TRADITIONAL JAZZ SERIES

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OUR THIRTY-FIFTY PROGRAM

RUBY BRAFF
with the
TJS QUARTET

RUBY BRAFF ............... Trumpet/Cornet
JACK BUMER ............... Piano
GRAY SARGENT ............... Guitar
MARSHALL WOOD ............... Bass
CHUCK LAIRE ............... Drums

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

8 P.M. MONDAY
APRIL 15, 1985
STRAFFORD ROOM
MEMORIAL UNION
DURHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE
THE ARTISTS

RUBY BRAFF

Artists are continually confronted by the collision of personal conviction with public acceptability; this is especially true in periods when revolution rather than evolution seems to be the order (or disorder) of the day. Accommodation is not necessarily bad, anymore than innovation good, but the artist who endures must have built into his aesthetic consciousness — and maybe his genes — a keen judgemental sense as to permanent vs. transitory values in what he both does and observes. For the performer, this is a special challenge, because his instincts (and income) relate to immediate audiences, not to generations yet unborn.

Ruby Braff certainly gained his solid slice of jazz history the old-fashioned way. It is illuminating to follow his fortunes over two decades as articulated in the various incarnations of Leonard Feather’s Encyclopedia of Jazz. In 1955 Ruby is introduced as “a versatile stylist, combining traditional and modernist sounds”; prescient words, since in that year he led the New Star category in the Down Beat Magazine Critics’ Poll. But in 1960 we are told that, “Braff’s case is a striking illustration of the failure of critical acclaim to bring success to an artist of obvious merit. He has been . . . embraced by innumerable critics both at home and abroad, yet . . . reported that he had been almost continuously out of work for five years, possibly because he is a younger musician playing in a basically older style”. By 1966 it is noted that he had been “poorly represented on record in recent years”, although he was developing visibility in college concerts and at festivals; then in 1976 we learn that “in the ’70s, however, he became more active in all areas”, a fact copiously documented.

These quotes are of course from only one well-informed source, but they do reveal that Ruby has been in that provocative if sometimes uncomfortable position of being simultaneously behind and ahead of his time. Now, in the ’80s, time and tide have converged to reward his patient and thoughtful adherence to conviction.

Ruby was born in Boston in 1922, and much to the shock of many of today’s students (and their teachers) is musically self-taught. His education was nonetheless early enriched by performances with such luminaries as Vic Dickenson, Mel Powell, Urbie Green, and Benny Goodman, and subsequently he has worked with virtually the entire population of exemplars of traditional and mainstream jazz, as well as sympathetic singers like Tony Bennett — and he even had a role in Rodgers and Hammersteins’ Pipe Dream! Ruby’s stalwart example has helped make the world safer for its Scott Hamiltons and Warren Vachés.

Backing Ruby tonight are the members of the Traditional Jazz Series Quartet, who reassemble from their numerous and varied activities around and beyond the region. Well-known individually to our audiences, they last appeared here as a unit with Doc Cheatham and Clarence Hutchenrider in October.
Ruby has described his approach to his art in the following words: "Improvisation is adoration of the melody...imagination coupled with a strong sense of composition...Running chords doesn't interest me. What does is trying to superimpose a new melody on the original, to build on layers..." Louis and Bix would be proud. So would Bach.

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