ART of A Z

FORM/PERFORMANCE/NOTES

Thursday at Noon, March 10 — May 5, 2016
The Cooper Gallery, Media Room, 102 Mt. Auburn St, Cambridge MA

Free and open to the public — Limited seating
Exhibition on view through May 8

MARCH 10

GREATEST JAZZ FILMS EVER
VOLUME 1, 2005
5:50

Imported collection from Spain

This superb collection from Spain includes excerpts from both Jammin’ the Blues and Jazz at the Philharmonic, along with highlights from several television specials like Be Bop’s Nest—a rare Charlie Parker appearance with Dizzy Gillespie on the short-lived variety show Stage Entrance—and “The Sound of Miles Davis,” a 1959 episode from the television show The Robert Herridge Theater that showcased one of Davis’s most celebrated ensembles.

The Greatest Jazz Films Ever is an impressive and enduring collection of documents from the golden age of jazz. While the emphasis here is generally on musicianship, not filmmaking, it’s a collection that also demonstrates jazz’s close relationship to film and television in the mid-twentieth century.

Endearing collection of documents from the golden age of jazz.

• The Sound of Jazz, Billie Holiday, Count Basie, Thelonious Monk, Jimmy Giuffre, and many others (54:00)
• Jazz from Studio 61 (18:00)

MARCH 24

SYNCOPE, 1942
1:28:00

Directed by William Dieterle

Covering a quarter-century of American “syncopated” music (ragtime, jazz, swing, blues, boogie-woogie) from prior to WWI through Prohibition, the stock market crash, the Depression, and the outbreak of WWII. A romance between singer Kit Latimer, from New Orleans, and Johnny Schumacher, in which they share, and argue over musical ideas.

MARCH 31

SYNCOPE: SHORT JAZZ FILMS, 1942
1:37:00

Various directors

• Symphony in Black, 1935, Duke Ellington and Billie Holiday (P.36)
• Rhapsody in Black and Blue, 1935, Louis Armstrong (10:00)
• St. Louis Blues, 1929, Bessie Smith (15:41)
• Cab Calloway’s Hi De Ho, 1933 (11:00)
• Bundle of Blues, 1933, Duke Ellington (9:00)
• Hoagy Carmichael, 1939, Hoagy Carmichael, Jack Teagarden (10:00)
• Artie Shaw’s Class in Swing, 1939, Artie Shaw (10:00)
• Jazz at the Cuba, 1933, Don Ameche (5:19)
• Black and Tan Fantasy, 1929, Duke Ellington, Fred Washington (19:00)

APRIL 7

THE LAST OF THE BLUE DEVILS, 1980
1:30:00

Directed by Bruce Ricker

Kansas City jazz is a style of jazz that developed in Kansas City, Missouri, and the surrounding Kansas City metropolitan area during the 1930s and marked the transition from the structured big-band style to the musical improvisation style of bebop. The hard-swinging, blustery transition style is bracketed by Count Basie, who in 1929 signed with Bennie Moten’s Kansas City Orchestra, and Kansas City-native Charlie Parker, was to usher in the bebop style in the 1940s. Director Bruce Ricker’s ninety-minute The Last of the Blue Devils chronicles the 1979 reunion of many of the legendary players, combining interviews, vintage film footage, photos, and some inimitably swinging performances by Basie, Turner, and pianist Jay McShann. “The Last of the Blue Devils is an absolute delight.” — Sam Graham

APRIL 14

MINGUS: CHARLIE MINGUS, 1968
58:00

Directed by Thomas Reichman

This documentary records an especially poignant moment in Mingus’s life when he was forcibly evicted from his apartment in New York City. Scenes from the apartment are intercut with footage of Mingus and his sextet performing at a little club in Peabody, Massachusetts, called Lennie’s-on-the-Turnpike. The combo features Mingus on bass, Dannie Richmond on drums, Charles Mingus on alto saxophone, John Gilmore on tenor saxophone, Lennie Hilyer on trumpet and Walter Bishop Jr. on piano. The music includes parts of “All the Things You Are,” “Take the ‘A’ Train,” and “Secret Love.”

APRIL 21

ROUND MIDNIGHT, 1986, 2:18:00

Directed by Bertrand Tavernier

Jazz great Dexter Gordon plays a brilliant, self-destructive African American musician who moves to Paris in the 1950s to find an audience more appreciative of his art, and more accepting of his race. There, a young female fan bonds with this talented musician, but even her affection may not be enough to save him from alcoholism, drug addiction, and depression in this deeply human drama probing the price of artistic greatness. Paying for his gift, Round Midnight is a 1986 American-French musical drama film directed by Bertrand Tavernier and written by Tavernier and David Rayfiel. It stars Dexter Gordon, Francois Cluzet, and Herbie Hancock. Martin Scorsese, Philippe Noiret, and Wayne Shriver appear in cameos. The protagonist jazzman, “Dale Turner,” was based on a composite of real-life jazz legends bassist Jimmy Blanton and saxophonist Bud Powell (pianist). While the film is fictionalized, it is drawn directly from the memoir/biography Dance of the Infidels written by French author Francis Paudras, who had befriended Powell during his Paris expatriate days and on whom the character “Francis” is based. The film is a wistful and tragic portrait that captures the Paris jazz scene of the 1950s.

APRIL 28

THelonious Monk: Straight, No CHASER, 1998
1:30:00

Directed by Charlotte Zwerin

Thelonious Monk: Straight, No Chaser begins the life of one of the most extraordinary instrumentalists in the history of jazz. Using precious film footage shot in the late 1950s of this great pianist and composer, this film provides a special opportunity to savor the work of this one-of-a-kind musical innovator. This exemplary documentary about seminal jazz pianist and composer Thelonious Monk reaps the benefits of multiple blessings, including the skilled editorial hand of director Charlotte Zwerin and the patronage of executive producer and erstwhile jazz pianist Clint Eastwood. Most vital is the use of extensive 1948 footage, shot by Michael and Christian Blackwood, documenting the sometimes moody, sometimes puckish Monk in the studio, on tour, and offstage, which on its own would make this essential jazz viewing. “The film’s late-sixties portions, which document a European tour and also catch Monk playing in clubs and in recording sessions, are some of the most valuable jazz sequences ever shot,” writes Stephen Holden of the New York Times.

MAY 5

BIRD, 1988, 2:41:00

Directed by Clint Eastwood

Eastwood produces and directs a film, a barnburner with the magic of the 1940 concert encounter between legendary and future legend, Bird was honored with an Academy Award for Best Sound in its spellbinding recreation of a man and his music. Like jazz itself, Bird rings with counterpoint and embelishments. Past and future overlap as the film explores Charlie Parker’s soaring skill and destructive excesses. “Charles ‘Bird’ Parker was one of the great fountainheads of jazz, a creator of bebop whose improvisations and joyful discoveries on the saxophone created a sound that is absolutely distinctive. He stood as a bridge between the swing era and the cool, modern jazz of the 1950s, and even as his career collapsed into disarray, his influence continued to grow. At the end, Bird was denied a cabaret license because of his drug use, and couldn’t even play in Birdland, the famous club named after him. But whenever and wherever he did play, other musicians gathered, because he taught them what they were working for.” – Roger Ebert

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at the HUTCHINS CENTER presents

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