



Tenor saxophonist Charlie Ventura (from left) plays at Janzen Beach in north Portland around 1953-54; Duke Ellington, the greatest jazz composer and bandleader of his time, performs at McElvoy's on Southwest Fourth and Taylor around 1953; and Louis Armstrong at Portland's old Civic Theater for a "Jazz at the Philharmonic" national touring show around the same period. The photos are from the estate of Carl Henniger.

We Had Jazz

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Along Williams Avenue, locals could hear jazz 24 hours a day.

As jazz grew in popularity major national tour promoters like Norman Granz and Gene Norman brought leading jazz artists to the Rose City. Still segregated at the end of the war, lodging was mostly only available to black musicians in the Albina neighbor-

hood. After their performances downtown, black artists went across the Willamette River to black area clubs to jam after hours, exchange musical ideas and to stay in available lodging.

The city's golden age of jazz peaked between 1948 and 1956. During those years major national and West Coast jazz bands always stopped in Portland. Portland became known among jazz musicians all over the

country. Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Charlie Parker Jr., Count Basie, Dizzy Gillespie, Lionel Hampton and many others all appeared live in the Rose City. Duke Ellington like playing in Portland so much he played here on his birthday twice. Portland became a leading stop on the West Coast for the best in live jazz performances from big swing bands to be-bop combos.

It was during this period that Carl Henniger photographed many of the leading jazz musicians and sidemen alike. He took candid shots back stage and performance shots during the concerts. Some of these images are rare and unique and all are of the highest

artistic quality.

The late Henniger was a teenager when he arrived in Portland from Milwaukee, Wisc. He attended Lincoln High, then Oregon State College where he took advance photography classes. He met his wife Jean and became the principal feature photographer for the 1942 Beaver yearbook. He served in the Army Air Corps and after the war returned to Portland with his wife and one year old twin boys. He had a career in advertising sales at the Oregonian in addition to his photography work.

Thanks to Michael Henniger for providing the information and historical context for this story.

“The time is always right to do what is right.”

– Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



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