

Don Palmer and the Dalhousie Jazz Band produce a brilliant evening

by M. Lynn Briand

Neptune Theatre presented for the first time a "Big Band" late last year. The Dalhousie Jazz Band, under the well-known jazz saxophonist and flutist, Don Palmer, were smashing.

Sharing the limelight, Truro's

Charlie Grey on flugal horn added another touch of brilliance to the already scintillating ensemble. Grey, well respected regionally, is now in Toronto freelancing after having graduated from Berkley College in Boston. His strong, full, pungent command of the horn was clear

in selections such as "Chase the Clouds Away." Both his musical sensitivity and comprehension served as major components in delighting the full house.

The evening was ideal. The typical jazz "layback" atmosphere -- intimate and relaxing -- was not missed. Without pro-

grammes, Don introduced each piece with sideline anecdotes and interesting tidbits. Varying in style, mood and demands the works ranged from the old standards such as Miller's "In the Mood," and "Shiny Stockings" to more modern arrangements such as the Beatles' tune "She's Leaving Home."

Duke Ellington's "Concerto for Coote", better known as "Don't Get Around Anymore" was outstanding. Its sharp, pointed entrance contrasted well to lulling, rolling sounds that followed. The band's versatility executed the soft, gentle waltz "A Child is Born" with Grey. The melodious flow and flourishes were mellowing. On vocals, saxophonist Karen Conrod of Truro astounded the audience with "Shiny Stockings" and "When Sonny Gets Blue."

audience conveyed its enthusiasm with a standing ovation.

Aside from an electrifying performance, the show served as an "exposure" opportunity -- an insight to the great local musical talent.

Resident Haligonians Scott MacMillan, Brigham Phillips and Paul DesRosier were among the long list of arrangers on the night's agenda. I particularly enjoyed MacMillan's arrangement of "She's Leaving Home", opening with its sweet melodic flute, sax and clarinet blend and growing in complexities in the middle section.

Several band members caught the ear with licks, turns, technique and tone-perfect to style -- soprano saxophonist John Hollis, trombonist Danny Martin, trumpeter Allen Hoyt -- were but a few noteworthy instrumentalists.



The music was Don Palmer. He constituted the spirit, vivaciousness and life that penetrated every nook of the theatre and affected each individual. Sporadic as his conducting appeared, he coaxed from his minstrels an indisputably jazz-big band style.

In keeping with the season, a small combo of guitar, flugal horn, flute and voice toyed with "Christmas Song" by Mel Torme and "What Are You Doing Christmas Eve" -- perfect festive songs. Following the thunderous opening of Robb McConnell's "My Man Bill" and the all time favourite "In the Mood" by Glenn Miller, the evening regrettably came to a close and the

Not enough can be said about Karen Conrod. Rich and strong in both tone and style she's a performer to watch. Her potential is unlimited and her act hard to beat.

In addition to regular band members "extras" collaborated. The rhythm section was a treat -- both the Halifax Jazz pillars -- bassist Skip Beckwith and drummer Tim Calhoun -- were present, and trumpeter Frank Ridgeway joined the band. Late in the programme both delighted the audience: the rhythm section with "ABC Blues" and Ridgeway with his full smooth sound in "Here's That Rainy Day."

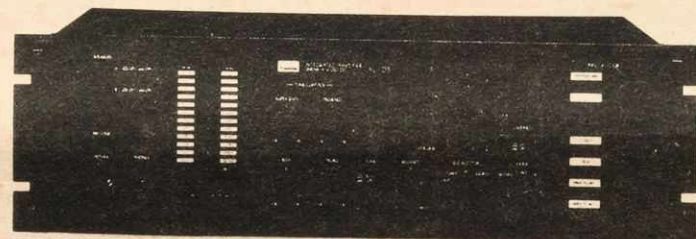
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