

# Mangione group impressive

by Rick Collins

Avoiding all fuss and formality, the Chuck Mangione quintet sauntered on stage for their first concert at 7:40 last Friday evening (after being unavoidably detained at the border; from that, we can assume strip searches still take as much time to perform as ever).

Opening with a brief horn intro, Mangione carried on with a light riff on his electric piano, as Chris Vadala blew out an interesting solo on soprano sax. This was followed up by another horn solo from Mangione, collapsing into an abrupt ending; just enough to serve as a warm-up for the brassier sounds to come.

"Chase the Clouds Away" featured a light, low-key flute solo from Vadala, which he endeavoured to diversify by alternating on alto sax. The number, originally a softie on an early Mangione disc, was played with just a little more vigour on stage, with guitarist Grant Guysman finishing off on a spirited acoustic six-string break.

"The Day After the First Night Together" is a classic Mangione piece. Focusing on improvisation, it quickly gathers momentum and lays down a rock/rhythm pattern. This allows the brass and baritone sax to tighten up in an almost funky fashion, giving the finished product a near-perfect sense of balance in both rock and jazz sounds.

"Legend of the One-Eyed Sailor" was the longest piece of the show, and was apparently written to include a percussion ensemble for the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. The texture of the selection defined it as an up-tempo swing number, but it sounded suspiciously like Ravel's "Bolero" as it reached a brassy climax, led by Mangione on his trusty flugelhorn. James Bradley, Jr. attempted a lengthy drum solo, but it never did ignite in that fashion of a build-up solo, and that ultimate concentration of really complex drumming was lacking. To listen to it was frustrating; it was as though Bradley was trying to express something, but never could quite get it out. A slower number entitled "Soft" brought the atmosphere down to reality in time to close off the first set.

"Feels So Good", the title cut off the new Mangione album, contained alot of that typical Mangione sound, much like "The Day After the First Night Together"—soft build-up, brassy finish.

"Bellavia", the chief number on Mangione's earlier album of the same name, is a tribute to the composer's mother, and, as he himself put it, brings back memories of hearth and home, and Mom's good old fashioned spaghetti sauce. Well! It's difficult to argue with that, I guess.

"The Eleventh Commandment"

established itself as the best performance of the evening. A cut off the new album, it registers a high degree of rhythm flair; Charles Meeks plays an extensive yet quite distinctive Bass solo, somewhat reminiscent of an old Willie Dixon style. James Bradley Jr., on drums comes alive and does a short and lively stint to remind the audience of his presence while Mangione puts it all together with a high energy finish on the flugel-horn.

The group wrapped up the concert with an oldie, "Land of Make Believe", the highlight of which was an acoustic guitar solo by Grant Guysman, which elicited from the audience a surprising amount of applause. His style is extremely tasteful to watch and listen to; fast, light finger work lends an almost flamenco-like quality to Guysman's playing, yet the end result is as jazzy as anything else the group is into at the time.

In summing up, it could be said

that the strengths of Chuck Mangione's group lie in creative flugelhorn and saxophone leads, with excellent back-up on guitar. Chris Vadala's flute playing is not exceptional and tends to grow somewhat repetitive. The rhythm section is adequate, but the drumming is indecisive. The bassist, however, does exercise a large amount of professionalism in his playing and virtually carries the beat of the up-tempo numbers.

I suspect that the best way to listen to the Mangione sound is to buy any one of the albums available. The music has a better sense of quality and finish to it, and there's generally a large number of studio session musicians used in recording to offset the imperfections of a live performance. Recorded jazz loses a little of its spontaneity in one sense but, in the long run, time and flexibility are studio advantages and they give a better sense of direction to a basically good sound.



Improvisational jazz artist Chuck Mangione was featured recently at the Cohn with his renowned Chuck Mangione Quartet.

## Cranston and The Ice Show returns

by Cheryl Downton

Amid the cold and general gloom of the Forum, there was a show worth seeing. Among the hawking cries of vendors calling out: "get your Ice Show records (and t-shirts and buttons and posters) here," there was a show worth talking about. In the midst of canteens selling cotton candy, popcorn, taffy apples, pop and peanuts, there was a show to be remembered. Toller Cranston and his Ice Show were back in Halifax, enchanting and entertaining as always.

In what now appears to be an annual event, Canadian and American skating champions displayed their multitudinous talents, both artistic and acrobatic, on the Halifax ice. The Ice Show, a Cranston creation, is in its second year and has travelled extensively across Canada and the United States. They always perform their fast moving programme before near capacity crowds who most often leave unsatiated at the end of the show.

The Ice Show has a different flavour and is therefore very easily distinguished from other ice shows. (i.e. The Ice Caputs and television's Stars on Ice). The Ice Show survives because it employs talented skaters who need no gimmicks to cover flaws and ineptitudes; indeed, there are none. The colourful costumes and changing lighting serve to compliment the skaters and their versatility. Shows like the Ice Caputs depend more on flash and glitter to shift attention from a usually mediocre display of talent.

Performing before near capacity houses at the Forum, The Ice Show was all it claimed to be—"A

Musical Experience on Ice." The costumes were without exception tasteful and well-fitting, and allowed easy flow of movement, yet enhanced the total visual effect. The selected music was for the most part tasteful and covered a very wide range from "Rock Around the Clock", to "Nadia's Theme", to the "Blue Danube Waltz", to a finale consisting of a run together of popular 'disco' tunes.

The skaters' versatility proved more than the equal of the musical selections. The ability of each individual skater cannot be questioned. Freed from the more rigid restrictions of competitive skating, each is able to expand and try new moves and perfect rather daring routines. Former Canadian senior pairs champions, Candy Jones and Don Fraser were indeed the most audacious with a solo death sparrow, overhead somersault, running leaps (and catches), one hand lifts and twirls, and a rather nerve-racking innovation in which Fraser swings Jones around by one skate, at high speed, and it is most evident that one wrong calculation leaves the Jones and Fraser team minus a Jones.

Gordon McKellen Jr., past United States men's champion, tried to steal the show as per usual, with his seemingly effortless triple jumps and powerful, yet artistic display of unparalleled exuberance. Kath Malmberg, Wendy Verge and Elizabeth Freeman displayed faultless impressionistic style and grace, while Berezowski and Porter gave ballroom dancing a smoother and flowing look. Jim Millins and Colleen O'Connor skating to "Nadia's Theme" were the epitome of

love and joy on ice; soft music and soft blue costumes embodied all that could be and is, creating the feeling that the two skaters skated for us all.

Mark and Janet Hominuke were vivacious doing the charleston and the tango, and were equally enjoyable skating in a number called "Innocence". Canadian Bob Rubens skated just one solo number in which he was very strikingly dressed in red. The performers combined to do several full company selections, and the couples got together on a chorus line routine, as well as others, displaying co-ordination and rhythmic togetherness.

The acclaimed star of The Ice Show, Toller Cranston, proved once again that he still has that illusive quality. He must know he can ride on past successes, and really does not need to be more than good, but still he gives his all to each and every performance. He is an

integral part of The Ice Show, yet maintains his distance; he confines his appearances to solo and full company numbers and does not partake in group selections; his costumes do not follow the same lines as the others—he dresses in plunge neck, black besparkled jumpsuits; the centre spot is reserved for him during full company numbers.

His artistic impressionistic style, well renowned internationally, was very much in evidence. It ranged from accredited Cranston trademarks to a fully prone slide across the ice in the final throes of Cranston's interpretation of "Loneliness of War". His artistic style can be seen in the performances of other Ice Show members, and is excellent in all.

Hopefully The Ice Show will return to Halifax next year, and audiences will once again thrill to "A Musical Experience on Ice".