

Jazz at Sunset

Sixth season swings with Warren Vache, Giacomo Gates, Herb Pomeroy and more

By Chel Williamson

Jazz at Sunset. Sounds like a poem to the setting sun. But for many local jazz fans it marks the arrival of summer: "Summertime and the livin' is easy"

Held on Fridays from 6 to 8 p.m. throughout the summer at the New England Science Center (NESC), 222 Harrington Way, jazz at Sunset is celebrating its sixth season of presenting the very best in regional jazz artists. From the harmonically radiant sounds of Brazil to the rich rhythms of Africa, this year's events should be a festive study in the science of jazz.

Dan Moretti and Brazilia featuring Greg Abate and Claudio Roditi open the 1996 campaign Friday, June 7.

Brazilia is a crossover dream come true, a marriage of Latin rhythms with jazz styles, especially bebop. Founded several years ago by saxophonist Moretti, the group began exploring global influences when bassist Oscar Stagnaro, a native of Peru, suggested playing some Latin music.

"He lives in Boston and there's a whole network of Latin players living there," Moretti said, speaking by phone from Providence. "He also plays with Paquita de Rivera and Dave Valentin."

Sambas from Brazil, bombas from Puerto Rico, calypso from Trinidad and the baião conde from Uruguay integrate with American swing to give Brazilia a tropical flavor.

"We play a lot of bop tunes with Latin grooves underneath," Moretti said. "The melding of two musics together is what really makes it interesting."

Brazilia may draw its influences from around the globe but the presence of special quests Abate and Roditi make this date a world-class affair.

Abate has connections to both Moretti and Roditi that reach back. A veteran of the Ray Charles Orchestra, the multi-instrumentalist has recorded with both artists. Last year he was featured with Moretti on his date Live at Chan's. The CD was a benefit project for the Music School of Providence where both Moretti and Abate teach.

A native of Rio de Janeiro, Roditi is an internationally recognized jazz artist who has performed with Tito Puente, McCoy Tyner and Herbie Mann.

"His trumpet playing is impeccable," Moretti said. "He really rounds out the sound of the horns."

The rhythm section of Brazilia is a veritable rainbow coalition. Pianist Alain Mallet (who is married to Jonatha Brooke of the Story) hails from France. He has worked with Victor Mendoza, Mili Bermejo and the Orange Then Blue big band. Percussionist Pernell Saturnino comes from the island of Curacao. He, too, is well-traveled. Saturnino has worked and recorded with Gilberto Gil and Rebecca Parris. Drummer Ben Whitman, although best known for his work in the acoustic music field, by way of the Stm} and Carol Noonan, is a specialist in Brazilian and Afro-Caribbean drumming.

Moretti, with six albums out under his own name, is a player to watch. He recently signed a three-record deal with Herbie Mann's Kokopelli records. He plays tenor, soprano and flute with equal breadth and flair.

Jazz at Sunset is produced in collaboration with WICN and Jack Wertheimer, the owner of the Brownstone Group, a Worcester-based jazz production company that produces some of the finest mainstream jazz on the market, including many slated on the Sunset bill.

The combination of jazz and science has made an interesting and successful match.



Dan Moretti and Brazilia kick off the Jazz at Sunset series Friday, June 7.

Arts



ENTERTAINMENT

"It's going great," Wertheimer said of jazz at Sunset. "We average about 500 people. It's becoming, if not a Central New England, a Worcester tradition."

"They give me absolute autonomy in picking the groups," Wertheimer added, referring to the Science Center. "They give me a budget and I go get the groups. They've never, ever interfered. They've never called and said, 'Oh, we have to do something about this group.' So it makes good for me. I can just go ahead and start searching for players."

"But by now, [I think after five years of doing it, I have a sense of what the audiences really go for. While [I try and keep it to their tastes, [I also try and introduce something new. We basically try and get variety in the lineup."

jazz at Sunset concerts are held on the NESC's Sundial Plaza.

"[I think it is a great place to end the week because it is such a relaxing place to be," said Sandra Breault of the New England Science Center. "We have an overview of the city. It is wide open and the shade just happens to hit it right about 25 past 6. There is a big grassy area for people to put out their lawn chairs, blankets and what-have-you."

"We have 60 acres up here, so it's not congested. There is plenty of space to move around. We encourage people to walk around and look at the animals. It's a sunny place. It's a shady place. It's a great place. So it offers all those things that a city wouldn't necessarily offer."

The Jazz at Sunset Series Schedule

Dan Moretti and Brazilia	June 7
The Harry Skoler Quartet with special guest Warren Vache	June 14
EIEco	June 21
New England Jazz Ensemble	June 28
Monica Hatch and friends. with Mike Turk	July 5
Tony O'Aveni Sextet	July 12
Steve Davis and the Explorers	July 19
Giacomo Gates	July 26
The Greg-Abate Quintet and special quest Herb Pomef(jy	Aug. 2
The Paul Brown Quartet with Jack Pezanelli	Aug. 9

The last concert in the series will be a benefit for WICN radio with artist TEA.

Aug. 16. Tickets are \$10 per person, \$9 for members of WICN or NESC.

In the event of rain, the shows are moved inside to the middle-level stage. Tickets are \$9 per person; \$8 for NESC and WICN members; and children under 12 are admitted free.

Season passes are \$72 NESC, \$64 WICN members (WICN benefit concert excluded).

The wildlifecenter and museum are open during the con-erts.