickly before the real lounge show comes on. This week it's something called the Jazz Barons.

At the Four Queens, the bar is already four-deep with musicians and regulars who have been coming here for nine years. Alan Grant's place in the Las Vegas jazz scene is assured, for here, one night a week, you can hear top-flight New York or Los Angeles jazz bands. Sometimes the groups are self-contained; other Mondays, local rhythm sections get the nod to back a visiting Harold Land or Mark Murphy or Bobby Shew. The cover is more than reasonable and three separate shows guarantee everyone a chance to stretch out.

The musicians say it's sometimes hard to hear on the stage but the recording sound is good enough to rebroadcast on 120 public radio stations. The crowds are good and so is the music. "What amazes me," says Alan Grant, "is that no other hotel has picked up on our idea. We're in our tenth year."

Of the bars and hotels that occasionally

See page 32.

## THE "PLAYIN' JAZZ FOR NO MONEY TO A TINY AUDIENCE" BLUES

by SCOTT DICKENSHEETS

"We'll be playing in the Hob Nob, or in someone's living room or something, and the music will be so intense, so good, that I think 'People would have to go for this if they could only hear it.'"

Jay Cameron seems to have resigned himself to the disappointing realities of the Las Vegas jazz scene. A saxophonist who has played with Woody Herman, Chet Baker, Dizzy Gillespie and Maynard Ferguson (and who was voted something like "musician not getting enough attention" in *downbeat's* 1964 poll), Cameron has plied his trade in local jazz clubs for years. He also sets up the weekly jam sessions at the Hob Nob Lounge. He says there's a lot of fine music being made in various venues, but the musicians aren't making any money at it and not nearly enough people are hearing it.

"I used to think it was a put-down of the music if the audience wasn't there," he said. "It's not. It's the hype, the promotion, that causes the audience to come out."

"When I was involved with the Las Vegas Jazz Society (1977 to 1984), I was encouraged by the different audiences that would come out. There was a group of people who came out for the annual jazz picnics. Then we'd put on concerts in showrooms at 2 a.m., and there would be a whole other set of faces. And we'd do concerts at the university, and I'd see a whole different set of faces. What I find today is that it's too bad we can't get the word out to all those constituencies, about the clubs, the concerts. We can't do that because the cost of advertising in the newspapers exceeds the budgets of most jazz undertakings."

Business people promoting jazz for one reason or another have to love the music themselves, he says. "Because jazz doesn't get enough exposure, it doesn't get the audience numbers needed to make it a commercially viable enterprise. Since people who are good at promoting want to attach themselves to a product able to make money, they find themselves doing other things, even when they might like jazz. It's a rare mixture of a successful promoter who loves the music and is committed to it. Musicians themselves are good at playing the music and not so good at promotion. The best hope a club has to get an audience is to be located near the Strip.

"If a promoter who loves the music were to materialize, we'd have a lot healthier scene. The audience is here, it

just needs to be coaxed out."

And what of the audiences that do show up? "Because of being so underexposed to jazz, even those who have a feeling for it are not always all that knowledgeable." An exception, he says, is the Four Queens' Monday night audience, which has been groomed over the years by impresario Alan Grant and the publicity resources of the Four Queens Hotel. "Now, even if 80 percent of the audience doesn't know who the player is, they'll still show up."

Cameron is quick to add that there are advantages to being a jazzman in Vegas. Most places, except the big centers, have maybe one good rhythm section, a few guys considered top players, and if you want to play with the best, you play with them. Not so here. "The concentration of musicians in Las Vegas provides jazz players of much higher than ordinary abilities, and they go on making their music in spite of the fact that it's tough to find an audience and get paid decently."

Then Cameron sighs. To be really hot, jazz requires a certain cohesiveness and interplay among band members. But even after you round up the players and rehearse til you're tight and line up the gigs and get the word out, chances are pretty good one of your guys will land a better-paying job that night, and you'll have to play the show with a new face sitting in, which brings up another sad reality: "Musicians have to go where the money is," as opposed to where their hearts are.

Yet Cameron perseveres. "I've been committed to being a jazz musician for forty-something years now, and I've always felt that to realize my own potential as a musician, I had to keep playing jazz, whether I got paid for it or not."

It's that "or not" that hurts. Ask Cameron if it's possible to make a living playing jazz clubs in Las Vegas. The way he looks at you, you might as well have asked him to hand over his kidney. "It's out of the question!" he snorts. **aa**



JAZZ SPECIAL

JOHN  
ABRAMSON'S

# RAVING NOTION



## BY DAVID RENZI

Newly graduated and armed with a degree from West Virginia University, John Abraham possessed skills completely useless in helping him get a job.

That's the way it is when you leave academia a drummer.

Content with the decision, Abraham had another to make. The question wasn't whether he would leave Morgantown — that was a given — but where he would go.

The obvious selection was New York City, forever the teeth-cutting capital for young musicians.

Los Angeles and Nashville with their studios were possibilities. The common denominator with all three was abundant competition — and no connections.

Abraham had only family in Las Vegas, but that was enough.

"It just seemed like a good place to go because I actually knew somebody here" he says. "I got out of college and came out here. Probably the main reason I came here is because I knew I had to go somewhere ... so I came here just kind of on a whim."

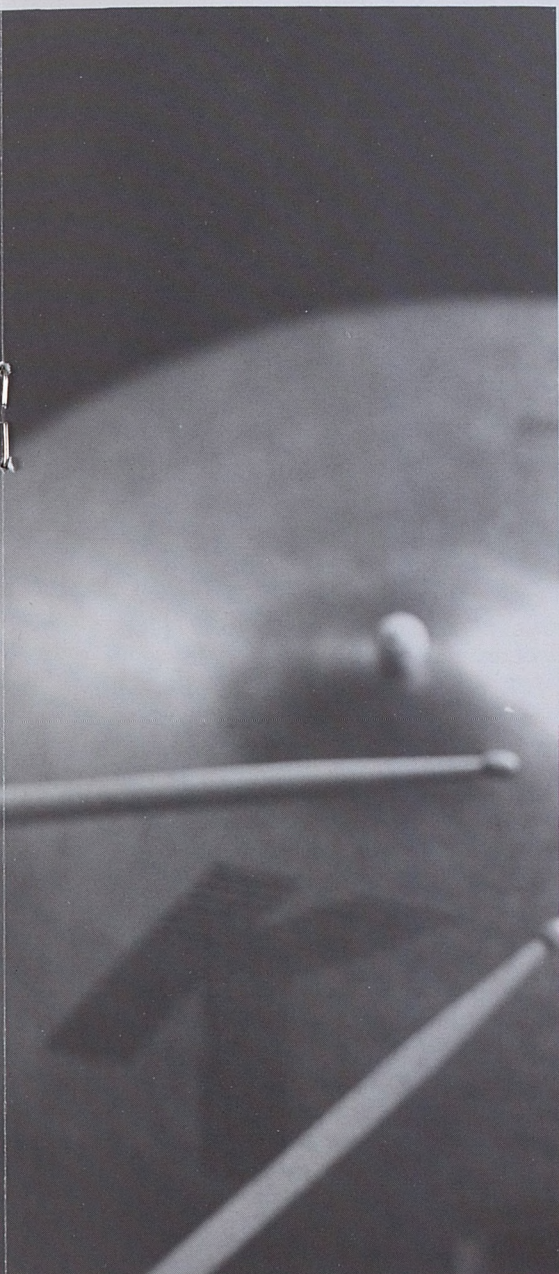
The irony is now that he's here, most of the jobs have left.

"Believe it or not, when I first got here (in 1980) things were still going pretty well," Abraham says. "Just about every hotel all up and down the Strip had one band or two, guys were working, guys were hanging out at the union and meeting everybody else."

"Now it really has changed."

In the wake of the strike that left musicians strewn across the landscape, jobless and hopeless, Abraham remains optimistic, focused and occasionally employed, if only for a night or two or three.

He'll get a meaty assignment befitting his



talent – a call here from Alan Grant for Monday night jazz at the Four Queens, an offer there to play drums or percussion (or both) for a headline act in the rare star-policy room, a recording session (with Bob Badgley, Lanny Morgan, Joe Lano, Tom Ferguson and Dan Skea) – but little sustaining work.

Determined to remain a musician, Abraham stays as others leave or drive cabs.

"For those of us that are left here, it's tough because in this business you know that the bottom could drop out any minute," he says. "I could name about four jobs that I've been on that were the kind of jobs you really enjoy having.

"They're steady for one thing, and a couple of them were real musical. I was at the Sands for a stretch where I did headliner type things. Siegfried and Roy was steady work and good money, and then at the

Golden Nugget I worked quite a few acts.

"Many times you'll be replaced by a tape, for one thing, or replaced by a different show, for another thing. Things have changed to the point where it's hard to say where it's gonna go right now.

"I try to keep optimistic about it, because if you dwell on it too much, if you think about it so negative all the time you can't get anything productive done, and one of the things that I like to do with my group is keep busy. That's one of the reasons I've probably stayed here is because of that group."

"That group," otherwise known as Afterburner, was formed in 1984 by Abraham, pianist Devin Streater and guitarist Craig Sharmat as an outlet for the fusion animal in each.

They were joined by bassist Roshon Westmoreland and saxophonist Craig Wancy, and later by saxophonist Jay Rasmussen and guitarist Jim McIntosh, who with Westmoreland, Streater and Abraham form the current five.

In the truest sense Afterburner is fusion personified, a musical stew of funk, Latin, Reggae, heavy metal and straight-ahead jazz.

"It really is a blend of everything," Abraham says.

And that, he adds, is a problem in dealing with record companies.

"They say, 'Send us everything you have.' We do and they listen to it and they say, 'Well, you've just about covered everything, we just don't know what category to put you in.'"

Lately, a definite rock influence has pervaded the group sound, an evolution Abraham finds unusual considering several members are steeped in traditional jazz.

Abraham, 33, estimates their book contains upward of 25 charts, some of which will never be heard again.

"We've put a couple on the shelf we just

got tired of doing since 1984," he says.

Perhaps the biggest change in Afterburner, aside from the usual personnel shifts and musical progressions, is its schedule. Initially a prolific performing band, concerts have dwindled to three or four in a good a year, mainly due to scheduling conflicts among group members.

Abraham prefers it this way in that it helps in planning and prevents burning (afterburning if you will) out.

"When we first started out we played every week, which we really needed to do," he says. "But for a while there, you start to burn yourself out. Your own material doesn't feel fresh."

Given the reduction, Abraham says the group makes an event out of its rare public appearances.

"One of the things I like about the group is the fact that it's all original material, and when we do a concert we rehearse it to the point where it's not just playing music in front of people, it's more like taking them on a little trip," he says.

"I have the goal that every time we play a gig we want people to walk out and say that they've seen something different or something special. We work awfully hard and everybody in the group really gets along well. It's always been that way. Nobody's ever been asked to leave. Anytime anybody's left it's always been on their own."

At one time Abraham himself thought about leaving, but the band kept him here.

"Over the course of time we've been tempted by record offers and had them fall through, so it kind of kept me here. If I left it would probably be the end of the group. I was going to come here and get myself together as a player and then move on.

"I would take my stuff down to LA and have other guys play it, but no matter how good they are it's just not the same as when

you have a set group of guys you're with all the time."

Abraham says the writing is a cooperative effort.

"That's the nice thing about it," he says. "Everybody has a say. It's not one person directing everybody else."

Abraham says he grew up playing rock 'n' roll — "nothing but rock. I started playing in bands like at 10. I can't remember ever not being in a band working in a bar somewhere."

He considers himself lucky that the high school and college he attended had teachers that stressed overall musicianship and encouraged expansive thinking.

"The best experience I ever had was not people teaching me but playing in bands all my life and playing everything from weddings to whatever," Abraham says. "Being exposed

"I've always wanted to be a little more serious about playing piano, so I've been trying to get into playing more piano and more marimba as far as a means to either writing and also playing jazz," he says. "You've just got to have that keyboard knowledge if you're going to write."

Always possessed with a good rhythmic concept, his writing has progressed harmonically to where he feels comfortable.

"It's funny that it was so harmonically deficient but it still worked," he says. "Everything doesn't have to be harmonically complicated for it to work, but you've got to move on from that point or else everything you write is going to sound the same."

For Abraham the piano and marimba serve a dual role in helping him meet an end.

"It's funny, when I write sometimes I sit

the music and help you to be able to say what you want to say."

This sensitivity to the music doesn't mean Abraham shuns the spotlight.

"I love 'em," he says of drum solos, "because it's your turn to be creative. You've got the different rhythms you can play, different melodies on different tunes and the technical things that you can do to create something, to start at one point and play little rhythmic patterns or motifs that will get your point across."

"Sometimes I'll set a pattern out of different things that I want to accomplish during that solo, but other times it'll just be spontaneous, which usually works out better. I take the things that I practiced and if they happen, they happen. If they don't, then it's no big deal either."

Still, solos are secondary to playing good time and locking in with the rhythm section, he says, adding that drummers who can play good solos but can't play with the band usually are unemployed.

A critical listener of himself, Abraham is occasionally surprised when he plays the tapes back.

"A lot of times I'll listen to something back that I thought was really sounding good when I played it, and it wasn't," he says. "You realize you may be playing something too loud or something just wasn't time-wise together. So, it's good because then you can take that bit of information and correct it so the next time you play you feel more comfortable."

Quiet and introspective, Abraham's ability has grown with the city.

"I didn't think I was a very good player when I first got here," he says, "mainly because I was young. I was like 21 or something. I don't think anybody 21 is really experienced for the kind of things that were happening in this town. That only comes with playing and working. I feel I've progressed."

Most important to Abraham is his family, his wife and two children, which he places above all else. That and his religion, he says, give him sustenance when the music business gives him headaches.

Abraham occasionally thinks he should have left Las Vegas, but invariably reaches the same conclusion: it's as bad or worse for professional musicians in New York and Los Angeles.

"Probably the most important thing to me right now is the fact that I have my family, wife and my children, and it means more to me than schlepping across the country with Madonna or somebody like that. That has no appeal to me."

"I think just the reward of working towards a goal of being a good musician is a reward enough in itself for me. That's really all I need as well as the support of my wife."

He pauses, then adds: "I don't know. I think there's a lot of very, very good players here and I think that if you can find five guys here that have the same musical goals that you do and are the same head-wise, you could live anywhere. You could live on the North Pole." aa



to everything just helped me out a great deal, and once I got to college I had a real good teacher.

"He motivated me to want to actually teach myself. Most of the things I've learned I've had to more or less teach myself from listening to other people and analyzing. I think that's a better way of learning."

This approach he applies not only to drums, but mallets, playing jazz and writing.

As Abraham matured, he realized he needed a better harmonic and melodic foundation if his writing was to improve. Already playing a keyboard of sorts in the marimba, he found it useful but limiting.

at the piano then have to jump up to the marimba then sit back down at the piano because there's something technically I just can't do on the piano and other things I can't do four-mallet wise on the marimba," he says.

His approach to drums equally meticulous, Abraham practices the rudiments daily. Armed with ample technique, he disdains facile displays until his time to solo.

"The number one thing I think about is the music, and the technical things that you practice you leave after you're done with them," Abraham says. "If you've practiced them enough, they will somehow enter into

# WARNING: Jazz Flash Flood

**JAZZ** SPECIAL

This year in Las Vegas, May is Jazz Month for the 18th time. Started by the late Monk Montgomery, brother of guitarist West Montgomery, in 1974, Jazz Month was originally sponsored by the Las Vegas Jazz Society, the City of Las Vegas and the Allied Arts Council.

In 1991, besides Allied Arts, Jazz Month concerts will be presented by the UNLV Center for the Performing Arts, the Cultural Affairs Division of the Clark County Parks and Recreation Department, and KUNV FM 91.5 Community Radio. This year it will be funded by the NEA, the Nevada State Council on

the Arts, and its steady corporate sponsor First Interstate Bank.

Jazz Month will begin with a week-long Las Vegas Jazz Festival featuring flutist James Newton; the piano duo of Ramsey Lewis and Billy Taylor; the UNLV Jazz Ensemble with guest drummer Louis Bellson and saxophonist Don Menza; Walt Richardson and the Morningstar Band; a world music unit from Arizona; and then a Jazz Picnic with Afterburner (see cover story), pollwinning Japanese trombonist Hiroshi Suzuki, who now lives in Las Vegas; and the Brass in the Grass Band. Trumpeter Marvin Stamm wraps up the week with a

Monday Night gig at the Four Queens. See sidebar for complete concert info.

Newton's concert will be the first of five concerts in the Barrett Allied Arts Gallery, one each Wednesday in May. The others will feature bassist Bob Badgley's Jazz Commuters, with alto saxist Lanny Morgan, guitarist Joe Lano, and drummer Frankie Capp; Composer's Night, with new works by John Abraham and Raoul Romero; the Charles Owens Saxophone Quartet from Los Angeles; and "A Tribute to Garvin Bushell," in which the 89-year-old Las Vegas multi-reed player will act as musical director, choosing tunes from his varied career, which included recordings with Bessie Smith, Fletcher Henderson, Cab Calloway, Chick Webb with Ella Fitzgerald, Gil Evans, Miles Davis, Eric Dolphy and John Coltrane.

Also during May, the Tom Gause jazz Quartet will swing through several local schools as part of a special Class Act jazz program funded by the Nevada State Council on the Arts.

In other jazz events, Michael Schivo Presents is bringing saxophonist Richard Elliot to Spring Mountain Ranch State Park in Red Rock on May 17. For details, call 798-6405.

Following Marvin Stamm's May 6 show at the Four Queens, the rest of the month's roster includes the Buddy Charles Big Band on May 13, multi-instrumentalist James Morrison on May 20, and Don Rader and Ron Eschete on May 27. 385-4011.

The Community College of Southern Nevada Jazz Band, along with the school's Vocal Jazz Choir, will perform a free concert at 2 p.m., May 19, in the lobby of the college's Cheyenne campus. 643-6060 x259.

Clark County will present Blues with Charlie Musselwhite (harmonica), at Sunset Park, May 17, at 6 p.m. Advance tickets are \$8, \$10 at the gate. 455-7340.

The County will continue the Jazz Month spirit into June, with free concerts every Saturday in June at the Winchester Community Center, from 7:30 to 10 p.m. Executive producer and host Alan Grant has put together the following line up: June 1: Kenny Harkins and Joe Lano open for headliner Marlena Shaw. June 8: Tom Ferguson and Friends open for trombonist Al Grey. June 15: The Pat Sherrod Group opening for violinist Papa John Creach. June 22: Pete and Conti Condoli from the *Tonight Show* Band. June 29: The Rudy Aikels Group, featuring Edie Aikels, opening for (tentatively) Red Holloway. Call 455-7340.

Michael Schivo will present his second "Jazz Under the Stars" concert on June 1, featuring Fattburger, guitarist Grant Geisman and reedman Tom Borton. Tickets are \$22.50, subject to service charge, and partial proceeds will benefit Allied Arts. **aa**

## CLIP AND SAVE THIS HANDY JAZZ SCHEDULE!

### LAS VEGAS JAZZ FESTIVAL

- Wednesday, May 1, 5 p.m.  
*Opening reception, jazz photos and drawings by Sylvia Hill, Tony and Mary Scodwell, and Stewart Freshwater. Barrett Allied Arts Gallery. 731-5419.*
- Wednesday, May 1, 8:05 and 9:30 p.m.  
*James Newton, flute, Barrett Allied Arts Gallery. \$6 general, \$3 Allied Arts members. First set broadcast live over KUNV 91.5 FM. 731-5419.*
- Thursday, May 2, 8 p.m.  
*UNLV Jazz Ensemble, Black Box Theatre, free. 739-3801.*
- Friday, May 3, 8 p.m.  
*Ramsey Lewis and Billy Taylor, pianos, Artemus Ham Concert Hall. \$15. 739-3801.*
- Friday, May 3, 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.  
*Jay Cameron Quartet, McCarran Airport Baggage Claim Area. Free. 455-7340.*
- Saturday, May 4, 6 and 9 p.m.  
*Walt Richardson and the Morningstar Band, Winchester Community Center. \$5, under 14 with parents are free. 455-7340.*
- Sunday, May 5, 2 - 6 p.m.  
*Jazz Picnic, Winchester Community Center, featuring Afterburner, trombonist Hiroshi Suzuki, Brass in the Grass Band. Free. 731-5419.*
- Monday, May 6, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 p.m.  
*Marvin Stamm, trumpet, Four Queens Hotel, French Quarter Lounge. \$3 cover. 385-4011.*

### JAZZ MONTH CONTINUES

- Saturday, May 4, all day  
*3rd Annual School Jazz Band Festival, Community College of Southern Nevada, lobby. CCSN Jazz Band at noon, Si Zentner Big Band at 4 p.m. 643-6060 x259.*
- Wednesday, May 8, 8:05 and 9:30 p.m.  
*Jazz Commuters with Bob Badgley, Lanny Morgan, Joe Lano and Frankie Capp. Barrett Allied Arts Gallery. \$6 general admission, \$3*

Allied Arts members. First set broadcast live on KUNV 91.5 FM. 731-5419.

- Monday, May 13, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 p.m.  
*Buddy Charles Big Band, Four Queens Hotel, French Quarter Lounge. \$3 cover. 385-4011.*
- Wednesday, May 15, 8:05 and 9:30 p.m.  
*Composers' Night, new compositions by John Abraham and Raoul Romero, Barrett Allied Arts Gallery. \$6 general admission, \$3 Allied Arts members. First set broadcast live on KUNV 91.5 FM. 731-5419.*
- Friday, May 17, 7 p.m.  
*Jazz Under the Stars #1, with Richard Elliot, saxophone, and Fear of Success. \$21.50 (subject to service charge). 798-6405.*
- Friday, May 17, 7 p.m.  
*Blues with Charlie Musselwhite, Sunset Park. Gates open at 6 p.m. Advance tickets \$8, \$10 at gate, under 14 free with parent. 455-7340.*
- Sunday, May 19, 2 p.m.  
*Community College of Southern Nevada Jazz Band, CCSN Vocal Jazz Choir. College lobby. Free. 643-6060 x259.*
- Monday, May 20, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 p.m.  
*James Morrison, multi-instrument, Four Queens Hotel, French Quarter Lounge. \$3 cover. 385-4011.*
- Wednesday, May 22, 8:05 and 9:30 p.m.  
*Charles Owens Saxophone Quartet, from Los Angeles. Barrett Allied Arts Gallery. \$6 general, \$3 Allied Arts members. First set broadcast live on KUNV 91.5 FM. 731-5419.*
- Monday, May 27, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 p.m.  
*Don Rader and Ron Eschete, Four Queens Hotel, French Quarter Lounge. \$3 cover. 385-4011.*
- Wednesday, May 29, 8:05 and 9:30 p.m.  
*Tribute to Garvin Bushell, Bushell will act as musical director to a combo playing tunes from his career. Barrett Allied Arts Gallery. \$6 general, \$3 Allied Arts members. First set broadcast live on KUNV 91.5 FM. 731-5419.*

**aa**



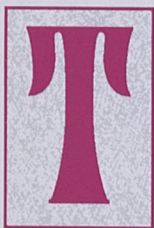
PHOTOS by Sylvia Hill

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This was originally slated for the last issue, but was bumped back. While some event information is out of date, but the ideas are still valid.*

# "RENAISSANCE DUDE"

## Mark-Louis Walters Does It All.

BY ERIK JOSEPH



**T**HEATRE, MUSIC, dance, prose and visual art. Few creative artists excel in all aspects of the arts. Few can merge technical workmanship and creative imagination to form ingenious and pragmatic works. Few can combine their unique vision, personal knowledge and learned skills to create and adapt extraordinary works of fine, graphic and liberal art. As a director, painter, designer, performer and musician, 28-year-old Mark-Louis Walters creates excellence in his art and craft.

The youngest of four boys, Mark-Louis Walters was born in Ashtabula, Ohio. His parents have been married 39 years. Mark's father, Jack, is a former chemical engineer, now on early retirement from Titanium Metals. His mother, Mary, is a registered nurse and part-time flute teacher.

Following his graduation from Bonanza High School in 1980, Mark entered the Marine Corps. Suffering from injuries while boxing at Annapolis, Walters was given a medical discharge and returned home. He enrolled in UNLV's art program and in 1987 received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, with emphasis in art and sculpture.

Walters attributes much of his strong base

in art appreciation and history to a semester he spent in Florence, Italy. The work-study program, arranged through UNLV, gave him inspiration. When he returned home he knew it was time to put his talents to work.

*Jack of all trades, master of many* describes Mark-Louis Walters. He currently divides his typical 12 to 15 hour day between the Lady Luck Hotel and Casino, where he is redesigning their events center, and rehearsals for *The Marriage of Bette and Boo*, a play he is directing at Clark County Community College. The only way to fully understand and appreciate his talents is to look at his recent work in the Las Vegas arts community.

### DIRECTOR

*THE MARRIAGE of Bette and Boo* is Walters' first big break into directing a Las Vegas stage production. Still, it is a natural progression for Walters, whose theatre background is replete. Though he has directed a few smaller projects around town, by now directing a Christopher Durang play, Walters feels he has reached a personal goal.

"I've done every single job there is in theatre, so I'm not only familiar with the process, but well prepared," says Walters.

He describes the play as "a piece that examines the perceived ideals and expectations of a family, in a ridiculous and

bizarre way." He adds that he can relate to the family theme, but not the familial unrest and discord portrayed.

"My parents and family are not like that at all. They've never even asked me to get a real job. I think that's true support," he says, bemused.

Bob Dunkerly, artistic director for Community College Theatre and the New West Stage Company, approached Walters about directing *Bette and Boo*. He felt the combination of Durang and Walters would work wonderfully.

"Mark has been a vital part of the growth of both New West Stage Company and the Community College theatre program. Directing was the next step," says Dunkerly.

Dunkerly met Walters 12 years ago when Walters was a member of the Bonanza High School orchestra. More recently, Dunkerly was impressed with Walters' acting as Mozart in a production of *Amadeus*. Walters has since worked with Dunkerly off and on as an actor or member of the technical crew.

Barbara Brennan, New West's associate artistic director, regarded as one of the city's best directors, echoes Dunkerly's confidence in Walters' potential as a director. She was a combination assistant director/technical director for New West's version of *I'm Not Rappaport*, which Brennan directed.

"Mark is so talented and so professional in many areas," says Brennan. "Durang is right

up Mark's alley. With his superb comedic sense and timing and demented sense of humor, it should be a fantastic play."

Next up for Walters, after *Bette and Boo*, will be another directing job. He will direct *The Little Shop of Horrors* for New West. Walters anticipates even bigger and better things from this popular play.

"It's a high-profile play," he says, "so I expect it will attract a very good audience."

Walters plans to invite some Los Angeles-based theatrical movers and shakers, which hints at the inevitable question: does he have his sights set on bigger cities and bigger theatres?

"Of course," he says, "but Las Vegas is good for me. I get to do whatever I want here."

### PERFORMANCE ARTIST

PERFORMANCE ART helps Walters vent steam. It is his soapbox, the perfect opportunity and arena for him to do what he wants.

Walters has had six performance art shows in Las Vegas. The latest, "Trans Am," opened an exhibit of his paintings in the Allied Arts Gallery in June of '89.

"It was a reaction to consumerism and demographic marketing. The point being, you are what you buy," Walters says. Each character had a car and each character talked about their car. "It was about our perceptions of ourselves in advertising."

He is preparing for another show after the first of the year.

### ACTOR

WALTERS HAS been acting since he was eight years old. It settles his ego, he says. It offers him instantaneous gratification. "But I don't mess with dramas, I stick with comedies."

Acting is his passion and he's good at it. Last season he won the McHugh award for best actor for his role in *Baby with the Bathwater*. He insists that if he had to choose between one of his many talents, he would chose to be a professional stage actor, because "it is easier to do than the other things." However, he disdains the idea of being a waiter-actor or a grocery clerk-actor. He tried it briefly in Los Angeles and feels it simply isn't worth it.

"You have to be very, very lucky. You get your luck at some point if you're good, not patient. Few stage actors make a living at it," he says.

He also has no desire to work in feature films or television. he's done it and found the work tedious.

"Film work is precise, I like that, but the process is monotonous and irritating. Essentially, it is the difference between a photographic medium and a performance medium."

Walters will stick with "live" theatre.

### DESIGNER

IN 1986, Walters met John Iacovelli, a UNLV alumnus and professor of design.



Iacovelli was from Los Angeles and was designing the Las Vegas production of *Something's Afoot*. Walters served as his apprentice. He then worked with Iacovelli in Los Angeles as assistant designer, scenic artist, prop master and art director. Through Iacovelli, Walters had the opportunity to work in such theatres as the Mark Taper Forum, the Los Angeles Center for the Performing

Arts and the Southcoast Repertory Theatre.

In the summer of '90, Walters worked as head scenic artist at the Utah Shakespearean Festival, where he was asked to help interpret the designs of the shows.

Walters has since worked as production designer on many Las Vegas stage productions. Barbara Brennan has the highest praise for his work on *Crimes of the Heart*, a New West production: "Mark's set was incredible, his his scenic paintings fantastic!"

Walters won his second 1990 McHugh award for his scenic design on *A Lesson From Aloes*.

Jim Carey, artistic director for the Lady Luck Hotel and Casino, and producer of the downtown property's new production show, *Luck is a Lady*, hired Walters shortly after the McHugh awards. Carey needed someone to re-design the Lady Luck's events center from scratch.

"I needed a talented stage designer and was completely confident Mark could handle the job," Carey states.

Walters brought in his own crew of

See page 32.

## WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A RENAISSANCE DUDE?

You don't adopt the appellation "Renaissance man," you earn it. Following is a list of Mark-Louis Walters' arts activities during 1990.

### JANUARY

■ *I'm Not Rappaport*, New West Stage Company; designer, assistant director.

■ *A Lesson From Aloes*, Community College Theatre; set and lighting designer. Nominated for McHugh Award for lighting, received McHugh for set.

### FEBRUARY

■ Valentine Art Auction, Allied Arts Council; sold painting.

■ *Golden Boy*, University of California - Irvine; scenic artist.

### MARCH

■ *I Ought To Be in Pictures*, Community College Theatre; set designer. Nominated for McHugh Award.

### APRIL

■ *If Festival*, Rainbow Company: *The Tingalary Bird* and *Really Rosie*; set and lighting designer for both shows.

### MAY

■ *Baby with the Bathwater*, Community College Theatre; set designer and actor. Received McHugh Award for supporting actor.

### MAY / JUNE / JULY

■ Utah Shakespeare Festival: charge scenic artist for Randall Theatre, including productions of *Waiting for Godot*, *Ghosts* and *The Importance*

*of Being Earnest*.

### JULY

■ *AFT III*, industrial film, Hollywood; art director.

### AUGUST

■ *American Notes*, Los Angeles; scenic artist.

### SEPTEMBER

■ *Fools*, Rainbow Company; set design and actor.

■ *Crimes of the Heart*, New West Stage Company; set designer.

### OCTOBER - DECEMBER

■ *Luck is a Lady*, Lady Luck Casino; production designer.

### NOVEMBER

■ *The Marriage of Bette and Boo*, Community College Theatre; director.

■ *Fences*, New West Stage Company; production manager.

### DECEMBER

■ *Hey, E-Guy!*, Nevada Power Company and Allied Arts; conceived, wrote script, composed and recorded music, directed production and performed.

During the year, Walters also sold a pair of paintings in Los Angeles.

To lend a sense of context, Walters' 1989 list is nearly this extensive, and his 1991 list is shaping up to be even longer. aa

# Mark Masuoka Gallery



Photo: Dirk Bakker

"Rabbit Head", 1990, Earthenware, 58"x 46"x 17"

## DEBORAH MASUOKA RABBIT HEADS

March 8 – April 27



"Wake Up", 72"x120", oil on canvas

## MARY WARNER

### "Immaculate Perceptions"

May 3 – June 14

Opening reception for the artist:  
May 3, 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm

### PREVIEW GALLERY

Premiere Exhibition: "Celestial Raymond," Photography by Morgan Thomas Warner  
May 3 – June 14



## ALLIED ARTS RECEIVES NEA GRANT FOR JAZZ MONTH

The Allied Arts Council of Southern Nevada has received its first-ever direct grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, \$5,000 to support this year's Jazz Month program.

The Endowment joins First Interstate Bank in funding Jazz Month. FIB has been the main corporate sponsor of Jazz Month for the past three years.

"The NEA grant is extremely important," says Walter Blanton, chairman of the Jazz Month Committee. "Although NEA funding comes to Allied Arts every year through grants from the Nevada State Council on the Arts, this is the very first direct NEA grant Allied Arts has ever received. We think it's because of the serious approach we've taken to Jazz Month, the care we take in selecting the finest artists, and the fact that we've done things like commission many new jazz compositions.

"We also thank FIB for its continuing support. They are one of music's strongest supporters in Nevada." **aa**

## ALLIED ARTS RECEIVES NEON MUSEUM GRANT

The State of Nevada 125th Anniversary Commission has awarded Allied Arts Council of Southern Nevada \$25,000 for its Las Vegas Museum of Neon Art Project. The funding will go toward the preservation and restoration of classic Southern Nevada neon signs for eventual display when the museum is built.

The Las Vegas Museum of Neon Art Committee, chaired by Allied Arts board member Thomas J. Schoeman, has been planning and collecting signs for nearly five years. It now has well over 20 classic signs committed to the museum, from the Golden Nugget sign of postcard fame, which used to dominate Fremont Street, to the Hacienda's 30-ft tall rearing horse and rider, as well as the animated Fifth Street Liquor sign, featuring a hand pouring a bottle.

The committee is now working to raise \$25,000 needed to match the Anniversary Commission funds.

The Anniversary Commission was formed to celebrate the 125th anniversary of Nevada's statehood in 1989. At that time it developed a number of commemorative items, including commemorative license plates, which it used to raise funds. It has now completed the distribution of those funds to projects designed to commemorate Nevada's history.

Some of the Commission funds will be used to move about a dozen classic signs donated to the project by the Young Electric Sign Company (YESCO) from YESCO's neon boneyard to storage on land loaned by the City of Las Vegas.

The bulk of the funds will be used to restore to display condition the 5th Street Liquors and Hacienda signs, as well as the original Thunderbird from the Thunderbird Hotel, now the El Rancho, which has been stored in Ad Art sign company's yard in Stockton, California since it was taken down in March, 1978 as the hotel became the Silverbird.

The Las Vegas City Council has unanimously approved the concept of locating the museum on City land across from Lied Discovery Children's Museum, adjacent to the old Elks building on Las Vegas Boulevard North. **aa**

## ALLIED ARTS — NEVADA POWER PROJECT SUCCESSFUL, RENEWED

After zapping into 81 local elementary schools with their messages of power safety and conservation, The E-Guy and his sidekick DC wrapped up their Nevada Power-sponsored program in late May.

*Hey, E-Guy!*, a musical skit devised by Mark-Louis Walters (see profile this issue) — who scripted, scored, designed and performed the title role — was a joint project by Allied Arts and Nevada Power Company, designed to inform children about the origins and nature of power, as well as safety and conservation information.

The results? Sixty thousand students saw

the performances, learned the singular E-Guy dance, and heard the messages. According to Allied Arts development director Jean Norton, who administered the program, "it received a 98 percent positive response."

Thanks to those numbers, and the fact that *Hey E-Guy!* came in under budget, Nevada Power will work with Allied Arts again next year. In previous years, the company had imported a midwestern theatre troupe to perform for school kids.

Aside from delivering needed information on electricity to the children, Norton pointed out two other important benefits of the program. "It provides paying opportunities to local theatre people, writers, directors, scenic designers and others," she said, "which is an important consideration for Allied Arts."

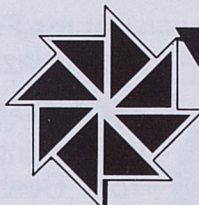
Also, it exposed the students to live theatrical performances.

For next year's program, Norton said, Allied Arts and Nevada Power will solicit treatments for scripts from writers. Those plans will be announced when finalized. **aa**

### CLASSIFIED ADS

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## NEW OFFICE MANAGER WHIPS AAC INTO SHAPE

Susie Martinez



Susie Martinez has climbed aboard Allied Arts as office manager, replacing the long-departed Kim McCall-Warren. Formerly an office manager at Highlands University of New Mexico, Susie has become an island of

calm organization in a sea of chaos. Already she has introduced visionary innovations such as obtaining separate baskets for each staff member's mail! She has also manhandled unruly stacks of paperwork, kept the bulk

mailing process humming smoothly along and generally adapted well to the kind of atmosphere that would snap the mind of lesser office managers. Hopefully she'll last a long time. **aa** - Scott Dickensheets

## VALENTINE AUCTION A SUCCESS

For those who keep track of such things, Allied Arts held its second annual Valentine Auction on February 5. It was a rousing success. More than 65 people showed up, an increase over last years attendance of about, oh, 59 people, and some of them left significant sums of money behind.

After all the math was completed, nearly \$10,000 in art was sold, and most of the money was returned to the artists. Several pieces sold for more than the minimum bid, in particular a Tom Holder oil that was the object of a lively bidding war; it eventually went for two and a half times its \$850 asking price. All told, 21 pieces of art were sold.

Allied Arts Trustee Maureen Barrett, who picked up several artworks in an acquisitive frenzy, was also the guest of honor for a dedication ceremony preceding the auction. Maureen, husband Jay Barrett and brother-in-law Patrick Barrett spearheaded the volunteer drive that resulted in the refurbished Barrett Allied Arts Gallery; Maureen accepted a plaque commemorating that effort and listing the 10 businesses that supplied men or materials. The plaque now hangs in the gallery. **aa** - Scott Dickensheets

**Award Winning!**

**JAZZ**

1988

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**SUMMA CROP. CEO JOHN GOOLSBY AND WIFE JUDY  
TO CHAIR ANNUAL  
MASQUE BALL**

Summa Corp. President John Goolsby and wife Judy will host the Allied Arts Council of Southern Nevada's 7th Annual Masque Ball on Saturday, April 20, at 7 p.m., in the Caesars Palace Colosseum Ballroom. Tickets are \$150 individual, \$1500 for a table of 10.

The theme of the event is "Arts Sensation," and will feature performances by artists of various disciplines. There will also be a silent auction that includes not only paintings, sculpture and miscellaneous cultural items, but the services of musicians and other performers as well.

Some of the artists who will be featured in the auction, which is being curated by Mark Masuoka, are Mary Warner, Tom Holder, Jennifer Safko, Walter McNamara and Pasha Rafat.

Goolsby, 49, is President and CEO, and a member of the board of directors, of The Hughes Corporation and Summa Corporation, the principal operating companies of the Howard Hughes Estate. Summa is developing the vast Hughes real estate holdings, among the largest private real estate assets in the United State.

Along with those duties, he is also on the board of directors of First Interstate Bank of Nevada, the Dean's Council of the UCLA School of Architecture and Urban Planning, the UNLV Foundation, and is president of the Boulder Dam Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

During Goolsby's tenure, Summa's undertakings in Nevada have included the Hughes Center, the 120-acre complex anchored by the First Interstate Tower; the 350-acre Hughes Airport Center, which will include 4.5 million square feet of office space when completed; Summerlin, the 23,000-acre development that will eventually be home to 200,000 residents; the Fashion Show Mall, and Park 2000. The company is also involved in extensive real estate development in California.

Goolsby grew up in Fort Worth, Texas, graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington, and started his career as an accountant and management consultant with the international accounting firm Arthur Young and Company. In the years since then, he held several executive positions with American Medicorp and established his own real estate firm in Texas, before joining the Hughes organization. He was named a vice president in 1980.

Those interested in attending the Masque Ball should respond by April 5. Call 731-5419 for more information. **aa** - Scott Dickensheets

**MASQUE BALL 1991**

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# GALLERY TO HOST PASHA RAFAT, JAZZ PHOTO EXHIBITS

Here is Rafat on his work:

Recent black and white images, printed on photographic linen emulsion, are a direct transition and transformation of ideas from earlier lush color still lifes made in 1988 - 1989. The current series of work deals with and negates certain visual characteristics of the photographic medium. Properties as isolation of information, representation, and documentation are some of these unique characteristics. The artist, in this case, has fabricated and manipulated shallow space environments created with wrinkled paper over simple geometric forms. The information within the environments is retained in a democratized manner emphasizing the illusionary quality of overall pictorial space.

Rafat, who last exhibited in the Allied Arts gallery in April, 1989, has been a full-time instructor at UNLV since 1986, and is now building up the school's photography program. He is a native of Tehran, Iran, with degrees from Arizona State University and California State University, Fullerton.

Rafat's show opens April 5 with a 6 to 8 p.m. reception, and runs through April 29.

## JAZZ PHOTO EXHIBIT

Just in time for Jazz Month, the gallery will host an exhibit of jazz photography by Sylvia Hill and Tony and Mary Scodwell. Complementing the photos will be a selection of jazz-themed drawings by Stewart Freshwater.

This show opens May 1 with a 5 to 7 p.m. reception, followed by the first Jazz Month Gallery Concert, featuring James Newton (see Jazz Month schedule this issue).

According to Sylvia Hill, who is organizing the show, the pictures will mostly depict past Jazz Month performers. Hill and the Scodwells have been ubiquitous clicking presences at Jazz Month events over the years, and have compiled images of the local and national jazz artists who have performed here.

This exhibit will run through May 31.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: The June exhibit has yet to be finalized, due to a change in gallery directors. aa - Scott Dickensheets*



## PASHA RAFAT

The Barrett Allied Arts Gallery will open the spring with an exhibit of photography by UNLV photography department head Pasha Rafat.



**"R**ex wasn't about to make the same mistake twice. The last time he ate a chile that size, he had a nitemare that he had send money to Jim and Tammy Bakker."

## Moonstruck Gallery

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# FIRST PEEK AT THE GRANT ARCHIVES



by Patrick Gaffey

## CANNONBALL ADDERLEY RADIO NIGHTS Night Records CD 2 – 91590

"Stars Fell On Alabama," "The Little Boy With The Sad Eyes," "Midnight Mood," "Fiddler On the Roof;" "Cannonball Adderley, alto sax; Nat Adderley, cornet; Joe Zawinul, piano; Sam Jones, bass; Roy McCurdy, drums; Nat out on "Stars..." last week of 1967.

"Work Song," "The Song My Lady Sings," "Unit Seven," add Charles Lloyd, tenor sax; Louis Hayes, drums replaces McCurdy. Date given: First week of 1968 (see below). All performances recorded by Alan Grant at the Half Note, New York City.

Cannonball monologues over "Oh Babe" and "Country Preacher" no date given, Keystone Korner, San Francisco. Total time: 67'16".

"Ladies and Gentlemen, Cannonball Adderley! With the Quintet!" Alan Grant's voice takes us right into the Four Queens. But, believe it or not, there was an Alan Grant before there was Jazz at the Four Queens, and this was Alan in 1967 at the Half Note in New York.

Grant was one of New York's best known jazz impresarios, presenting nearly all the big names from the sixties in a few different clubs. Since then, recordings from those days have inhabited one closet after another as he moved around the country, waiting for the right opportunity.

It finally came, and he made a deal with legendary producer Ahmet Ertegun to lease five tapes to the new Night Music label, a Virgin Records subsidiary distributed through the massive WEA system. If you read any of the the jazz magazines, you've seen the big ads for Night Music (a "live recordings only" label) and its first five releases, *Radio Nights* prominent among them.

Since Alan's recordings were made during broadcasts, anyone with a radio could also record them as airchecks, so some have

been released as bootleg LP's. But Alan's tapes are not airchecks; they have the rich quality of studio sound. The guessing game, of course, is, "What will Night release next?" Even Alan doesn't know, but he mentions a few contenders: Jimmy Witherspoon/Roy Eldridge; Eric Dolphy at the Gaslight Inn with guest singer Joe Carroll (with tunes missing from the horrible-sounding bootleg); John Coltrane; Al Cohn/Zoot Sims with Jimmy Rushing; the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra playing head arrangements before they made their first record (Alan had much to do with the formation of the band); Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers with Keith Jarrett and Chuck Mangione; and, Alan says, an outstanding set by the greatly underrated Lucky Thompson. Another set, Horace Silver, *The Natives Are Restless*, has been release on the Silvetto label. And, yes, Alan says someday some of the KNPR tapes from his ten years at the Four Queens could be released – like tapes of Cleanhead Vinson; Pepper Adams; Joe Farrell; and the late Las Vegas resident Lockjaw Davis with current resident Joe Williams. It's worth noting that Alan takes care that the musicians or their heirs receive the proper royalties from all releases.

Julian "Cannonball" Adderley spent much of his career being held to impossibly high standards. When he first appeared in New York he was compared to the Mother of All Mothers, Charlie Parker, and unfairly had the sobriquet of "The New Bird" hung around his neck like an old albatross. Then, when he helped make Miles Davis' late fifties band the colossus it was, he was constantly compared to bandmate John Coltrane. But Cannon could cope. Hard-charger that he was, he couldn't out-charge Coltrane, so by the time of *Kind of Blue* he would sometimes follow Trane's powerful torrents quietly, with the most lyrical beauty you could ever imagine.

Forever after, Cannon was a "disappointment," Miles' band having been the high point of his career and, not being "serious" enough, he squandered his talent on crowd pleasing. Of course, this line ignores the point that the 1959 band was the high point of Miles' career, as well as one of the high points in the history of jazz.

*Radio Days* comes as a timely reminder that Cannonball did not die in 1960. The first cut, brother Nat's "Little Boy..." a beautiful, funky hard-bop tune typical of the band is a sufficient reminder in itself. Cornetist Nat solos first; by 1967 he had shed his albatross of Miles Davis worship. Here he is entirely himself, with an open horn in a spectacular solo in front of a very tight band.

Cannon solos next, so alive he could step out of the speakers. He projects a rich, warm, bluesy presence. His playing is remarkably fresh and unclichéd with the incredible rhythmic variety that makes it impossible for him to produce a boring solo. There is no letdown throughout the set. "Midnight Mood" is a Zawinul waltz. "Stars..." is the familiar Cannonball feature, but his sound has grown bigger and much more emotional since the carefully manicured 1959 studio version from *Cannonball and Coltrane*. Somehow, a fine arrangement even turns "Fiddler" into more engaging hard bop with a middle Eastern twist.

One look at the information provided for the second set shows something is wrong. Charles Lloyd? Playing for the Adderleys in 1968, when he still had his goldmine quartet from 1966 with Keith Jarrett and Jack DeJohnette? A glance at a few sources shows they all agree – Louis Hayes worked with the Adderleys from 1959 through 1965; Lloyd in 1964-5. The first week of 1965 might be a good candidate for the true date.

The older band sounds just as tight as the '67 unit (with Louis Hayes on drums, why not?). Lloyd, a student of the underappreciated George Coleman, sounds out of place on "Work Song," as Yusef Lateef often did with the Adderleys. But there it is – Lloyd's soft, insinuating, unique tenor voice. He sounds more comfortable on his own, "The Song..." Cannonball's solo on the final tune is at least as amazing as it was on the first. The overall sound of the second set is also quite good, but the tape apparently didn't survive the decades as well as the first set tape; there are several little tape glitches, and in "The Song..." both Lloyd and Zawinul are pingponged back and forth from right speaker to left during their solos; Lloyd sounds like he's trading eights with himself.

The CD is filled out with two Cannonball monologues from San Francisco, revealing a little of the personality behind his joyous sound. After an exposition on the difference between sin and immorality (sic), he pronounces his agreement with the first Mosaic commandment, but: "We had a caucus in the band and decided that the only thing that our neighbor can have *uncoveted* is his ox. That is, that we don't never have need of a piece of ox."

Buy this album. **aa**

## MONEY

On February 7, the Nevada Alliance for the Arts held its legislative luncheon in Carson City, playing host to Lieutenant Governor Sue Wagner and an impressive number of legislators, including Finance Committee chair Nick Horn and Ways and Means Committee chair Matt Callister.

Alliance President Roger Peltyn opened the luncheon, explaining the organization's purposes and position. Board member Roger Thomas explained the importance of the arts to Nevada businesses, and singer Toni Tenille talked about the arts in more emotional terms. State Senator Dina Titus closed by calling for the formation of a bipartisan, Senate/Assembly arts caucus to push for cultural issues throughout the session.

The luncheon was short, to the point, and apparently quite effective. Speakers stressed the fact that, despite our hearing about it for nearly a decade, Nevada remains 53rd in per capita arts funding among the 56 states and territories, and that seemed to hit lawmakers rather hard.

The Alliance provided some figures which pointed out that Governor Bob Miller, who two years ago became the first governor to include a substantial increase in his budget for the Nevada State Council on the Arts (NSCA), has again written in a 20 percent increase, which stands out among his extremely lean recommendations for other state agencies. Still, even with Miller's increase, Nevada, one of the few states which has never fully matched the funding it receives from the National Endowment for the Arts, would still not reach a full match by the end of the biennium.

The Alliance recommends that the state allocate funding at the national per capita average (\$1.13) for each year of the biennium, for a state amount of \$1,356,000. Currently, Nevada is spending \$.31 per capita. Because of the state's lagging funding, organization grants were cut 75 percent in 1985, in the middle of Nevada's explosive growth, and remain at that level today.

Roger Thomas, who runs the Golden Nugget Corporation's design arm, Atlandia Design, shone a powerful light on the role of the arts; what he said deserves wider circulation. Here is his speech in its entirety:

### THE ARTS MEAN BUSINESS

by Roger P. Thomas

Financial support for the arts is good business – every dollar the state of Nevada spends on ballet, symphony or visual arts

programs will return to the state's treasury in several ways; by attracting new and diversified businesses; by attracting new citizens to live in our state; and by increasing and broadening our attractions, thereby bringing more tourists for a longer stay.

Nevada has an important opportunity to consider. By dramatically increasing our financial contributions to meet the national average of state support for the arts to the national average of \$1.13 from our current \$.31, which rates us now 53rd of 56 states and territories, we can signal all of our potential economic contributors that Nevada is the most attractive and completely balanced community for their purpose. We have a chance to substantially improve the quality of life for ourselves, our children, and that of prospective contributors to our most vital industries, our schools and our universities.

To attract new and diversified industries and businesses to our state, we have to sell the advantages of Nevada in an aggressive marketplace with the other 49 states. Our tax advantages, geographic location, and advantageous business climate are obvious attractions. But the chief executive officers and businessmen making these decisions are rightfully concerned about the lifestyle we can offer them and their employees. The Nevada Development authority, who champions the cause for all of us, supports our request for additional arts funding. They have found through experience that the quality of culture available to our communities is extremely important in this decision-making process. The issue of quality of life is as important as the quality of education and is more important to them than access to raw materials or an attractive climate. The issue of available cultural amenities and the quality of life are always in their top 10 priorities, and most often in the top three. It is not only an important consideration for their employees and their families, but has a personal importance: more CEOs in the Fortune 500 have degrees in liberal arts than hold MBAs.

It is revealing that the city of Seattle, Washington, when confronting solutions to their recession when Boeing drastically cut its workforce there, substantially increased their funding for the arts, which resulted in model programs and noted results. Because of this, they were able to attract enough new companies to the area to not only reverse the recession but create a veritable bull market, raising their real estate values to some of the highest in the country.

We need quality arts programs to attract quality educators to our public and private schools and our university and community college systems. According to the National Education Association, access to culture is

the number four priority of its professional members, one through three being reading, writing and arithmetic.

In a discussion with Bob Maxson, president of UNLV, regarding the advantages of a strong cultural presence in our state, he said he agreed the issue at hand is the quality of life we enjoy and offer to others. Support for cultural enhancement is not to satisfy a handful of the elite in Las Vegas or Reno, but is the very root of education for everyone in a civilized, progressive and competitive community. It is one of the most fundamental tools educators have at their disposal. When the presidents and CEOs of major companies visit Dr. Maxson's office with the Nevada Development Authority, their first question is not about the number of engineers they graduate each year; their first question is about the quality of life our community can offer them, their employees and their families. It is their first and foremost consideration and concern.

Successful arts programs relate directly to successful tourism. There are numerous examples of their function as the primary attraction of a city or area such as Santa Fe, Aspen, or Tanglewood, Massachusetts.

These programs are vital sales points to the convention business. A spouse will often accompany a delegate only if attractive cultural amenities are available to occupy their time.

Nevada tourists were polled to determine their vacation planning criteria: when asked what attraction they most wanted to see, the answer was legitimate theatre. When asked if they would extend their stay to attend an arts or cultural event, the answer was a resounding yes. This means dollars in our pocket and in our state treasury.

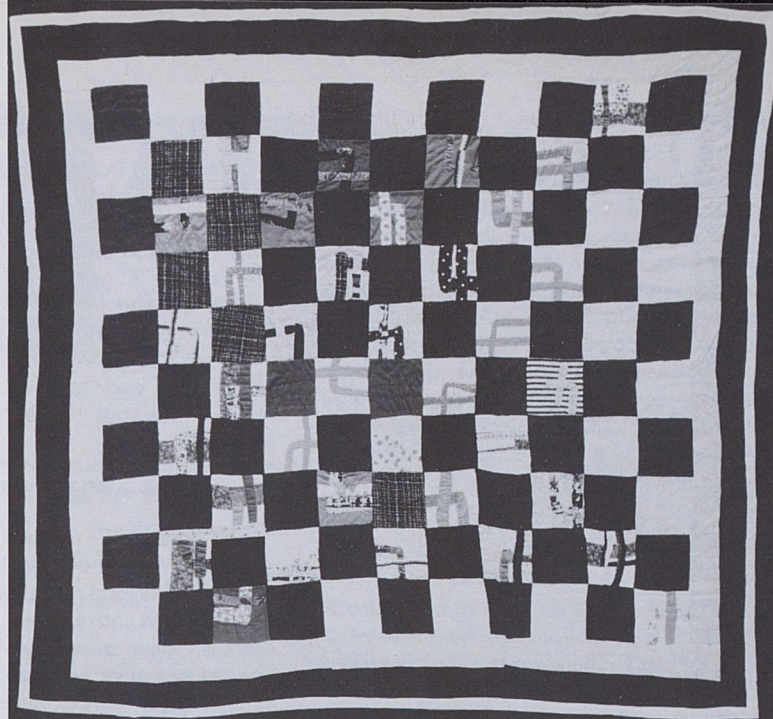
Finally, we need to meet the national average to make Nevada eligible for what I call *free dollars*, to bring us to the next level of available funds. Until we meet or exceed the national average for state funding of the arts, we cannot be considered competitive for major funding and grants from such institutions as the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Mellon Trusts and countless other organizations. These are monies we could aggressively pursue.

Until we meet the national average funding level, we are also not eligible for additional dollars from the National Endowment for the Arts; monies the taxpayers of this state have paid themselves.

State dollars attract dollars from the private sector: the current ratio of these contributions is \$17 private dollars to every state dollar on an annual basis. I firmly believe this ratio would continue with a greatly expanded state budget. It's simple; the more you give, the more you get. Both individual and business donors will rise to the challenge.

The result of increased funding would be a renaissance in the arts in our state, a quality of life and cultural events that sell themselves, a diversified economic base, superior educational opportunities and a bright future for our children and generations yet unborn. **aa**

# T H R E A D I N G



*FOURS QUILT, pieced by Francis Sheppard of Las Vegas in Bedville, TX in 1977; quilted by Willia Etta Graham in Oakland, CA in 1985. Photograph by Sharon Risedorph.*

## PAST AND PRESENT

by KATHY KAUFFMAN

A *Common Thread* is Nevada's second fiber biennial and the largest fiber art exhibition ever mounted in the state. It will travel to museums in all parts of the state from March to November 1991.

A *Common Thread* is an impressive exhibition; it is unique in combining a juried section of contemporary fiber with an invitational section of indigenous fiber arts still vibrant in Nevada. By uniting juried and invitational segments into one exhibition, the biennial achieves a *de facto* racial and cultural mixture that educates the viewer about the rich reality of life in Nevada.

The juried fiber pieces were judged by internationally known fiber artist Lia Cook. She chose 30 pieces. Cook emphasized a very contemporary aesthetic and a loose definition of the term "fiber" that included William Barker's dot matrix printed images on paper, packaged in plastic wrappers, and Paul Ford's wood and plastic (medium with paper poured over styrofoam) sculpture that used small bunches of natural plants in several spots: a fine piece of sculpture, but quite distant from any traditional fiber techniques.

The vast majority of works Cook accepted were by women using traditional fiber methods such as tapestry, pieced quilting, crochet, knitting, embroidery, dyeing, pattern weaving, tating, felting, basketry, or handmade paper. Juxtaposed against traditional methods, the artists made exciting contemporary statements

in each piece. In a realistic mode, Karin Serra combines unorthodox craft materials quite successfully — stained fabric with machine stitchery and handpainted gold — to create freeform forest imagery with a loose dandelion dominating. Kim Kennedy uses the medieval Gobelin tapestry technique to create large pastel graphic images of everyday life with Native American motifs as a subtheme; these are lovely luminous visions with ancient symbolism.

Modern abstraction abounds in the exhibition's context of ancient fiber methods. Jerry Swan weaves strips of handmade paper into intricate octagonal shapes that look like Japanese origami, and yet the sensual abstract designs within the paper, along with the bold overall geometrics, are very contemporary. In "Variations on a Diamond in Square," Katherine Jenkins dramatically layers small geometrically shaped felt pieces as thick as eight layers in an abstract modern version of Amish colors and design. Polly Peacock sews expressionistically stained and painted fabric fragments next to traditional floral designs, creating large, stimulating, and successful compositions.

The only discordance in the juror's choices

*"TEA TIME" by Kim Kennedy of Las Vegas. Photograph by Susan Mantle.*



are several pieces such as Barker's and Ford's that are far removed from the use of fiber and from a sense of connectedness to the past; they do not merge traditional and contemporary use of fiber as do almost all the other juried pieces. It is this synthesis of old culture and new which creates a revelation of the postmodern, giving the viewer a connection to an ancient past. In spite of a few pieces that are not consistent, the exhibition as a whole resonates with a blend of old customs married to current aesthetics, creating such a powerful theme that the juried and invitational parts of the exhibition are united.

The invitational exhibit features indigenous folk arts, the primal cultural roots of Nevada. Native American work was curated by UNR anthropologist Dr. Kay Fowler and folk arts were selected by Andrea Graham, folklife coordinator for the Nevada State Council on the Arts.

Paiute, Washoe and Shoshone artists exhibit a winnowing tray, seed beater, cradle board, burden basket, fiber duck decoys, and miniature coiled baskets in a pre-historical tradition. The Native Americans harvest wild willow and tule, splitting the willow with their teeth to create thread! While most of these traditional objects are still used by the Native Americans, the seed beater had fallen out of use and was revived recently.

Nevada is fortunate that Western Shoshone weaver Lilly Sanchez still knows the ancient techniques involved in making the seed beater. A cradle board and winnowing tray by well known Washoe Elder JoAnn Smokey Martinez is exhibited. Martinez descends from a long line of exquisite Washoe basketmakers which includes the famous Dat So La Lee, and she still uses her winnowing trays in pine nut preparation, just as her grandmother, Manta Smokey, and her mother, Sadie Joe Smokey, did. I can attest that Martinez' cradle boards are esteemed by Native America mothers, since I have seen them proudly strapping in newborns at the local hospital.

Livestock ranching is a major part of rural Nevada. Male and female ranchers ("cowboys") still spend their spare hours plying the products of the livestock. Larry Schutte's elegant museum-quality horsehair mecate is made of tightly twisted colored horses' mane hairs, evolving from white at one end to grays in the middle to black at the other end. The mecate has a living presence — if you move it at one end it moves at the other. Randy Stowell of Cherry Creek, north of Ely, is one of the best rawhide braiders in the entire west, and exhibits a long whip.

The black community in Las Vegas will honor 103 year old Francis Sheppard's "Four Block" quilt with special celebrations when A *Common Thread* is exhibited in Las Vegas. Las Vegas art collector Eli Leon boasts the world's largest collection of Afro-American quilts, and will give a gallery lecture during the exhibition. Sheppard's quilt is an aesthetically thrilling example of African-American improvisational quilting, which contains many original African religious beliefs, some of which have been

lost to the current generation. The cultural legacy contained in Sheppard's quilts are as powerful as the ancient heritage seen in the Native American weavings. One of Sheppard's other quilts, "Who'd A Thought It?," became the featured quilt and title piece for an exhibition launched at the San Francisco Craft and Folk Art Museum in 1987; this quilt has traveled throughout the U.S. and in 1991 will be on a two-year Smithsonian tour.

While the invitational work in *A Common Thread* emphasizes traditional methods and utilitarian usage, two factors create a strong contemporary appeal: the artisan's exquisite aesthetics and craftsmanship, along with a postmodern perspective that allows the viewer to perceive beauty and wonder in the ancient.

Nevada's main cities, Las Vegas and Reno, have "tinsel town" images due to the gaming industry. The fact that none of the pieces in *A Common Thread* use "The Strip" or gambling imagery is a statement about the real Nevada population. We are a blend of widely diverse cultures sharing a love of honest labor with the hands and a rich aesthetic knowledge.

*The exhibit will be in the Reed Whipple Cultural Center June 16 through August 21. The exhibit is sponsored by the Northeastern Nevada Museum, the Reno Fiber Guild, the Nevada Humanities Committee, the Sierra Arts Foundation, First Interstate Bank, Newmont Employees Association, Las Vegas Fiber Arts Guild, Valley Bank, Barrick Gold Strike Mines, Inc., Harrah's and Fitzgerald's Hotel and Casino. aa*

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## KUNV from page 9.

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### HELLO OUT THERE IN RADIOLAND!

Our audience changes over the course of the day. Every time we change a program, we lose some people and hopefully we gain some people. One of the disadvantages of a schedule like ours is that people are used to having a station with a single format: All Rock All The Time, All Hits All The Time. Whatever. With KUNV, what we've tried to do is be consistent in our diversity, so that for instance from noon to 7 every day, it's going to be jazz. And we think people can figure that out. If we had the same programming all day long, we'd probably hold an audience longer, but we wouldn't be providing the service we're providing.

### PHILOSOPHY 102

We tend to think of ourselves as a library of sorts. We want to be a resource, and while we want people to listen to us as much as possible, it's probably more realistic to hope people tune in when they want to get something particular from us. If people want to get a better understanding of jazz, they know they can tune into KUNV. So we aren't always overly concerned with ratings and who's listening and for how long. Programming is in the forefront.

### \$\$\$\$\$\$

The budget for KUNV is between \$120,000 and \$130,000. \$78,000 comes from student fees, via the student government, so that's a significant nest egg. The remainder comes from listener contributions, donations from corporations and granting organizations like the Nevada State Council on the Arts and the Nevada Humanities Committee, and local business support. If we didn't have that nest egg [and had to commercialize the programming], the programming would be different, but the philosophy would never change. We'd always strive the best we could under those monetary constraints to provide a variety of voices.

### FUTURE PART II

It's our expectation that a commercial alternative rock station will hit town in a couple of years. There's one in Los Angeles, in San Diego, in San Francisco, in Phoenix. It's only a matter of time. Then KUNV will have to think about how to provide a voice to someone else who isn't being covered.

We thought it might be appropriate to have a morning program with an eclectic mix of world folk music, both traditional and contemporary, mixed with some news. We'll be applying in 1992 for satellite interconnection, which will allow us to downlink national news programs we currently don't have access to. We don't have a clear vision of what that will be yet, I just know it's something we have to do.

### PHILOSOPHY 103

We want to give a voice to folks who don't get a voice, and that includes the music as well as the information programs. If we're in a democracy, we need to make informed decisions, and if we're not getting access to some of the ideas at the periphery and everything is always (for lack of a better term) mainstream ideas, then I think we're doing ourselves a disservice.

My understanding is that America is proud of its plurality, and I don't see us exploring that in the media too much, and that's why KUNV's here. And that means having those information programs, but it also means having a French program, it means listening to how a saxophone player expresses his feelings and his ideas, it means listening to a keyboardist, a guitarist, a singer, however they're expressing themselves, whether it's political, emotional, artistic or whatever.

It may sound like I'm quoting this out of a book, but I really feel that, and it's why I think KUNV's so vital to this community. aa

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## RENAISSANCE DUDE from page 23.

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two, - carpenter Richard Jackson and prop master C.L. Wilson - to work with the Lady Luck's technical crew. The project has had its problems, but none have been insurmountable thus far.

"This is entertainment, not art. I don't have to make a point, just make it work," he says.

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## MUSICIAN

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WALTERS HAS always been a musician. He plays numerous instruments, but prefers the trumpet or piano. He first sat at a piano when he was six years old, and began playing the trumpet in grade school. Mary Walters helped her son learn music, but was more helpful in providing good teachers.

In Las Vegas, Walters studied piano with Al Cemola and trumpet with Alan Ware. "Music," he says, "gives me an emotional reward."

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## PAINTER

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PEOPLE ARE motivated for fictitious reasons," Walters asserts. It is the underlying theme of his pop art paintings. His mixed media works have been exhibited at the Markus Galleries and the Allied Arts Gallery. The reviews have been positive. Such is why virtually all of his paintings have been sold.

"Most people like my paintings because they are great big pictures or airplanes. If they get the point, that's great, but most people buy them because they think the work will look good on a wall," Walters says.

He explains his paintings as being a reflection of a strong personal desire to be a fighter pilot.

"More than anything, I would like to be a fighter pilot," he says. "It's what I've always wanted to be, but never could be. I have this image of what it would be like to be a fighter pilot and I put that image on canvas. It is a personal myth I have bought into."

Walters says he plans another exhibit this year.

Bob Dunkerly describes Mark-Louis Walters as a true Renaissance man. "Mark has a great facility for mastering the visual and performing arts. I have great faith in him as an artist." Barbara Brennan adds that Walters is definitely "a man of many talents."

There is no denying the multiple talents of Mark-Louis Walters. He is an award-winning actor and designer, accomplished musician, painter, director- writer and performance artist.

There are more 12 to 15 hour days ahead for Walters, but that's what you get for being good. aa

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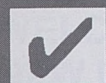
## NIGHT from page 17.

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try a jazz policy, the attitude of management is usually, "Okay, here's what we'll do. We're going to try jazz one night for a few weeks. But we're not going to help you at all. We're not going to advertise, we're not going to put your name out front, but if it doesn't work, then it's your fault."

Vibist Joe Locatelli knows better after long runs at places such as Pep's, Capo's, and Pepper's, that once featured jazz. You hope the Hilton will last, that Big Al and Eddie's will last with Mike DiBari, but we're still really left with three, and in this town that's hardly a crowd when it comes to jazz clubs. aa





None  
of the  
Above

# THE LOVE THAT KILLS

by Patricia McConnel

...poets love the poetry that kills them  
As drowned sailors love the sea.  
—Derek Walcott

I was fifteen years old when I announced to my friends that I was going to be a writer. I thought it would impress a certain boy who was the closest thing to an intellectual I had ever met. By the time I found out he was gay, he had introduced me to Truman Capote, Carson McCullers, Franz Kafka, Eudora Welty, Marcel Proust, Katherine Ann Porter, and Dostoevsky, so I didn't change my ambition, just my motivation: I thought that being a writer must be the most adventurous, exotic, mysterious calling I could aspire to.

Any writing teacher can tell you that such motivations may make a lot of money for writer's conferences, but don't produce much in the way of literature. I was thirty-five before I wrote my first story, and what got me to put words on paper at last was another change in motivation. I needed to write to save my sanity. I had a deep sense of personal failure as well as a nearly terminal case of existential despair. Above all, I needed to assert my view of reality, to tell my side of the story. Such desperate motives that I had to plumb deep to find my own truths, had to master my craft to tell my truths effectively. I became a real writer instead of just fantasizing about it.

Later, other less desperate motivations emerged. I learned there is nothing else I love with the passion I bring to the creation of story, the molding of a world that allows me to commemorate events and people in my life and to interpret those events, explore the psyches of those people, still hoping to find a transcendent truth in the process. The love of this process is not separate from the ways I have learned to cope with life, and I think this may be true of most artists who are truly committed to their art.

But lately I am in the phase where I feel that the writing of fiction and the conditions that go with it may do me in. It's only a slight comfort to know that the feeling will go back in the shadows again if I survive the wait. I know because I have suffered through these states many times.

This most recent attack was triggered by receiving notice that Atheneum has remaindered my first book of fiction, *Sing Soft, Sing Loud*, only a year and four months after its publication. Remaindering means that the book is removed from their inventory. Whatever number of copies they have left in stock are sold at cost or less to discount booksellers. My book will end up on bargain tables for a few weeks, then it will disappear, perhaps forever.

The publisher's stated reason is that the book was selling slowly. That's true. Of a first printing of five thousand, they have sold three thousand. There was a time when any new author would be ecstatic if her first book sold three thousand copies, and the publisher would keep the book in print if it got good reviews. My book got terrific reviews but these days, when major publishers are run by megaprofit-oriented international publishing conglomerates and oil companies, they are not impressed by good reviews. They are impressed by sales of 100,000 copies. I am short only 97,000. Couldn't they have waited another six months?

The publisher spent not one penny on promotion. If there

is no promotion, the chain bookstores do not stock the book. I have lost track of the number of people who have told me, "I can't find your book anywhere." That's the most bitter pill: I have ample evidence that there are people out there who would buy my book if they could only find it.

The history of my first nonfiction book, published by Bantam Books, is even worse. The publisher remaindered the book three months after doing a second printing. Figure that one out. It was a book that had a word-of-mouth reputation that was snowballing.

Why publish the book in the first place if you're not going to try to sell it? Publishers say, as they always do when confronted with this question, "Because we care about quality fiction." I say, "No, you don't, or you would make some effort to see that it gets read, and the only way to do that is to make some effort to sell it." As far as I know, no one in publishing has yet come up with an explanation that isn't basically schizoid.

Here's the worst news of all: my experience is not exceptional. Such experiences are not only common, but typical.

Also typical: I did a week-long writing workshop last summer for the University of Utah. They paid me \$230 because I had only five students. The university takes their loss out of the instructor's pay. I paid my own travel expenses of over \$200. How do they get away with this? Because writers betray one another. The ones who are famous and/or have comfortable jobs at universities don't need the income. They do the workshops for a pittance because they're fun. Often the workshops are in glamorous mountain resorts and they get to hang out with writer friends on the teaching staff. So those of us who teach to make a living get shafted. If we rebel, as I did with another workshop promoter, we get fired.

Efforts to organize writers into effective unions have been notoriously unsuccessful. Writers are by their very nature outsiders, iconoclasts who resist organizing. The National Writers Union barely stays afloat financially and has neither the personnel nor the funds to address the myriad abuses of writers by publishers. The Authors Guild is stronger and richer but has to focus its efforts mainly on legal issues which, for good reason, are at the top of their priority list.

Someone is bound to say, "If you don't like it and can't do anything about it, quit writing and get a real job."

I tried that. Several times. The last time, the winter of 80/81, I went immediately into a suicidal depression, and had to acknowledge that writing is still the only thing that gives my life any meaning. I have to do it to survive.

So I have no choice. Or rather, I believe that to choose otherwise is to experience a kind of death. Unfortunately, the answer to the pain I feel is more of the same (ask not why artists numb themselves with alcohol and drugs). That is, to save the book into which I have poured so much of the best of myself, I have to write another and hope it will be a commercial as well as a critical success. Then the first one may be reprinted. Experience tells me that in the process of writing a new book I will work through and defuse most of my anger.

But not all of it. There remains a kernel of rage that grows slowly but inexorably over the years, a rage that is perhaps inevitable for an artist living in a society that values art and artists too little. Perhaps it will be the rage, rather than the love, that does me in someday. aa

# "JAZZ MONTH CHANGED MY LIFE"

## Proposal for a Jazz Month TV spot

FADE FROM BLACK.

### Actor #1: medium shot, simple black background



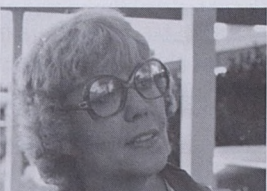
Not many people knew this, but I used to have webbed toes... (*Shakes head sadly*) ...until I attended Jazz Month last year. (*Brightens.*) Then I was healed! Those flaps of skin are gone. Of course, I can't swim as fast as I used to, but now I can finally wear sandals! Jazz Month changed my life!

### Actor #2: close-up, facing just to left of screen



Before I went to Jazz Month a couple years ago, all I ever did was sit around, drinking beer and watching rock and roll videos. Once I went to Jazz Month, however, all that changed. I got an active lifestyle, I've started exercising, gotten a better job, my complexion cleared up, I'm dating girls who would never even *look* at me before, I'm volunteering time to charities, helping little old ladies across the street and I've become fabulously rich! Thanks, Jazz Month!

### Actor #3: tight close up, sad face



A year ago this May, my baby daughter chased her ball into the street, right in front of a truck loaded with heavy equipment. Jazz Month dashed into the street and pushed her out of the way, saving my baby's life.... (*Sobs*) Of course, Jazz Month was crushed instantly, but if it were here, I'd give Jazz Month a great big hug!

FADE TO BLACK

– Scott Dickensheets

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