

MITCHELL-HUFF DUO: AS TIME GOES JAZZ AT ITS BEST

Fred Sapp

I had the distinct pleasure of enjoying approximately ninety solid minutes of first class, jazz entertainment when the Mitchell-Huff Duo performed on Thursday, February 17, 1994, at FSU's Seabrook Auditorium. The program was part of a Cultural Diversity Presentation sponsored by the Fort Bragg Schools in conjunction with Fayetteville State University. The Duo had made musical presentations at various Fort Bragg schools earlier in the day.

The Mitchell-Ruff Duo was formed in 1955 when pianist/composer Dwike Mitchell and bassist and French-horn player Willie Ruff left Lionel Hampton's band to strike out on their profession and to many corners of the world. It was this Duo that introduced American jazz to the postwar (then) Soviet Union in 1959, for instance, and to China in 1981. The New York Times wrote "The Duo held their audience at the Tchalovsky Conservatory spellbound. Mr. Ruff lectured in the Russian language on the origins and wonders of Jazz music and he and pianist Dwike Mitchell went on to give a performance of American Jazz not soon to be forgotten in Russia."

On Thursday evening, the Duo opened the first set with an up tempo piece entitled "Return To Fayetteville State University". Mr. Ruff explained to the audience that the Duo performed at FSU in the past. However, it was so long ago that there is probably "no one alive who remembers". Incidentally, this program was a return for me as well. I first saw the Mitchell-Ruff Duo when I was a college sophomore in (Good Grief!!!) 1964.

The second piece was the standard "Autumn Leaves", but Mr. Mitchell presented his own arrangement in 3/4 time. For the third number, "Lush Life", Mr. Ruff put aside his bass and picked up the French horn, proving to all present that the French horn is certainly a singularly

beautiful jazz instrument. Before playing the next piece, Mr. Ruff told the audience that as an elementary school student, he had the honor of meeting the great W.C. Handy who influenced his musical interests. The Duo then played a most beautiful arrangement of W.C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues". The final piece of the first set was chosen, according to Mr. Ruff, as a result of a renewed interest in Gershwin. So, from the Folk Opera Porgy and Bess, they honored the audience with their interpretation of "It Ain't Necessarily So", and left the stage for intermission amid thunderous applause.

An old standard, "Favorite Things", opened the second set. This, too, was arranged in 3/4 time (much like John Coltrane's version). The Duo then launched into an old Dinah Washington ballad, "My Old Flame", which showcased the piano virtuosity of Mr. Mitchell. The program ended with another Gershwin-influenced composition entitled "Porgy and Bess Excerpts". This time Mr. Ruff moved from bass to the French horn, and back to the bass, while Mr. Mitchell held the audience captive with his flawless keyboard artistry. The Duo exited to a standing ovation.

As I write this article, I realize words are not enough to describe the joy and delight brought to Thursday night's audience by the Mitchell-Ruff Duo. For those of you in attendance-you know! For every else...ya had to Be there.

BY.....

Earl Moniz

Since being enrolled, I have witnessed quite a few historical moments in the annals of Fayetteville State University. Amidst all the triumph and turmoil, all the pride and disappointment, and all the laughter and tears, I finally realized that the university is composed of us. If the university does something that a person despises, then that person should vigorously oppose it and ensure that that action does not occur again, or at least that dissatisfaction should be adamantly voiced. If no action is taken by the students to prevent that action from recurring, then that inactivity can be interpreted as permission for that action to take place once again. The university does not exist without us! The university only commits acts and enforces policies that we permit. When a person criticizes what the university does, that person is talking about and criticizing what the students permit it to do. As our Constitution encourages, if an agency of the government no longer has the best interests of its citizens in mind with its policies and regulations, then maybe the citizens should abolish that agency and start again.

The future of the university lies in the future of its students. If graduates wander off into the "real world" and embarrass themselves and the university, support for the university's endeavors will decrease. If graduates and students do not con-

cern themselves with keeping the standards at a challenging level, curious and superior students will find other challenges to conquer. If graduates and students forget who brought them to the dance, it will truly be a night to forget.

Graduates and students should always consider themselves recruiters as well as ambassadors of the university and be on the lookout for bright students who will enjoy the challenges that FSU can provide. When students of superior caliber are encountered, they should be introduced to the challenges and opportunities that await them at Fayetteville State University.

With that said, I now bequeath my column to any individual who will be back next semester and who will build upon these characteristics: I bequeath a sound sense of community for everyone and for every tradition at FSU. I bequeath my objective and logical style in approaching problems and situations at FSU and also in the community at large. Most of all, I bequeath my profound belief that an education, like happiness, adds and multiplies as we divide it with others. Please do not interpret these traits and characteristics as the epitome of journalistic style (I am not that foolish...or arrogant), but simply a very fundamental base upon which to build taller, stronger, and more influential literary and artistic monuments in an attempt to strengthen and diversify the idea of the university as well as Fayetteville State University itself. All my best wishes now, and as time goes by...

**Big Brother
is
watching
you.**

We're not.

You know what you are doing better than anyone-

If you think that what your club, fraternity, sorority, fellowship, or group is doing is of general interest--or if you just have an opinion or idea that you would like to share with our reading public-Art, Science, News, or Sports-write it up, send it off.

See Page 2 for more information on guidelines for submitting material.