

ENTERTAINMENT

# HAPPENINGS

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## Jazz man brings bent horn to town

Dizzy Gillespie, the man with the tilted trumpet, the swooning sounds and the bubbled cheeks, said that he may not be the best trumpet player there is, but he does have a way with words.

"How can you judge the best when you have not seen the best," he questioned in a gravelly voice. "I may not be the best trumpet player in the world, but I can match bull with anybody else."

For more than 50 years, Gillespie has been trumpeting the jazz sound and innovating new ones. Gillespie, born in Cheraw, S.C., said that jazz was the music of Black culture, born from African heritage and adapted to the days of slavery.

Jazz was also evolutionary and progressive; more than that, it was a mixture of everything, Gillespie said.

John Birks Gillespie's music has Cuban spice because of its similarity to African music, he said.

Dizzy, well-known for his "bebop," which he said is still present in whatever form of music he plays, said he would like to play more arrangements with symphonies.

He said, "That's to let them know there is something else besides 1800 music."

"It's no bother to us because we are groovers. We can go along with them, they can't go along with us."

Gillespie said his music was part of the American culture, but not a multi-million-dollar success story.

"It would surprise me dearly. I'd be happy to sell half a million," he said.

Instead of millions, Gillespie said he sought something more lasting.

"I'll be a great humanitarian. A legacy of oneness, oneness of mankind," he said.

Jazz. What would Dizzy be without it? At age two and a half he was playing single notes on the piano. At 13 he won a music scholarship to Laurinburg Institute in Laurinburg, N.C.

Gillespie said that as he grew older, it got harder to keep ahead of jazz.

"You never catch up to yourself," he said. "You learn every day." And you say, why didn't I do that 50 years ago?"

Gillespie has been touted as the composer and virtuoso player who revolutionized the jazz world in the 1940s and '50s with his "be-bop" music.

Incidentally, the 63-year-old Cheraw native has entitled his autobiography, "To Be or Not to Bop."

The nickname "Dizzy" stuck when Gillespie carried his trumpet around in a paper bag. The horn acquired its unusual shape, with the bell pointing at a near 90-degree angle when someone sat on it. Gillespie liked the end result.

His father, who was an amateur musician, introduced Gillespie to jazz at an early age. Dizzy began playing trombone when he was 14 and switched to trumpet a year later when he received a scholarship to the Laurinburg Institute.

He has been tooting his horn ever since.

In the late 1930s when he was 19 he played trumpet with the Teddy Hill Band.



DIZZY GILLESPIE

Dizzy Gillespie will be at the Sheraton Showplace Feb. 1 thru Feb. 6, 1982. He will give 2 (two) shows nightly, 8 pm and 11 pm, Mon. thru Sat. Tickets \$9 and \$10. For information call 288-7171.

The 1940s were the years when his reputation as a player and arranger made their mark. Gillespie has been associated with many bands, including those of Ella Fitzgerald, Cab Calloway, Les Hite, Woody Herman, and Billy Eckstein.

He was linked with saxophonist Charlie "Yardbird" Parker, pianist Thelonius Monk and Kenny Clarke in this time period also.

Gillespie, Parker and Monk are mentioned most as the innovators who rejuvenated the dance beats of Swing into the fast and flatted fifth note chords of be-bop. He also introduced Afro-Cuban rhythms with compositions like "A Night in Tunisia" and "Salt Peanuts."

In 1956 Gillespie was honored as the first jazz leader to represent the United States Department on an overseas tour of goodwill. His band conducted two tours that year in the Far East and in Latin America.

He has continued to tour since then. His honors and awards include doctorate degrees from Rutgers University and the Chicago Conservatory of Music. He has received the Handel Medallion, Grammy Award 1975, National Music Award, and the Downbeat Critics Poll Award. Gillespie has also made appearances at the Tenth Anniversary of Independence in Kenya and at the White House for the President.

"A musician who says he doesn't need the audience is either crazy or too high."

Having made that statement from the stage, the legendary Dizzy Gillespie went on to prove that we need him as much as he needs us.

After decades on the jazz scene, Gillespie can still provide a special brand of music which is thrilling, masterful and joyous. There is no one quite like him.

early days.

"We didn't really think about making some kind of revolution at that time. We were just trying to find a new way of phrasing the music, you know, and we didn't expect anybody to be upset. But when you have a new idea, you always get flack."

Gillespie and Parker did "get flack," even from the mild-mannered Louis Armstrong, who claimed that bop was not music. Through the late '30s and early '40s, Gillespie moved from one band to another, from Teddy Hill to Cab Calloway to Charlie Barnet to Les Hite. But it was only in the Earl "Fatha" Hines big band of 1943 that he was allowed to be himself. Hines encouraged the younger musicians, and in that band, Gillespie joined Parker, Benny Harris, Benny Green and others who were trying to play jazz in a new way. After working with the Billy Eckstein big band the following year, Dizzy formed his own small combo and later his own orchestra. These bands cut the first classic bop records, and by the 1950s, Gillespie and Parker were acknowledged masters, and their music was jazz. Everyone was listening.

Since that time, Gillespie has played with small combos and big bands, and many younger musicians have gotten their start under his leadership. He has written many classic jazz tunes, and he has done everything a jazz musician could do, from film soundtracks to symphonic concerts. He was the first jazz musician to tour for the U.S. State Department as a good will ambassador, and he has played in almost every country in the world.

Gillespie's talent is so all-encompassing that he can incorporate the music of others into his own style without compromising his own integrity or that of his source. His arrangement of the Israeli folk tune, "The Land of Milk and Honey," was brilliant, as was his rendition of W.C. Handy's classic, "St. Louis Blues."

Looking back over his career, Gillespie talked about some of his favorite moments, most of them preserved on records.

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