



## Jazz Is a Summer Festival



Dancers at Newport—left to right, Baby Lawrence, Pete Nugent, Honi Coles, Charlie Atkins, and Bunny Briggs, accompanied by pianist Bill Rubinstein and bassist Jim Neves.

By STANLEY DANCE

**B**ECAUSE nightclub business is generally in the doldrums, the summer festivals now have much greater significance to the jazz community than before. Always recognized as a means of securing extensive additional publicity for the music and its makers, this year they have come almost to represent succor and salvation.

A major fault of most festivals in

the past was the policy of commercial gigantism, requiring mass audiences and massed entertainment. In big fields and arenas, the performers were whisked on and off stage—all playing and plugging their record hits—as though on a conveyor belt. The audience presumably was expected to be satisfied as much by the sight of the artists as by their sound.

This policy has not yet been discarded, but artistic aspirations, to judge by the festivals in Washington and Newport this summer, are increasingly raising their pretty heads, and with more vigor.

The Washington jazz festival was the first of its kind held there, and a great many of the shortcomings were clearly due to inexperience. The main events, for example, were presented in the Coliseum, a sports arena with appalling acoustics, an inadequate sound system, and no air conditioning, so that the sale of beer and soda often appeared to be the chief reason for luring several thousand perspiring people within it.

In Constitution Hall there was a return to the pretensions of Paul Whiteman's day, and jazz and the symphony sat side by side as uneasily as ever. Jazz came thoroughly into its own only when Duke Ellington's fifteen-piece band played his "Night Creature" and dominated, however unintentionally,

the symphony's seventy-odd musicians. Of the works specially commissioned for the festival, a high proportion seemed, oddly enough, to require the use of the symphony's strings.

A combination of modern jazz and modern ballet, presented in Howard University's acoustically excellent Cramton Hall, was a more rewarding experiment, although here again the introduction of tap-dancer Baby Lawrence unwittingly served as a reminder of the extent to which basic jazz values were being deserted. Probably the most valuable innovation of the whole festival was a concert by small jazz combinations in the same relatively intimate hall. An exhibition of jazz memorabilia in the Smithsonian and daily showings of jazz films in the National Gallery were also small but welcome steps away from gigantism, while the use of the Eureka Brass Band from New Orleans as a curtain raiser to two of the more arduous endurance tests happily drew attention to the origins of jazz.

At Newport, the emphasis was more directly on essentials. George Wein was back in charge, and besides having greater experience in running jazz festivals than anyone else in the world, he also happens to enjoy nothing so much as playing jazz himself. The group with which he appeared was, in fact, one of the few to go overtime, the others adhering to the schedule in a fashion previously unknown.

**W**EIN'S conception of programming was intelligent and satisfying. There were three evening concerts and one in the afternoon, two entertaining panel discussions, and a marvelous afternoon performance illustrating the relationship of jazz and dancing. Instead of ballet dancers there were, most appropriately, five of the best surviving tap-dancers. The enthusiastic crowd which applauded them seemed to be of one mind that their art should not be allowed to die.

Gospel singers, who are usually reluctant to admit any connection with jazz, had been heavily featured at Washington, but Wein more knowingly brought in only Clara Ward's group. Blues singers, however, were neglected at both festivals. At the first, Howlin' Wolf was allowed so little time that he didn't play his guitar at all, and at Newport the responsibility fell mainly on the broad shoulders of Jimmy Rushing. In view of the wide appreciation of country blues today, this might be said to be the one point at which the Newport director's approach was off balance.

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## BOOKED FOR TRAVEL

### There's a Great Day Coming Tomorrow

SINCE it is written into the charter of this department to dispense news of fairs, expositions, and major medicine shows, I buzzed into Seattle the other week end to have a look at the celebrated circus underway up there. Ever since I cruised around the Seattle waterways some three years ago, and listened to the ambitious plans being outlined by a local posse of superenergized executives, I have nursed a warm feeling about the élan being exuded at the base of Mount Rainier, and I have exulted in the successive triumphs which came Seattle's way—its ordination as a proper site for a world's fair, its selection as the proper place for an \$11 million science exhibit by the U.S. government, and its great success in attracting representation from foreign nations whose authorities were required, I am sure, to look up Seattle on the map before coming themselves.

It has been such an ambitious program for such an obscurely placed city, that there welled in onlookers the same sort of feeling inspired in some hearts when the old Dodgers faced the old Yanks and Finland stood up against all the Russias. The pose was made only too clear when New York announced its own intentions for a fair and Mr. Robert Moses, who is its chief proponent, began to tolerate the Seattle affair as if it were some distracting but disdained minor revolution in the hills.

I wasn't conscious, when I stopped here in February to view the progress, that Seattle felt it had an underdog's part to play, nor worse yet, that it had to milk it for all the pathos possible. No chests were inflated over the successes; no stones were cast in the direction of the meadows at Flushing where Mr. Moses's moles were already at work. Everybody was too busy for that. Indeed, the fair people were so busy that the fears and wonders of the early visitors were almost totally sidelined through sheer preoccupation with industry. One afternoon while we were both encased in hard hats, the construction workers' headgear, Mr. John Graham, whose firm built the Space Needle, invited me to ride with him in the first of the elevators, one that had just been installed. "You don't want to ride in the construction elevator," he said. "Of course not," I agreed and stepped

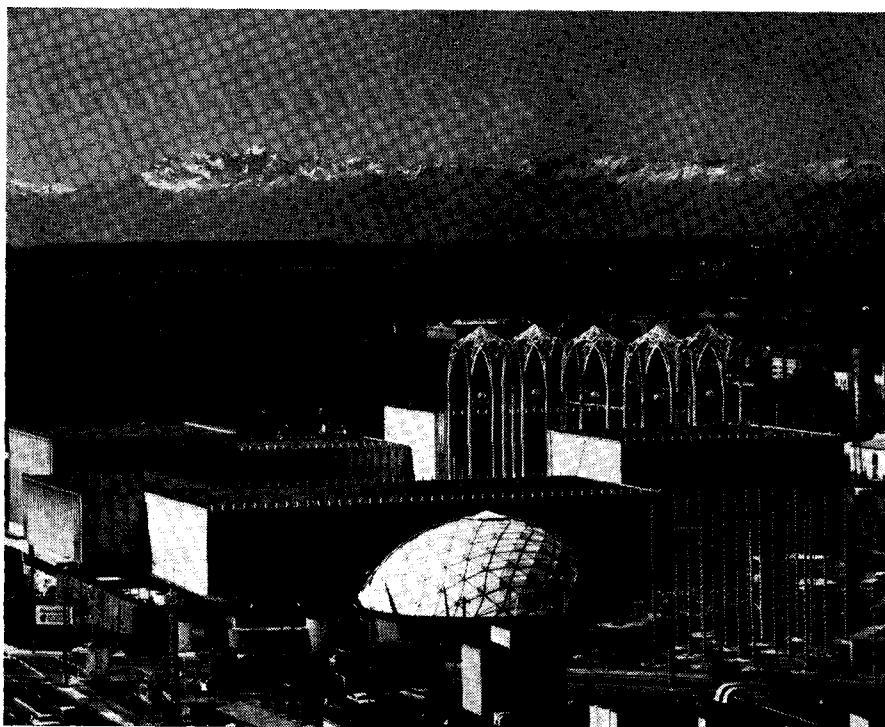
with him onto a wooden platform equipped with a pair of upright beams and a piece of beaverboard at the back. The operator tied a frayed rope on a bent nail to enclose the front, and before I could shriek in protest we were soaring sixty stories skyward. It was by far the most memorable ride at the fair, and when I returned this time to see the exposition in full flower and to walk the Gayway, I laughed scornfully at all the rides that the local torturers had managed to devise to induce the pleasure and vertigo of the fairgoers.

When I looked in at the fair grounds last February, two months before it was to be opened to the public, I was stopping off at the tail end of a round-the-world flight. This time I slipped down from Canada, running the distance from Victoria to Seattle in Trans-Canada's Viscount, in about half an hour. I must say that the inquisition by U.S. Customs at the Seattle airport was far more intense than it had been at Honolulu when I was coming home after a month of stops at a dozen ports of call in the Far East. How this attitude is helping our "Visit the USA" program I'm sure I don't know, but it's a question that someone might put to

the collector of customs at Seattle.

I had heard, back in Manhattan, that tower of truth, that the fair was hurting for customers, and also that it was impossible to find a room. After half an hour in town neither theory seemed to hold up. At a motel a few yards from the airport, the customers were few, and only a handful of youngsters were on hand to gambol in the pool. My first choice in accommodations was honored—a stateroom aboard the S.S. *Acapulco*, a Mexican ship of the Natumex Line that is berthed for the summer five blocks from the fair grounds. The *Acapulco*, which can take 610 fairgoers (or 610 passengers) and has 250 cabins, may not be the largest ship in the sea lanes, but it does, it insists, have the largest lido deck afloat. The night I pulled in, it was ablaze with lights and lanterns, a buffet was spread in the open air, a band played for dancing, and nobody, not even a visiting New Frontiersman, had been thrown into any one of the three swimming pools.

The fair, it turned out, was not wanting for customers any more than was the S.S. *Acapulco*. It has been registering anywhere from 40,000 to 70,000 people a day, which is about double its estimate. Long lines snake from the entrances to the most popular exhibits. These have proven to be those whose themes embrace the twenty-first century, among them the Space Needle, the U.S. Science Exhibit, Ford's display, and the State of Washington's World of Tomorrow. The architects who turned in such brilliant visual of-



The Seattle Fair—"Gothic arches" and "a child's imagination."