

Big sound of Ellis rings ears

By BRUCE MICKLUS
Of the Emerald

The amazing loud sounds of the Don Ellis Big Band filled the EMU Ballroom Saturday night. The 24-piece band which featured Ellis on both trumpet and drums, was so loud it could be heard from almost anywhere on campus.

Review

The Ellis group is probably the most popular big band on the jazz scene today. Ellis opened the first show by appearing from the rear of the extended stage wearing an electric-looking black and white floor length cape. The first number, "5-4 Getaway," opened with a fanfare and closed as a real screamer. It featured Ellis on trumpet and drums. Ellis is obviously a better trumpet player than a drummer.

Most of the tunes the band played were from the eight albums they have recorded for Columbia Records. "K.C. Blues," which is an arrangement of a Charlie Parker solo, started with a long horn solo by Ellis. He is indeed a fine trumpet player. Although he lacks the screaming power of a Maynard Ferguson or Doc Severinson, he makes up for it with his fine technique and imagination.

The regular stage in the ballroom was extended almost thirty feet to make room for the band which included a four-piece string section among its talented membership. Melcho Leviev, who alternated between organ, electric piano and grand piano, was the standout of the show. His keyboard work was excellent on every number, always new and varied and never tiresome.

Ellis closed the first show with a number called "Final Analysis." He plugged in his trumpet to a machine called an

Echo-Plex. The Echo-Plex consists of a tape ring and two tape heads. One head records; the other plays back at a delay and in a different tone. This allows Ellis to sound like a ten-piece trumpet section. He is also able to vary the pitch and the amount of echo. It was a fascinating display of how electronics can be used to develop a new musical experience. "Final Analysis" closed with the entire band building to a thundering ending that might have been lifted from a Tchaikovsky symphony. It left everyone in the audience with ringing ears as they filed from the ballroom.

The second show included a completely different set of numbers. Some of the best were "Blues in Elf" with Leviev providing a dazzling performance on piano and "How's this For Openers," a tune done in 25-8 time, alternating in 27. The band members seemed to enjoy

the show as much as the audience. They were loose and relaxed and had a great deal of interaction which added to the performance.

"Strawberry Soup," which featured a woodwind quartet, "Pussy Wiggle Stomp" and "Wolfgang For All Seasons" were also popular with the crowd. In addition to Leviev, some great solo work was done by Sam Falzone on tenor sax.

The only disconcerting note of the evening was struck by Ellis. Several times during both shows he urged members of the audience to venture into the lobby where all of the band's albums were being sold by his girl friend Maria. It was a bit of commercialism that could have been done without. Besides, the prices were outrageous.

Other than that the whole evening was a success. It was a great blend of music and showmanship which isn't found too often. One thing to remember though, the next time the Don Ellis Band is in town find a seat near the back of the auditorium and relieve the pressure on your ears.

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Hicks and Licks good but insults mar show

By KAY HILL
Of the Emerald

The nostalgic welcome for Dan Hicks and His Hot Licks, staged Friday afternoon at Mahlon Sweet Airport, didn't come off too well. Hicks and his entourage, just arrived from a concert tour of California, seemed too weary for the fun.

But the effervescent group managed to regain some of its energy for Friday night's double concert in the EMU ballroom—a concert that left the audience happy, if somewhat insulted.

Hicks insulted the audience beginning with his introductory remarks. "Hello coeds, we're really happy to be in Portland."

Review

His actions continued to put down the audience in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. "You guys love everything we do. You'd love it if I said fart," he said. Hicks seemed to feel that the concert was more of a practice session than a performance. He was forever grabbing a drink in the middle of a set and at one point in a song, he began picking his nose.

Musically the group was very much together. They combined the qualities of a violin, a bass fiddle, two guitars and various small percussion instruments to make a solid toe tapping sound.

Being the lead singer, Hicks dominated the concert with the exception of two songs which were solos for the two women of the group.

Marianne Price's version of "I'm an old cow hand" and a solo by Naomi Ruth Eisenberg made the audience realize that both had a unique singing ability that was usually hidden in the background.

All of the musicians were exceptionally good on their instruments but it was up to the audience to notice the expertise of the violin, the backup guitar or the bass fiddle. Hicks really only acknowledged them once and even then it was while praising his own talents for having sung and written most of the songs.

Their first song was "Where's the money?" which seemed to be known by the audience, they showed their approval loudly. Price added spice to the music by playing—rather rubbing—two pieces of sandpaper together.

They went on to play "Shorty falls in love" which Hicks termed "rock and roll at its finest."

They ended their concert, which lasted about an hour, with another audience favorite, "Milk Shakin' Momma." Hicks sang this one Elvis style, jumping up, wiggling around and doing general gymnastics. The song brought the audience to its feet for a standing ovation. After a five minute stomping session begging for an encore, Hicks and Company came out to play. "I scare myself."

The show also included an Oregon magician, Melvin Anderson. He had his hands full of scarf tricks and started early by pulling a rabbit out of a top hat near the beginning of his act.

All in all it was a good concert, light and often funny, if a bit insulting.



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