

Jazz virtuosos perform tonight

By BOB WEBB
Of the Emerald

The collaborative efforts of two jazz and classical guitar virtuoso's may be seen and heard tonight as Ralph Towner and John Abercrombie perform in concert at 7:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. in the King Cole Room of the Eugene Hotel.

Solo bassist David Friesen, who was called the "most valuable player of the 20th Monterey Jazz Festival," will open both shows.

Guitarist/pianist/composer Ralph Towner was born in 1940 in the state of Washington.

He grew up in Oregon and attended the University where he received his Masters in Composition. He began playing the piano (mostly improvising) at the age of three.

When Towner was 23, he went to Vienna to study guitar at the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts.

Towner recently told "Guitar Player" magazine, "I went there to study with one man, Karl Scheit, and he turned out to be a great teacher.

"I feel that I made up for my 'late start' in one year because of the intensity. I lived in a small room and had no distractions.

"The year in Vienna was isolated: all I did was learn to play the guitar. Providing you have an excellent teacher, I don't think this technical thing is much of a mystery — as much as converting this technique into music and emotion."

After returning from Vienna and getting his masters, he went to New York in 1968. He worked mostly as a pianist, playing gigs in the city, before joining the Paul Winter Consort in 1970.

A year later, he played on Weather Report's "I Sing the Body Electric" and began performing and recording with the group Oregon.

Towner has recorded as a solo artist for the ECM record label since 1972, when he made "Trios/Solos" with Glen Moore. His first solo record to be released in the United States was the highly-acclaimed "Solstice" (it won a German Grammy in 1976), which was recorded with saxophonist Jan Garbarek, bassist Eberhard Weber and drummer Jon Christensen.

Towner's three other American releases have been a solo, "Diary," a duet recording with Gary Burton ("Matchbook") and one with John Abercrombie ("Sargasso Sea").

Currently, Towner is leader of the jazz ensemble Oregon. When he is not traveling throughout the world with Oregon, he plays with other contemporary jazz musicians, hence the duet tour with John Abercrombie.

Abercrombie was born in Greenwich, Conn. At fourteen, he began learning to play the guitar. By the time he was out of high school, he was ready to veer away from imitative Chuck Berry licks in favor of learning to play the instrument more seriously. He enrolled at Boston's famed Berklee Music School.

While at Berklee, he teamed up with other students to play local clubs and bars. An offer to tour with organist Johnnny Hammond Smith led to Abercrombie's going on the road for weeks at a time.

Around this time, he also met the Brecker Brothers who were in the process of forming the group Dreams. They invited Abercrombie to play with them. He was heard on their debut album for Columbia.

Following graduation Abercrombie decided to head south in hopes of breaking into the New York music scene. In the next few years, he developed into one of New York's most in-demand session musicians. He did record dates with Gil Evans, Gato Barbieri, Barry Miles and many other artists.

However, it was as the guitarist in Billy Cobham's band that Abercrombie first began attracting widespread attention among the general public. He is heard on Cobham's "Crosswinds," "Total Eclipse" and "Shabazz" albums.

Tickets are \$6 and are available at Everybody's Records and the Eugene Hotel main desk.

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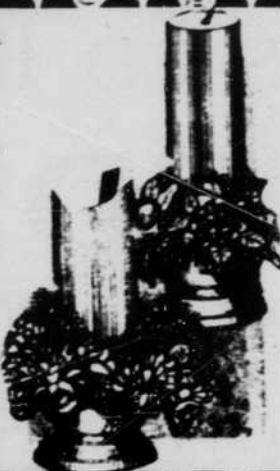
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