

Jazz Jam Session

Contributed by Administrator
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On the Avenue with Wynton Marsalis

In February of 1992, on a beautiful night, a jazz jam session was in the making by some of the country's best jazz musicians. After an appearance by Wynton Marsalis and his crew at the Alabama Theatre in Birmingham, Al, where they had just completed a masterful performance, Wynton decided to stop by the jazz club On the Avenue to sit in on a jam session. The session was being conducted by trumpet player Bo Berry, a former member of the original Commodores. Bo called Tommy Stewart and informed him that Wynton's crew would be at the club to jam. Wynton's band included Wycliffe Gordon (Trombone), and Wes Anderson (Alto Sax). Wycliffe had attended Florida A&M University and Wes had attended Southern University and studied under the great clarinet player Alvin Batiste.

Local musicians included Hooper Abrams (Trumpet), Jeff Drew (Bass), Nate Miller (Drums), Bo Berry (Trumpet), Tommy Stewart (Trumpet), and Victor Atkins (Piano). The musicians started out by swinging a traditional blues tune called Sonny Moon for Two by Sonny Rollins. Stewart took the first solo and played some heart felt choruses. Abrams tipped in with a couple of easy swinging blues notes. Bo Berry got fired up and played several effective choruses that got the audience going.

By this time Wynton and his band arrived from the concert. Wynton took his horn out and played several blues choruses with much authority! After Jeff Drew and Victor Atkins took some choruses, Tommy, Wynton, Bo, and Hooper exchanged fours with the rhythm section. This historic jam session should have been recorded to capture a great moment in jazz history. The young Wynton and Tommy were both in great form. Bo Berry and Abrams played tremendously well and showed why they are first class professional jazz trumpeters. It must be noted that Hooper Abrams taught Bo Berry at Rosedale High School.

Next, the band began to play a medium tempo version of Out of Nowhere. Wynton took the first solo and played several melodic jazz choruses. Nate Miller swung hard all night on drums. Stewart then heated things up with several forays into the upper registers of his trumpet. Bo Berry's solo added more fuel to the fire! Abrams took a cool solo before Jeff Drew and Victor Atkins completed the cycle. Referring to Tommy, Wynton said "Who is that bald headed dude up there playing?"

Maybe one day we can get all these musicians together to record a classic jazz album for the ages!