



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

News

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Smithsonian Jazz Tradition Boosted by Gillespie, Claxton, Alpert donations **National Museum of American History announces sixth annual Jazz Appreciation Month**

At a special ceremony today, the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History kicked-off Jazz Appreciation Month with a tribute to three prominent trumpeters: Dizzy Gillespie, Louis Armstrong and Herb Alpert, as well as donations by artist LeRoy Neiman and photographer Bill Claxton.

Now in its sixth year, JAM is an annual event that pays tribute to jazz both as a historic and living American art form. Throughout the month, the Smithsonian will present numerous events including performances, film and displays in venues around Washington D.C.

Jazz is a truly American style of music that has played an important role in our heritage, said Brent D. Glass, director of the National Museum of American History. Through the Smithsonian's Jazz Appreciation Month activities, we will highlight jazz and its history and expose audiences to this significant piece of American culture.

Four donations were recognized at today's JAM kick-off event:

- Business records and personal ephemera belonging to John Dirks' Dizzy Gillespie, one of the greatest jazz trumpeters of the 20th century. The collection was donated by Charles Fishman, Gillespie's manager from 1985 to 1993. Fishman won a Grammy for producing Dizzy Gillespie and United Nations Orchestra and founded the Duke Ellington Jazz Festival in Washington, D.C.
- 22 photographs by acclaimed fashion and jazz photographer Bill Claxton of jazz greats, including Ray Charles, Miles Davis and Chet Baker.

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- Support for JAM from the Herb Alpert Foundation as the lead sponsor of Jazz Appreciation Month with a donation of \$300,000 to the project over three years.
- Use of celebrated American artist Leroy Neiman's crayon drawing of Louis Armstrong which is featured on the official 2007 JAM poster. Last year Neiman donated the use of his painting of Duke Ellington. The museum and its JAM partners will distribute 250,000 posters around the country to promote local JAM activities.

This year, Carlos Santana and Herb Alpert have added their voices to those of other prominent musicians including Geri Allen and Wynton Marsalis in recording radio public service announcements which was produced by BMI and will be distributed nationwide.

In a first this year, the museum will partner with leading social networking site www.care2.com to host a discussion board as part of the online Smithsonian jazz community.

Herb Alpert

Los Angeles-born Herb Alpert is a legendary trumpet player equally renowned for co-founding with Jerry Moss A&M Records, for years the world's largest, most successful independent label and home to artists including Stan Getz, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Carole King and Sting. Herb Alpert & The Tijuana Brass' 1962 debut The Lonely Bull was also A&M's inaugural release, and their infusion of Latin and jazz sounds into the pop music spotlight delivered a wealth of hits including the GRAMMY--winners A Taste Of Honey and What Now My Love. As a solo artist, Alpert's stellar tracks include the chart-topping classic Rise. A 9X GRAMMY winner, Alpert's most recent honor was 2007's prestigious Industry Icons Award.

Bill Claxton

Claxton, who hails from Pasadena, Ca. first gained fame in the 1950s photographing artists for the Pacific Jazz record label and went on to have his work featured on album and magazine covers internationally. Throughout his career, Claxton has produced insightful portraits of many jazz legends, often capturing musicians in spontaneous, intimate moments, reflecting his vision of photography as jazz for the eye.

Dizzy Gillespie

Born in South Carolina as the youngest of 10 children in 1917, Gillespie taught himself to play the trumpet at age 12. In the 1940s, Gillespie helped develop an innovative style known as

bebop, featuring intricate improvisations, complex harmonies, and rapid rhythms. Gillespie played with jazz greats such as Ella Fitzgerald, Charlie Parker, Duke Ellington and John Coltrane and mentored young musicians including Miles Davis. Known for his beret, horn-rimmed glasses, bent horn and puffed cheeks, Gillespie has had an enormous impact on subsequent generations of trumpeters.

LeRoy Neiman

LeRoy Neiman, born in St. Paul, Minnesota, operates his studio out of New York. A street kid during the Depression, his first commission as an artist was for the local grocer, drawing calcimine pictures of food items on the windows of the store. Neiman became interested in jazz during the 1970s. He created art for numerous program covers and posters for the Newport Jazz Festival, the Kool Jazz Festival and Jazzmobile, as well as painting and getting to know jazz greats Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Charlie Parker and Miles Davis.

JAM was launched in 2001 by the National Museum of American History and has since grown to include celebrations in all 50 states and 20 other countries. This year the Smithsonian will present a record 29 events, including five performances by the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra, the museum's resident big band.

In commemorating JAM 2007, the museum collaborated with a diverse group of 28 organizations, institutions, associations and federal agencies that have provided financial and in-kind support, as well as organizing programs and outreach of their own. The Smithsonian operates the world's most comprehensive set of jazz programs. The museum is home to incomparable jazz collections that include 100,000 pages of Ellington's unpublished music and objects such as Fitzgerald's famous red dress, Gillespie's angled trumpet and Benny Goodman's clarinet. A complete schedule of JAM events is available at <http://americanhistory.si.edu>.

The National Museum of American History collects, preserves and displays American heritage in the areas of social, political, cultural, scientific and military history. Documenting the American experience from Colonial times to the present, the museum looks at growth and change in the United States. The museum is closed for major renovations and will re-open in summer

2008. For Smithsonian information, the public may visit the museum's Web site at <http://americanhistory.si.edu> or call (202) 633-1000, (202) 633-5285 (TTY).

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