

2003 Atlanta Jazz Festival

Weekend Concert Series

Greg Turner



May 24 - 26, 2003 - This year's Atlanta Jazz Festival was billed as "26 days of Jazz" in celebration of its 26th anniversary. Performances were held in venues throughout the Atlanta area the first 23 days, with the last 3 days reserved for the free Memorial Day Weekend Concert Series, held in Piedmont Park, in Atlanta's Midtown area.

After 2 years of having 2 stages, one for emerging artists, this year's weekend concerts returned to one stage. Also, the internationally known performers seemed to come from a wider variety of jazz genres instead of what I call the acoustic jazz mainstream, which was the case in past festivals. But this is what free admission jazz festivals do, give one the opportunity to see groups one may have heard about, as well as groups one may have never heard of.

Due to travel delays I arrived just in time to hear the jazzy Latin sounds of Bobby Sanabria y Ascension, featuring a multi-tempoed workout on Dizzy Gillespie's "bebop". New Orleans' Preservation Hall Jazz Band played their distinctive brand of traditional jazz, much to the delight of the large audience. Another New Orleans-based group, the Irvin Mayfield Quintet, closed Saturday's performances in tribute to relationships and artist /photographer Gordon Parks with their energetic post bop sounds displaying Mayfield's impressive trumpet skills. Mayfield and group members, saxophonist Aaron Fletcher and drummer Jaz Sawyer, played well into the evening at a jam session at Churchill Grounds, Atlanta's best known jazz club.

Sunday for this writer began with a

spirited set of original modern acoustic jazz performed by vibraphonist Matthias Lupri and his quintet, with a fine young tenor saxophonist in Walter Smith, but they only received polite applause. The huge audience seemed to be there for the other sounds. They cheered lustily for the jazz fusion sounds of Richard Bona, a Jaco-influenced electric bass virtuoso who also sings in his native African tongue. They grooved to the funky sounds of Soulive, one of the most publicized new groups on the scene. They even danced in the rain to the Latin sounds of Eddie Palmieri's La Perfecta.

Monday's highlights began and ended with the BlueNote era hard bop sounds of Atlanta-based drummer Bernard Linette and his Interactive Sextet, After the festival Linette, who combines Art Blakey's power with Billy Higgins' finesse, and his sextet performed a set with guest vocalist Annie Selleck at Paris on Ponce, a huge antiques store/warehouse complex with a large performance space in the rear of one of the buildings. A jam session featuring several vocalists ended the evening there. Other festival highlights included former Atlanta resident, guitarist Jacques Lesure, always straight ahead and swinging, with a surprise guest in vocalist Deborah Brown, now based in Atlanta after several years in Europe, Metalwood's powerful jazz-fusion was reminiscent of 70s Herbie Hancock and 70s Passport. Vocalist Maysa closed the festival with her mixture of smooth jazz and R & B

And so ends another Atlanta jazz festival. It was a very good time, and it will be interesting to see what the city's Bureau of Cultural Affairs puts together next year

For more information:
<http://www.atlantafestivals.com>

Photo by:



printer-friendly



this page