

Straight, No Chaser

Big Apple Trio likes its jazz New York style

BY SCOTT HARRIS
The Battalion

Bringing New York-style jazz to College Station would not be an easy task for just anybody, but it is exactly what the members of Big Apple Trio are attempting. Big Apple Trio is a three-piece band that incorporates piano, drums and bass to create their unique flavor of jazz.

Wayne Smith, drummer for Big Apple Trio, compared the band's sound to a New York style that would have come out in the '50s or '60s.

"We are not a New Orleans blues band," Smith said. New York is the home of what we do. We are a traditional small jazz trio with some '90s twists.

"We combine Latin and contemporary jazz together. We have a full spectrum, we go from high energy to — I don't want to say easy listening, but a soft jazz. From one extreme to another."

Smith said the best thing about playing in the band is that it is not their primary source of income but an outlet for their passion.

"We don't have to treat it like a job," Smith said. "We all have a passion for the music and it is some-

thing that we don't have to do. We all take a great pleasure in it."

Two of the band members, Smith and pianist Peter Lieuwen, are professors at Texas A&M. Smith is a professor of nautical archeology and Lieuwen is the coordinator of A&M's music program. Brian Lippman, the bass player for the band, is the owner of Lippman Music.

The band has been playing together for several years and has built a following in the Bryan-College Station area. Smith said the band came together as the result of playing with other people.

"We were all playing around town at the same time, and we had played together in conjunction with other people," Smith said. "We liked the way each other played and we got together and started doing shows at the Hilton."

"We decided to expand out and get more serious about the music, and we started playing at Sweet Eugene's, which is a good venue because the audience is there to actually listen to the music. Some places the music is just in the background. We have built up a good audience there."

The band has released one album, *To The Core*. The

band controlled every aspect of recording the album which, Smith said, kept the direction of the album in the band's hands.

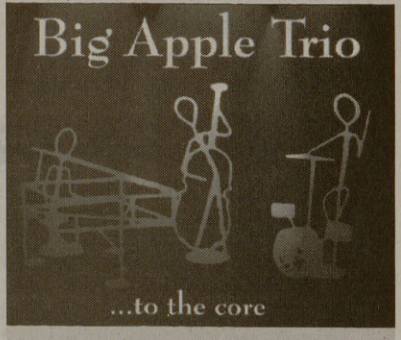
"Making the album was an important thing for us to do," he said. "We all put a lot into it. We wanted a certain sound. We all listened to other bands and knew what we did and didn't like, and we all liked stuff that was not typical. We wanted to hear the sonority of the piano coming out. We wanted to hear the sizzle in the cymbals."

The album was recorded in the auditoriums of the George Bush Presidential Library Complex.

They used one auditorium to play in and another one to set up a sound studio. Smith said although there was no audience the band basically recorded a live concert.

"Actually, we spent most of the time setting up the equipment, but we essentially recorded a live show," Smith said. "We didn't rehearse much. We played everything live and, if we liked it, we kept it."

"Jazz is a conversation, a dialogue. It is best when it is spontaneous. We wanted to keep all of the spontaneity. The music is best done fresh, if there is no agenda, then there are no problems."



Big Apple Trio
To The Core
CD Courtesy
of Tarpon Music

Big Apple Trio's debut release, *To The Core*, is an escape into a realm that is only offered by jazz music.

This three-piece band explores the roller coaster of emotions and feelings of the human persona in a way that only an instrumental band can.

The trio pays tribute to all of the jazz greats on their CD. They cover songs by Monk, Corea, Miles Davis, Coltrane and Dizzy Gillespie but with their own style and flair.

They combine Latin, swing and contemporary jazz to create their own sound.

The band delivers the music on a palette that can be enjoyed by even a novice jazz listener.

The music is soothing and at the same time invigorating, bringing together two ends of the emotional spectrum.

Big Apple Trio has struck gold with their versions of "Impressions," "Windows" and "Stella By Starlight."

This album is an altogether enjoyable experience for the listener. (Grade: B-)

— Scott Harris



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