

Arkansas Jazz Calendar

Vol. 12 No. 3

Arkansas Jazz Heritage Foundation Newsletter

Hall of Fame 2004

In this Issue: 2004 Arkansas Jazz Hall of Fame, Biographies, Arkansas Jazz News, and Monday Jazz Project at the AfterThought schedule

2004 Arkansas Jazz Hall of Fame

**Saturday, May 22, 2004
An Arkansas Heritage Event
"Remembering 9th Street:
A Night of Jazz"**

**7:00 pm Admission \$20
Old State House Museum
300 W. Markham, Little Rock**

The Old State House Museum and the Arkansas Jazz Heritage Foundation host some of the state's more recognized musicians for special tribute to Little Rock's "Main Street of Jazz." The evening entitled Remembering 9th Street: A Night of Jazz, will feature jazz guitarist Eddie Fisher. Other members of the Hall of Fame group include John Bush-tenor saxophone, Walter Henderson-trumpet/vocalist, Joe Vick-bass, Dale Kriner-piano, and Dave Rogers-drums.

The event will also include the 2004 induction of selected musicians into Arkansas's Jazz Heritage Hall of Fame. This year's recipients are Eddie Fisher and Scott Joplin (posthumously). The Arthur L. Porter, Sr. Lifetime Achievement Award will also be presented at the event.

Admission is \$20 per ticket; seating is limited. Contact Gerry Soltz at 501-324-8647.

The following are select biographies of the 2004 Arkansas Jazz Hall of Fame inductees Scott Joplin and Eddie Fisher.

Scott Joplin (ca 1867 - 1917) by Jerry Atkins

Scott Joplin was a master composer of classic ragtime music. He was one of the influential American figures in the formation of twentieth century music. Ragtime was a contemporary of the earliest jazz but a separate body of music. It influenced such great composers as Claude Debussy and Igor Stravinsky to write their own interpretations of ragtime music. Both jazz and ragtime are considered American original art forms.

The exact date and place of Joplin's birth is not known with certainty. We know he was born in Texas and probably in the northeast part since the U. S. Census of July 1870 locates him in Texarkana as a two-year old child. Joplin's frequently quoted date of birth, November 24, 1868, is probably incorrect. Historical documents lead to a date of birth as being between June 1867 and mid-January 1868. Scott's parents were Giles Joplin of North Carolina and Florence Givens Joplin of Kentucky. Scott had three brothers and two sisters. Documentation shows several addresses on Laurel Street in Texarkana. Later Scott and his mother lived at 618 Hazel Street.

Scott attended Orr School, then a two-story structure that is now a one-story

ARKANSAS JAZZ NEWS ...

- **The Arkansas Jazz Heritage Foundation** supports jazz in the state, for information write the Arkansas Jazz Heritage Foundation, PO Box 251187 Little Rock, AR 72225, visit www.arjazz.org, or call Cecil Rich - President 501-228-9999.

- **Send You Back to Arkansas: Our Own Sweet Sounds II** exhibit runs until October 2004 at the Old State House Museum, 300 W. Markham, Little Rock. Come see and hear Arkansas's contributions to American popular music. The exhibit features **five galleries** full of everything from stage suits, handwritten song lyrics, instruments, album art and more! **Jazz, blues, folk, gospel, country, and rock music** genres are explored. Touch screen kiosks, DVDs and surround sound components add to the experience. Jazz Artists featured include: Louis Jordan, Scott Joplin, Art Porter Sr. & Jr., Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Al Hibbler, and more.

- **2000 Arkansas Jazz Hall of Fame inductee guitarist Tonk Edwards** plays a regular set on Thursday thru Saturday evenings at Fuad's Lake Country Restaurant, 3920 N. State Line (Walmart Drive) Texarkana (870) 773-1550.

- **The North Arkansas Jazz Society** presents jazz events in the Northwest Arkansas area. Contact the North Arkansas Jazz Society, 40 East Elm, Fayetteville, AR 72703, or call Robert Ginsburg for information at 479-521-1255 or 442-0990.

- **Sixth Annual Summer Jazz Concert Series** starts Friday June 11, 2004, 8:00

Continued - next column

Continued on Page 2 - Hall of Fame

Continued on Page 2 - Jazz News

building located at 831 Laurel. It is currently used as a Community and Day Care Center. The family was very musical and Scott was exposed to the piano at an early age. Almost all accountings of his early life mention a German music teacher whose name we now know to be Julius Weiss. We believe he gave Scott the desire to be a classical composer.

Scott departed Texarkana in his late teens (this contradicts earlier undocumented information). His two brothers, Will and Robert, left to travel the Midwest but his third brother, Monroe, lived out his life in Texarkana. Two grand nieces of Scott's still live in Texarkana and another in California. These are the closest living blood descendents of Scott Joplin.

After departing Texarkana, Scott did some playing in Texas and Missouri and traveled to St. Louis in about 1885. There is evidence that he also lived in Sedalia with some other families bearing the name Joplin. In 1891, newspapers reported he was back in Texarkana with a minstrel group. There was a migration of musicians to Chicago in 1893 for the World's Columbian Exposition. Scott may have played cornet with a band but it was not a sanctioned group for the World's Fair. It was after this that he made the move to Sedalia, which was on the route of the railroad being built between St. Louis and Kansas City. He sang with his popular vocal group known as the Texas Medley Quartette. The group traveled as far as Syracuse, New York, to entertain. When not traveling he was playing piano in Sedalia, mostly at the Maple Leaf Club. He attended music classes at the George R. Smith College and learned to notate music and acquired other composition skills.



All of the Joplins were living at the time of the publication of the famous MAPLE LEAF RAG in 1899. It has been stated that over a million copies were sold over a long period of time. It allowed him liberation from the role of being just a saloon piano player.

He moved to St. Louis in 1901 with his new wife, Belle Hayden. In 1903 he filed a copyright application (never approved) for an opera titled "A Guest of Honor." A planned tour performing it failed and the music has never been recovered.

Many of Joplin's most important rags were published in those St. Louis years. After his marriage to Belle came to an end, Scott returned to Arkansas in 1904 and married Freddie Alexander in Little Rock. Unfortunately, his new wife died of pneumonia ten weeks later. After the funeral, Scott left Sedalia never to return.

There is strong evidence that he was working on his new opera TREEMONISHA with Freddie in mind. Scott had parted company with his long Sedalia publisher, John Stark and went to New York to try to get help from many important music people. Fortunately, there was a renewal of his friendship with Stark, who published

many new Joplin rags. Scott even gave the opera score to Irving Berlin who kept it but eventually rejected it.

Even though none of Scott's music was written while living in Texarkana, he never forgot about his early musical heritage. His heart and soul still remained in the Red River Valley and the dense forests of Northeast Texas and Southwest Arkansas. He stated that the setting of the opera was about 10 miles north of Texarkana. One historian believes that his second wife from Arkansas was his inspiration for the main character, TREEMONISHA. Its story takes place in 1884 and relates to how education can overcome racial inequality.

Despite many efforts, there were only some fragmented performances of portions of the opera. Joplin never saw a complete staged performance. Disappointment and frustration began to take its toll. He spent some time in a hospital from long developing physical problems. He was transferred to a mental institution where he died on April 1, 1917.

Reports of a large funeral procession are pure fiction. He was almost a forgotten man when he died. His burial in an unmarked grave was finally acknowledged by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers in October 1974. A brief service at the gravesite in St. Michael's Cemetery in Astoria, Queens was held and the new bronze marker reads simply "Scott Joplin, American Composer." 1971 and 1972 were the revival years for Scott and his ragtime music. Articles appeared in important music magazines and he was acclaimed a "Genius Rediscovered." Stories of his life appeared on television, movies and many record companies were quick

Continued from Page 2- Hall of Fame

to record his music. An Oscar winning movie, "The Sting," certainly capitalized on the use of his music that is now mostly in the public domain. Late in 1971, the Lincoln Center Music Library performed some of his piano music. The first complete performance of TREEMONISHA took place in Atlanta in January 1972. Later it was performed in Houston, on Broadway, and at Wolf Trap, America's National Park for the Performing Arts near Washington, D.C.

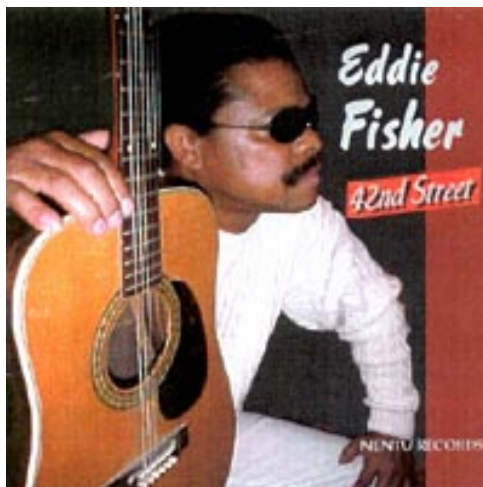
Scott Joplin was posthumously awarded "A Pulitzer Prize Special Award" for his contributions to America Music on May 3, 1976. A mural honoring this great American Composer and the "King of Ragtime" may be seen at the corner of 3rd and Main Streets in Downtown Texarkana.

Eddie Fisher

(thanks to the Old State House)

Eddie Fisher is not only an honoree but also a guest performer at the 2004 Arkansas Jazz Hall of Fame. This Hall of Fame was arranged in conjunction with the Old State House Museum, the Arkansas Jazz Heritage Foundation and the Old State House Museum Associates. That event is called Remembering 9th Street: A Night of Jazz, one of the special events related to the museum's exhibit Send You Back to Arkansas: Our Own Sweet Sounds II.

Eddie Fisher spent the first 17 years of his life in Little Rock, Arkansas. From the age of 10, he developed a love for music; influenced and supported by his father. After graduating from high school, Fisher left home and headed for Memphis, Tennessee, where he



continued to improve his guitar technique and musical skills. He spent the next several years touring with such famous musicians as Salomon Burke and Albert King. Fisher then became a founding member of the Leo's Five Band and decided to settle down in St. Louis, Missouri.

It was in East St. Louis that Eddie Fisher started making a name for himself when he began playing at the renowned Blue Note Club. Fisher enjoyed great success beginning in the 60s and early 70s when he recorded his first two albums, The Third Cup and The Next One Hundred Years. On his own label, Nentu Records, he has produced Fisher, The Promise and most recently released 42nd Street. Over the years, Fisher has recorded 6 CDs. He recently completed 10 European tours.

Fisher's guitar playing and compositions span various jazz styles. Critics explain that he began his career as a straight jazz guitarist with relatively traditional soul jazz, while his more recent work has been described as "very trippy guitar funk." Another entertainment writer states, "It doesn't matter whether I'm in a happy mood or feeling depressed. The music is spirited in any possible way. There are jazz, funk, blues and soul influences." □

Continued from Page 1-Jazz News

PM with a Regional All-Stars / Composer's Showcase, sponsored by North Arkansas Jazz Society, University of Arkansas Music Department, and KUAF Radio, 91.3FM. All concerts take place on Friday evenings at 8:00 PM at the University of Arkansas Stella Boyle Smith Fine Arts Concert Hall in Fayetteville. Tickets will be available through Ticketsage (479-587-8336 or toll free: 877-837-6616) or the NAJS website: www.DIGJAZZ.com.

- **The Hot Springs Jazz Society** supports jazz programming in the spa city including the Annual Scholastic Jazz Festival in Hot Springs National Park (Spring 2004) and the annual Hot Springs Jazz Festival (August 2004). For information, contact the Hot Springs Jazz Society, PO Box 972, Hot Springs, AR 71902-0972, www.hotspringsjazz.org, or call Shirley at 501-767-5482 / Peggy Ross at 501-922-4570.

- **Jazz at the Historic Arlington Hotel**, 239 Central Ave., Hot Springs in the Lobby Willie Davis Combo plays Thursday 8pm-midnight, Friday and Saturday 8:30pm to 12:30am. Tea Dances are held on Sundays once a month in Arlington Great Ballroom, 3-6pm, admission \$8 per person. Call 501-623-7771 for further information.

- **Jazz Cabaret at Wildwood** is presented on the first and third Friday evenings every month, 8 p.m. to midnight, \$5 cover. Call for information 501-821-7275, ext. 242

Send entries to ajc@arjazz.org or call (501) 225-2891. The next AJC deadline is May 27, 2004. □

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May / June / July 2004
Monday Jazz Project at *The AfterThought* , every Monday night at 8PM
2721 Kavanaugh, Little Rock, AR (501) 663-1196

- May. 24 - **Monday Jazz Project Jam Session** with Dan Sieckman, Joe Vick-bass, and Dave Rogers-drums.
Jam players signup starting at 7:45 p.m. in After Thought foyer, \$5 cover, \$1 Jammers.
- May. 31 - **Afterthought Closed for Memorial Day.**
- June 7 - **Lee Tomboulia Trio** with Lee Tomboulia-piano, Joe Cripps-bass,& Brian Brown-drums
tickets \$10 available at the AfterThought (cash only) and Capitol Keyboard (501) 229-9999.
- June 14 - **Saxophonist Barry McVinney** with Dan Sieckman-guitar, Joe Vick-bass, & Dave Rogers-drums, \$5.
- June 21 - **Tom Cox Trio, with Tom Cox**,-piano, Brian Wolverton-bass, & Brian Brown-drums, \$ 5 cover.
- June 28 - **Monday Jazz Project Jam Session** with Dan Sieckman-guitar, Joe Vick-bass, & Dave Rogers-drums.
Jam players signup starting at 7:45 p.m. in After Thought foyer, 8 PM, \$5 cover, \$1 Jammers.
- July 5 - **Trombonist Sim Flora** with Buck Powell-piano, Joe Vick-bass, & Dave Rogers-drums. \$5 cover.
- July 12 - **Vocalist Roseanna Vitro** with Michael Jefry Stevens-piano, Joe Vick-bass,& Dave Rogers-drums
tickets \$15 available at the AfterThought (cash only) and Capitol Keyboard (501) 229-9999.

All dates at the Afterthought 2721 Kavanaugh, Little Rock. (501) 663-1196. The Monday Jazz Project is sponsored by The Arkansas Jazz Heritage Foundation (www.arjazz.org), with special assistance from the Afterthought Seating is General Admission. For more information on the Monday Jazz Project contact Cecil Rich at (501) 228-9999.