TRADITIONAL JAZZ SERIES

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OUR THIRTY-THIRD PROGRAM

JACK BUMER
"NO EASY PIECES"

SPONSORED BY
THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC,
AND THE NEW HAMPSHIRE
LIBRARY OF TRADITIONAL JAZZ

8 P.M. MONDAY
FEBRUARY 11, 1985
STRAFFORD ROOM
MEMORIAL UNION
DURHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE
JACK BUMER

Jazz, iconoclastic idiom as it sometimes is, has nevertheless been around long enough to allow us to take certain of its special qualities for granted. It being a world of such strong and disparate personalities, we often focus on their individuality and neglect what the classical musician would refer to as "the repertoire". Though instrumental jazz does have a rich and indigenous body of actual compositions, varying in specificity of conception and capacity for re-creation, a vast amount of its resources comes from that remarkable treasury called the American popular song. Thus the performer finds inspiration in a melody, its harmonic structure and form; he knows the title (usually) and the words (sometimes), but he translates the meaning through what the notes themselves suggest rather than their original wedding with a text. (In the 19th century Franz Liszt tried this with the Schubert songs, but it remained a marginal endeavor.)

All of this could lead to a most tedious and inappropriate philosophical disquisition; the relevant point is that the practice is one of those unique and wondrous mysteries of the jazz experience. In fact, we listeners get much of our satisfaction from the interaction of our own imaginative expectations with those of the artist. And pianists performing by themselves have the freedom to generate the most compelling results in this manner, a phenomenon perhaps worthy of the designation, "the pianist as singer". The UNH Traditional Jazz Series has regularly featured solo pianists who emphasize this dimension of the art, and we are pleased to welcome Jack Bumer to that auspicious roster.

John Q. Bumer’s musical odyssey — a not fanciful term as you will presently learn — is as unusual as the history of jazz itself. Born in Ohio in 1928, the son of a professor of mathematics who doubled (no pun intended) as a concert pianist, Jack showed pianistic talent early, but in perfectly normal fashion rejected the strictures of formal classical training. He explored jazz as avid listener and devout practitioner throughout his college years at Clark University in Worcester, Mass., then after contemplating the difficulties of devoting one’s life to solid jazz values amidst the vagaries of changing public tastes he joined the Merchant Marine and served for 22 years, working out of Woods Hole for the Oceanographic Institute.

For much of that time Jack was rarely near a piano, but the ideas were germinating internally, and in the early 70’s when the types of jazz he loved seemed to be re-emerging he bought a small piano and literally bolted it to the bulkhead of his cabin aboard ship; of such bold and unprecedented actions are born legends. Since 1976 Jack has been completely committed to his musical pursuits. He is well-known to our audiences through combo appearances with Gray Sargent, Doc Cheatham, Jack Lesberg, etc., and the recording of his famous two-piano concert with Mike Markaverich has been widely and favorably reviewed, as has his solo album, "No Easy Pieces". Most recently he performed at the Manassas Jazz Festival in Virginia, and is currently "in residence" at Bishop's Terrace in Harwich, Mass.
Tonight Jack will share with us the fruits of those long-gestating reflections, with emphasis on a few of the great creators of the song literature — George Gershwin, Harold Arlen, Fats Waller, for example. Many years ago, Felix Mendelssohn gently challenged the pianistic norms of his time by composing “Songs Without Words”, and today Dave McKenna describes himself as “just a tune player”. Sing us some tunes, Jack.

Tape recorders and cameras are not permitted due to contractual arrangements. Your cooperation is requested.
THE SERIES

The UNH Traditional Jazz Series began in 1979. It promotes the enjoyment and understanding of the art through concerts featuring musicians of regional, national, and international prominence. The program represents a unique endeavor to expand interest and honor outstanding talent and achievement.

Musicians wishing to do so are encouraged to offer their recordings for sale or mail order during intermission; a brief announcement may be made. The sponsors have no financial interest in such sales beyond offering a courtesy service to the artists and the public.

Program Notes — Paul Verrette
Production — David Seiler

THE SCHEDULE

September 17  Rent Party Revellers
October 15    Doc Cheatham and Clarence Hutchenrider — with the TJS Quartet
November 12   Dick Hyman: Historic Piano
December 3     White Heat Swing Orchestra
February 11    Jack Bumer: “No Easy Pieces”
March 11       Ray Smith’s Decades of Jazz
April 15       Ruby Braff — with the TJS Quartet
May 13         Original Salty Dogs with Carol Leigh