



Great, great guitars give Cohn tasty jazz treat

by Lee Smith

Called "The Great Guitars", Charlie Byrd, Herb Ellis and Barney Kessel validated every implication of their billing two weeks ago at the Rebecca Cohn. For almost two hours a full house was treated to over a dozen tasty arrangements (principally by Kessel) of a diverse selection from all that jazz.

Four weeks every year the jazz trio tours the more remote music halls of North America (bless their socks) to lay down swing. Collectively, their talent spans over ninety years of devotion to jazz, embellished through stints with Woody Herman, Oscar Peterson and Billy Holliday among other heroes and heroines of pop and jazz.

Before they came on there was an excited din in the Cohn, the likes of which I hadn't heard before. Big-name jazz is (unfortunately) a relatively rare happening in Halifax, so all of the enthusiasts were ecstatic to leave their stereos to cool while they got the real thing. The energy surged north as 'The Guitars' with their back-up (Joe Byrd on bass and a hard-working young man on drums whose name I'm sorry to say

escapes me) strolled on stage and settled in.

Their first piece, Rogers and Harts' 'Where or When', was a pleasant, but perhaps carefully played, warm-up tune. Herb Ellis, sharing the lead with Kessel, was immediately soothing; comfortable, relaxed licks fashioned in a simple blues relation to the main line. The following numbers (New Orleans and Air Mail Special) were pleasant but disappointingly unadventurous.

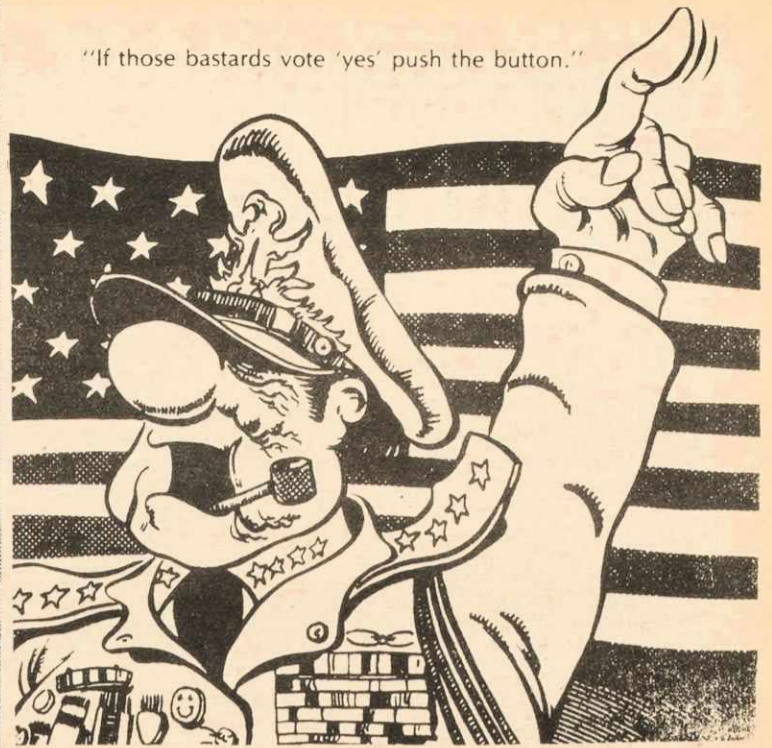
Begin chapter two: 'The Good Guitars become Great'. Charlie Byrd dazzled us with a choreographically elegant departure, leaving Ellis and Kessel to work through a fine selection of tried and true classics: On Green Dolphin Street, 7 Come 11, Georgia On My Mind.

Whew! They showed that jazz is freedom to feel and to say what's on your mind. Kessel and Ellis were incredibly tight in '7 Come 11', loaded with Charlie Christianson-esque single note whirls. Kessel joked with the audience between numbers, explaining that this bought Herb time to practice the next number, alluding to their spontaneity. The

drummer had to work hard to hold the line, and was allowed to falter only slightly before Ellis threw him a motivating look. Ellis by far put in the best night, and concluded the first half with a memorable version of 'Danny Boy', slipping in 'Where Are the Clowns'; smooth, soft emotion.

The second set began with Charlie Byrd working alone. He was playing an Ovation, a sort of amplified classical guitar, which sounds a little cheesy compared with the real thing. His style contrasted markedly to the rifty leads of the others, comprising mainly chordal progressions that came off rather stiffly. Even so, it was beautiful to hear him play: Charlie Byrd has been playing for a lot of years, and perhaps may not be concertizing for very much longer. He was joined later by Kessel and loosened up substantially as they played some material from their upcoming album.

Ellis finally returned and they amazed me with the complexity of the arrangements which they symbiotically pulled off without a hitch. They were clearly peaking, enjoying each other, ready to go. And it was over.



Thursday - Saturday
Best in New Wave from Montreal
X-MEN

Next Week
Back by Popular Demand from Montreal
Quickstep

D.A.G.S. ELECTIONS

(1) President
 (2) 30 Councillors at Large
 Nominations

Open - March 1/83
 Close - March 8/83

Elections
March 15/83

NOMINATION FORMS
AVAILABLE AT GRAD HOUSE

Gazette Editor
candidate screenings

Thursday, March 10, at 7:30
Gazette offices

Correction

In the Feb. 17 issue of the Gazette, the article titled "Provocative and innovative dances" was written by Edd Hansen.

As well, in the same issue, the article titled "Local bands thrive on that dirty rock'n'roll" was written by Michael Brennan, not Edd Hansen as printed. We apologize.