

Exploring ‘Jazz Town’

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

gon Experience half-hour documentary “Jazz Town” examines the eruption of music and nightlife in black clubs of north and northeast Portland in the 1940s and 50s. A significant chapter in the city’s cultural narrative, this short-lived period is largely unknown to many Oregonians.

World War II brought a great wave of workers and their families from across the country to work in the shipyards of Portland. During this time, the city’s African-American population grew from 2,000 to nearly 22,000. Many individuals moved into Vanport, a large tract of wartime housing built just north of Portland. Most of those not living in Vanport crowded into Portland’s Albina District.

Many of the newcomers came with a shared passion for rhythm and blues and contemporary, danceable jazz, but their options for entertainment were limited. Segregation was permitted by law, and Portland offered few venues for African-Americans to perform or to listen to music.

As the population in the Albina neighborhood swelled, the music scene intensified. Some of the country’s most famous jazz players—who may have passed by Portland in earlier years—began to make it a destination. Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Wardell Gray and Lionel Hampton became frequent visitors, and pianists Warren Bracken and Frank Martin even moved to the city.

Additionally, Portland produced many of its own homegrown artists who developed at what one of them called the “University of Williams Avenue” and would go on to find national and international fame. This includes Floyd Standifer, who grew up outside of Gresham on a farm, trumpeter Carl Hilding “Doc” Severinsen from Arlington, saxophone player Jim Pepper and drummer Mel Brown.

Presented largely through firsthand accounts from local residents, “Jazz Town” showcases the music and the parade of musicians that helped to put Portland on the jazz map. The program also tells the story of a marginalized community born of racial discrimination that proceeded to thrive during that time.

OPB is also hosting a free, public screening of “Jazz Town” on Thursday, April 21 at the Portland Community College Cascade Campus in north Portland. The event begins at 7 p.m.

“Jazz Town” airs Monday, April 25 at 9 p.m. on OPB TV and is available to watch online now at opb.org/jazztown.



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CALENDAR

April 2016

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
<div>11</div> <div>President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act, 1964 (1964)</div>	<div>12</div> <div>Space Shuttle Columbia First Launched Crewed by John Young and Robert Crippen - 1981</div>	<div>13</div> <div>3rd President Thomas Jefferson born, 1743 Lee Bennett Hopkins born, 1938</div>	<div>14</div> <div>Webster's Dictionary Published, 1828 Titanic Struck sank at 2:20 AM on April 15.</div>	<div>15</div> <div>Income Tax Day Artist/Inventor Leonardo Da Vinci born, 1452</div>	<div>16</div> <div>Garth Williams born, 1912 Aviator Wilbur Wright born, 1867</div>	<div>17</div> <div>Sherlock Hemlock's Birthday (Sesame Street character)</div>
<div>18</div> <div>Paul Revere's Famous Ride (1775) Great San Francisco Earthquake In 1906. Pet Owner's Day</div>	<div>19</div> <div>Humorous Day Revolutionary War began (1775)</div>	<div>20</div> <div>Scientists Marie & Pierre Curie isolate radium (1902)</div>	<div>21</div> <div>Kindergarten Day Barbara Park born, 1947</div>	<div>22</div> <div>Earth Day established 1970 Girl Scout Leader Appreciation Day</div>	<div>23</div> <div>Passover Begins at Sundown William Shakespeare born, 1564</div>	<div>24</div> <div>Library of Congress established (1800) Pigs-in-a-Blanket Day</div>
<div>25</div> <div>Anzac Day (Australia, New Zealand) Hubble Telescope launched, 1990 World Penguin Day</div>	<div>26</div> <div>Hug a Friend Day National Pretzel Day Seismologist Charles Richter born, 1900</div>	<div>27</div> <div>Administrative Professionals/ Secretaries Day Tell a Story Day</div>	<div>28</div> <div>Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day Take your Daughter to Work Day</div>	<div>29</div> <div>Arbor Day Zipper Day (patented by Gideon Sundback in 1913)</div>	<div>30</div> <div>National Honesty Day Anniversary Louisiana Purchase completed (1803)</div>	