



Renaissance show promises classic jazz on Sunday

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Lawrence F. Specker, Press-Register

Back in October, an ambitious new series of straight-ahead jazz concerts took flight at the Arthur R. Outlaw Mobile Convention Center.

Sunday evening, the second installment of the Jazz Renaissance series returns with a pair of stars who promise to take listeners back to the days of Dizzy Gillespie and Billie Holiday — or rather, to make their audience forget that the music of those greats sometimes seems at risk of being abandoned to the past.

West Coast saxophonist Dale Fielder will headline; vocalist Lynne Fiddmont, also based in the Los Angeles area, also will perform.

Promoter Ron Bookman, the architect of the Jazz Renaissance series, described Fielder as “probably one of the outstanding multi-saxophonists in the country,” and said he’s a champion of an older tradition.

Fielder is probably unlikely to disagree. On his “Frugal Apathy” blog, he’s established himself as a lucid champion of old-school jazz values, and a player dissatisfied with today’s emphasis on smooth music.

He affirmed that view in a recent phone interview.

“Right now, the type of music we play is pretty marginalized in the marketplace,” he said. “I’ve been



Craig Johnson

Dale Fielder plays a variety of saxophones, but favors a single style: Classic bebop.

doing this a long time. I'm not in this for the money, or the fame or anything. I'm doing this really out of a deep sense of mission. For me it's really vital to keep this form of music alive and intact."



Lena Ringstad

Lynne Fiddmont has extensive experience as a backup singer, and more recently has stepped out as a solo artist.

He described himself as a kindred spirit to such traditionalists as Wynton and Branford Marsalis.

"We're kind of keeping the tradition going," he said. "With us, they're going to hear the same type of jazz they probably would hear in New York City."

Fielder's view is straightforward: Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker, as founders of what came to be called bebop, took jazz to a musical pinnacle, "the highest form of musical improvisation that was ever created."

It required players to have the technical command of classical-music virtuosos, yet also the willingness to "throw all the rules away" and compose on the spot.

"My style is an older style," he said.

"I learned a lot from an era that was much before me. In so many ways, I feel like my generation is sort of like a missing link," he said. "We remember when John Coltrane was alive. I cried when he passed. I was an 11-year-old kid."

"A lot of the younger kids who are learning jazz nowadays, they're learning it through the universities and the colleges, they've got all kinds of books and internet things that we didn't have in the late 60s and early 70s. My generation learned the old ways, the same way the masters learned," he said. "We just feel

that we have a lot to offer the younger musicians."

But, he stressed, what they have to offer listeners is a good time, not some kind of historical master class.

"We don't really make demands on our audiences," he said. "They're in for a great night of jazz. Especially if you're looking for straight-ahead jazz."

"I think when the musicians are really excited ... that will kind of carry over to the audience," he said.

That all fits in perfectly with Bookman's concept of the Jazz Renaissance series.

"One of the things that we're strong believers in is that we thought the jazz experience of the old nightclubs in New York like Birdland, and the old Copacabana, is that if we could recreate that atmosphere at the Convention Center, where you had the intimacy of the show and the quality of the performers, we'd have a pretty good setup as far as ambience the ambience was concerned," Bookman said. "And we accomplished that. We certainly accomplished that on all fronts. The performers were outstanding."

"We think we can repeat that with Mr. Fielder and Ms. Fiddmont. They are both top in their class."

Fiddmont worked for years as a backup singer for Stevie Wonder, and has toured or recorded with numerous other top-tier stars. In more recent years, she's also ventured out as a solo artist.

Her most recent album, "Lady," is a tribute to Billie Holiday. Bookman said that material will figure prominently in her set.

"Lynne is just awesome," said Fielder. "They're going to love Lynne. She gives the music a different twist."

Jazz Renaissance concert featuring the Dale Fielder Quartet and Lynne Fiddmont

8 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 21, Arthur R. Outlaw Mobile Convention Center at the foot of Government Street on the Mobile waterfront.

Tickets: \$20, available at the Mobile Civic Center box office and other Ticketmaster outlets. To order by phone, call 800-745-3000; online orders can be placed at www.ticketmaster.com. For more information call the Civic Center box office at 251-208-7381. Student, senior and group pricing is available; e-mail info@rba-i.com for details.

Next show: The Jazz Renaissance series will present the Azar Lawrence Quartet and vocalist James Love at 8 p.m. Dec. 9. That show will pay tribute to John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman. Tickets are \$20; if purchased together, tickets for both shows are \$30.

Information: www.ijazzatmobile.com

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