

## Jazz Gumbo Showcase

Monday, Feb. 21 — Live Music 6:30–8:30 — No seating before 6 pm

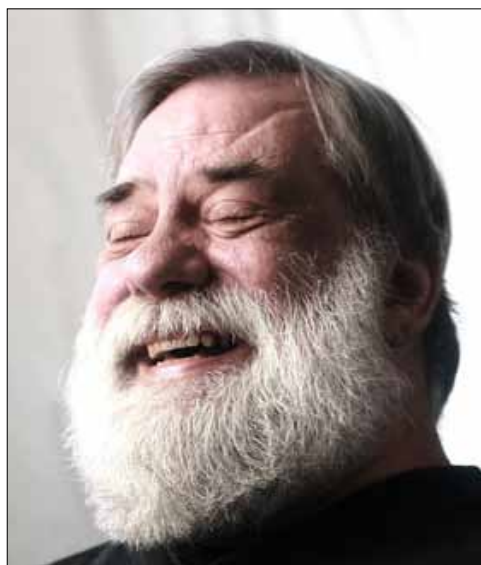
### Vocalist Kathy La Mar & THE Bob Van Stee Trio

**Bob** on piano; **Jeff Beavan** on bass; **Bob Thompson** on drums

Jazz, rhythm and blues vocalist Kathy LaMar is a vibrant, energetic performer. Her talents have been on display mainly in Las Vegas for over the past 20 years, where she worked with such luminaries as Gladys Knight, Nancy Wilson and Wayne Newton, among others. Her stylings, ranging from Billie Holiday to Tina Turner to Ella Fitzgerald, were on display at nearly every major hotel/casino on the Vegas strip. And she was born and raised in Grand Rapids!

Grandfather Frank LaMar, Sr. owned the Horseshoe Hotel and Bar on Grandville Ave., a block south of Wealthy St. As a child Kathy would sometimes join her father when he worked there, listening to the music, watching the entertainers. She sang in the youth choir at Messiah Baptist Church in her early teens and performed in the local Robeson Players productions in the late 70's, which helped her learn her great stage presence. Invited by a pianist friend to visit him at his new job in Vegas for two weeks, she left in 1980 and stayed for over 20 years. Her return to GR in 2009 was to help care for her mother through an illness that proved to be terminal this past year.

Teaming up with pianist Bob Van Stee over the past year has proved to be a winner. His great improvisations



provide the perfect backdrop to her sultry singing. They perform every Thursday at Noto's and have been featured at the Lowell Showboat, with the GR Symphony Picnic Pops and the What Not Inn, among other bookings. You will hear some of your favorite jazz standards with a Vegas twist at this great show!

**Dance — dine — and listen to great jazz at the Kopper Top Guest House**

**634 Stocking NW (one door south of Fourth Street) — Open Seating**

\$8 members; \$5 students; \$12 non-members, free if they join WMJS at this event! — Admission includes bowl of Gumbo or Chili plus salad and crackers — Refills \$2 — Food Service from 6-7:30 — Cash bar

**Please, early arrivers:** we cannot open the doors for seating before 6 p.m.... if you don't want to stand outside in the cold, please wait next door at the Kopper Top.

**RECAP**

# Jan. Gumbo: Sinatra at the Sands

I could use every superlative in the dictionary to describe what a fantastic show Rick Reuther and the Tom Hagen Septet performed for an overflow audience at our Jan. 17 Jazz Gumbo. Opening with an uptempo instrumental of “One Mint Julip” featuring the fine tenor sax playing of Mike Lutley, Rick’s first number was a rollicking version of Sinatra’s hit, “I Believe in You.” Kurt Ehinger, our soundman at every Zoo concert, was on hand recording the entire pro-



trombone licks; and Mike had opportunities throughout the evening to display his talents on flute and clarinet as well as saxophone.

Cherie Hagen came from behind her drum set to do two memorable duets with Rick: a “he said, she said” version of “He’s a Tramp” and “The Lady is a Tramp,” and in the second set, “Let’s Fall in Love.” The highlight of the evening, for yours truly, was the opening of the second set with Tom offering the Count Basie version of “All of Me” from the “Sinatra at the Sands” album. From his first tinkling piano notes, I could shut my eyes and be back in the late ’70s when I got to hear this exciting orchestra in person so many times. Another highlight (there were so many!) was the closing number of the first set when Tom set off with a boogie-beat to introduce Rick’s great vocal of “On the Street Where You Live.”

In recognition of the evening being Martin Luther King Day, Rick did a great “tie-in” tribute of Sinatra’s early ’50s position on racial tolerance when he made a movie short



gram for a future CD release.

All dressed in black suits, white shirts and black bow ties, the band looked as great as it sounded. Tom’s arrangements were superb—“Just in Time” was a tight full band chart that gave James Sawyer his trumpet solo; Paul Brewer his

called “The House I Live In,” which won an Academy Award. I thought this was a very nice addition to an evening which was, as stated in my opening, deserving of every synonym of “wonderful” that one can think of!

*Betty Forrest*





# March Jazz Gumbo

## The Fred Knapp Quartet... "Standards and More"

Monday, Mar. 21 — Live Music 6:30–8:30 — no seating before 6 p.m.

Featuring **Fred Knapp** on drums, **Dave Proulx** on keys and vocals, **Dave Rosin** on bass, and **Ben Jansson** on tenor saxophone

The Fred Knapp Trio has been one of our most popular performing groups at both jazz gumbos and zoo concerts, for many years. Their CDs, such as 2008's "Music of Cole Porter," are always best-sellers. Thus it is great news that tonight's performance will feature numbers from their latest CD, "Standards & More," and that their addition of tenor saxophone player Ben Jansson who joins them tonight is also on the CD. His stylings are a perfect fit for turning the trio into a quartet. Many popular trios had a history of adding to their group in recordings, such as the Oscar Peterson Trio with Stan Getz, or the Ray Brown Trio recording "Some of my Friends are Sax Players."

Some of the numbers you will hear tonight are Irving Berlin's "How Deep is the Ocean," Rodgers & Hart's "My Romance," and some big band classics such as "Girl Talk" and "Easy Does It." Fred adds one of his own compositions, "Shades of Blue," named after the GRCC



vocal jazz group which was formed by his mentor, Duane Davis. Add a Jobim samba and assorted other jazz standards, and you can look forward to an evening of great "familiaris" presented with originality, rhythm and swing.



### John Shea Reunion Concert

Sat., Feb. 25 with Paul Keller and Pete Siers, 7:30-10:30 at Cobblestone on M-37; (616) 588-3223 for reservations. Buffet dinner \$30 in advance, \$35 at door



# Frank: The Voice

by James Kaplan (2010)

From the very first paragraph, no two biographies could be less alike than Friedwald's "The Song is You" (reviewed last month) and Kaplan's "Frank – the Voice." Friedland was totally about the music... Kaplan is enamored with the man. He begins with Sinatra's rather traumatic birth – violently torn from his mother's body with forceps that left one side of his face, neck and ear torn. As an adult, his sense of disfigurement led him to apply pancake makeup to his face and neck daily. Kaplan's goal is to make the reader feel what it was like to be Frank Sinatra "as a man, a musician, a tortured genius." Friedman's goal was to make us hear and understand the music.

As a teenager, Sinatra had a radio in his own room (a luxury in the late '20s for a family just out of the Italian ghetto) where he listened to Bing Crosby. From winning a Major Bowles Amateur Hour contest as part of a group calling themselves "The Hoboken Four" in 1935, the young singer got to go on a tour across the country, meeting lots of girls. It's only page 45 before we get several paragraphs on Sinatra's most prominent physical endowment – and we are not talking about a Jimmy Durante-like nose! Back in New Jersey, he lived at home for three more years, ages 20-23, while working to build connections with area bands and others in the entertainment business. He hit 52nd Street, listening to Billie Holiday and Ethel Waters tear listeners' hearts out with their jazzy soul singing.

Sinatra's mother Doll was an abortionist. She was also a precinct captain and through her political connections was able to get the singer his first really good nightclub job. He married his girlfriend Nancy in 1939, about the same time that orchestra leader Harry

James heard him. What did he hear—"an indefinable something composed of loneliness, need, ambition, storytelling intelligence, and intense musicality." What was Sinatra's ambition? To knock over Bing Crosby.



With Tommy Dorsey

learned so well that he single-handedly moved the primacy of the big band era aside to usher in the age of the solo vocalist. In May 1940 he recorded "I'll Never Smile Again" which

stayed on Billboard's charts for 12 weeks, earning the singer Billboard's Vocalist of the Year award and overtaking Crosby in popularity!

Time to move on again. By Sept. '42 he left Dorsey to go it alone. His career was the only thing he cared about. He would step on or over anyone in his path. By Jan. '43 he was signed to star on radio's "Your Hit Parade," and in those war days everyone listened to the radio, so his name and voice became nationally known. Where screaming teenagers had made him a phenom at the Paramount Theater, now the society adults got to adore him at New York's posh nightclubs. The reissue of his 1940 recording with Harry James, "All Or Nothing At All," which had originally sold only 8,000 copies, now sold 1 million. By August 1943 Hollywood came calling, offering a seven-year contract, and by January 1944 he had become a legal resident of California. During this time, too, back home in New Jersey, Sinatra's son Frank, Jr. was born, joining sister Nancy Jr.





By mid-1944 Sinatra had moved the family to California, although according to the author, and the evidence, he had no intention of giving up the swinging lifestyle. (A brief affair with Lana Turner, among others, had already been detailed.) Also detailed at this time was the right-wing political climate, whose reporters blasted Sinatra as a draft-dodger (although he had been classified 4-F) because he publicly crusaded for racial and religious tolerance. The WASPs that controlled the media saw him as an ethnic playboy, having the time of his life while his countrymen were fighting and dying overseas.

His first contract movie, "Anchors Aweigh," starred Gene Kelly, who luckily decided to hold Frank's hand, teach him to dance, help him look good. When the movie was completed in September he returned to New York to perform at the Paramount, where 10,000 girls lined up for the shows. Columbia Records reached an agreement with the Musicians' Union, breaking the union's three year ban on new recordings, and rushed the singer to the studio to make 16 splendid ballad sides (still the era of 78s), revealing Sinatra's best self with such numbers as "These Foolish Things." The movie was released and became a great hit, making MGM very glad they had him under contract.

In keeping with his sincere feeling about racial and ethnic intolerance, he made a 15-minute movie called "The House I Live In," which had a great impact, won an Academy Award, and showed Sinatra as thoughtful, strong and persuasive—a self that existed not just on film. The left wing loved him, but the right wing, including the House Un-American Activities Committee, took note. While liberal associations and activities became a part of his life, so did his connection to gangsters. It was impossible to work in nightclubs in the '30s to the '60s without having contact with mobsters. Many backed them; many owned them; they were glamorous profit centers for the sale of liquor and entertainment. Sinatra's fascination and friendships with the tough guys became another ongoing chapter in his life, and a source of future problems.

His first "theme" album of popular romantic ballads was released in mid-1946; concert tours and more movies finished out the '40s. Meanwhile on the home front his open affair with



*With Ava Gardner*

theater shows attendance for the first time on what was to have been a triumphal return to New York's Capitol Theater. His opening act was the Will Mastin Trio, which led to his friendship with Sammy Davis Jr., who at age 22 had been star of the act since age three. Mid-1948 to 1953 were bad career years, and almost fatal on a personal level: an affair with Ava Gardner led to his divorce, their brief marriage, their divorce, and the temporary loss of his place as "The Voice."

Kaplan's many efforts to psychoanalyze Frank – his neediness, his violent temper, his anxieties, his focus on career, are often interesting but also questionable. Is Kaplan reading tarot cards? The long index shows most of his narrative is based on media reports and third party interviews, although

many of those quoted are very revealing of his attitudes.

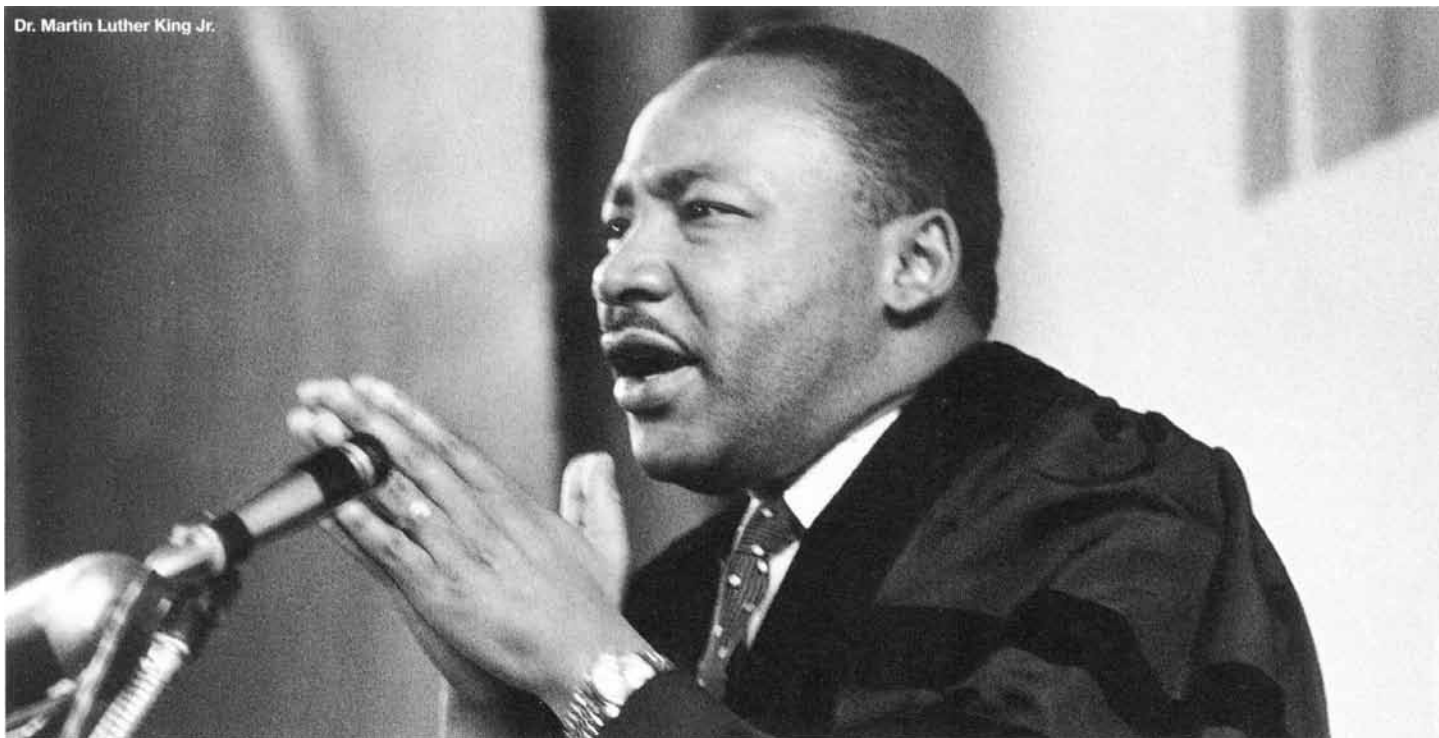
The music was changing: Johnny Ray's "Cry" was the current big hit. Frank was still Frank – the great voice, the beautiful arrangement – but they were no longer what the public was buying. It was at this low point that he read the script for "From Here to Eternity" and fixated on playing the part of Maggio – an endeavor that paid off more than a year later, at the March 1954 Academy Awards, with an Oscar for



*With mother Doll Sinatra*

his performance. Co-star Montgomery Clift had coached him in acting much as Gene Kelly had in dancing back in the '40s. Capitol signed him to a new recording contract, and The Voice was on his way back. Kaplan ends his book at this point, before the Vegas years, before Sinatra's ascent to legendary status, leaving the reader thirsty for the portrait of his later years.

*Reviewed by Betty Forrest*



# Source Uncovered for Martin Luther King Jr. Jazz Quote

By Bruce Jackson and David Demsey

It is surprising that there is only one known instance when Dr. Martin Luther King, perhaps the most galvanizing figure in African American culture, publicly addressed the subject of jazz. But, in that one quote, as only King could accomplish, his statement manages to describe the origins and development, the beauty and majesty of jazz—and put to rest the seemingly endless debate about its “ownership”—all in only 333 words. Indeed, the quote itself can be thought of as the music itself: King’s perfect one-chorus solo on the changes of “What Is Jazz?”

Martin Luther King

schrieb den  
Berliner Jazztagen 1964  
das folgende Geleitwort

God had wrought many things out of oppression. He has endowed his creatures with the capacity to create, and from this capacity have flowed the sweet songs of sorrow and of joy that have allowed man to cope with his environment in many situations.

Jazz speaks of life. The blues tell the stories of life’s difficulties, and if you will think for a moment, you will realize that they take the harshest realities of life and put them into music only to come out with some new hope or sense of triumph. This is triumphant music. Modern Jazz has continued in this tradition, singing the songs of more complicated urban existence. When life itself offers no order and meaning, the musician

creates an order and meaning from the sounds of earth which flow through his instrument.

It is no wonder that so much of the search for identity among American Negroes was championed by jazz musicians. Long before the modern essayists and scholars wrote of ‘racial identity’ as a problem for a multi-racial world, musicians were returning to their roots to affirm that which was stirring within their souls. Much of the power of our Freedom Movement in the United States has come from this music. It has strengthened us with its powerful rhythms when courage began to fail. It has calmed us with its rich harmonies when spirits began to lag.

This has been true from the early days of the simple Negro Spiritual. And now, Jazz is exported to the world. For in the particular struggle of the Negro in America there is something akin to the universal struggle of modern man. Everybody has the blues. Everybody longs for meaning. Everybody needs to love and be loved. Everybody needs to clap hands and be happy. Everybody longs for Faith. In music, especially that broad category called Jazz, there is a stepping stone toward all of these.

# Support Local Jazz Venues!

## John Shea...

Mon. – Republic Bar, 45 S. Division 8-11 PM  
Tues. – Big O's, 80 Ottawa NW 7-10 PM  
Wed. – Brick Road Pizza, 1017 Wealthy 7-10 PM  
Thur. – Fircano's, 1050 W. Western, Musk. 7-10 PM  
Fri. – Cobblestone on M37, Caledonia, 6:30-9:30

## What Not Inn: Live music 6-10 PM on Sat.

Feb. 5 – Mary Rademacher  
Feb. 12 – Wally Michaels Trio  
Feb. 19 – Entourage  
Feb. 26 – Diego  
Mar. 5 – Gary Gramer  
Mar. 12 – Patty Wright and Wally Michaels  
Mar. 19 – Entourage  
Mar. 26 – Diego  
Jazz Jams Mondays 6-10 PM

**St. Cecilia:** Winter Jazz Night, Tues. March 22nd - 7:30 PM - FREE; GRCC Jazz Orchestra and Shades of Blue vocals

**Mangiamo's** - Lake Drive east of Diamond 7-10 PM  
Piano soloists Wed. - Sat., 7-10 PM. Call 842-0600. Performers may be John Proulx, Mark Kahny, Greg Miller, Robin Connell, Bill Huyge, Bob VanStee, Wally Michaels or Paul Lesinski.

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**Noto's** in the lounge 7-10 PM

Wed. – Rick Reuter & the Hagens

Thurs. – Kathy LaMar and Bob VanStee

**Gilly's At The Bob**, Thursdays thru Feb., 7-10 PM;  
Mark Kahny & Tony Reynolds

## Co-Founder of WMJS Dies



Bob MacKercher passed away mid-January. Bob and his wife Phyllis, who left us just over a year ago, were my two partners in getting a jazz society started back in January 1986. Bob had been an avid collector of jazz records since the late '30s (a collection that now exceeds 12,000 LPs, tapes and CDs), whose knowledge and enthusiasm were priceless, and whose lack of optimism and abundance of "Scotchness" were vital to keeping our early efforts to build an organization on a modest "one step at a time" basis.

From day one he organized our growing membership list, having agreed with me that a monthly newsletter would be vital to our success. Phyllis was our membership chairperson for our first 17 years, while Bob booked our concerts and other events. We assembled our "Jazz Notes" monthly at their dining room table; collating, applying mailing labels and stamps (that still had to be licked in those days!) and taking them to the post office. During our seventh year I finally convinced him that we could afford a mailing service to handle a chore that had grown from assembling 50 pieces to 350!

Although he had withdrawn from active management of the Society seven years ago, due to his wife's illness, no month passed by wherein I didn't call him to discuss our plans and activities, and to seek his counsel. Only 10 days before his death we talked at length about plans for our 25th Anniversary party coming up in April, just three days prior to what would have been his 91st birthday. I had hoped to honor him in person one more time at this event, but with his usual modesty, he has bowed out early.

He will be dearly missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him.

*Betty Forrest, Editor*

**Check out our Web Page: [www.wmichjazz.org](http://www.wmichjazz.org)**

# Jazznotes

February-March 2011

Articles, photos and comments are welcome! Send before the 20th of the month to:

**Editor, Betty Forrest**  
**West Michigan Jazz Society**  
**304 Paris S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49503**

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## West Michigan Jazz Society Board Members

Board Meeting: Tues., Feb. 22, 7 pm at Great Lakes Steak House

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Interested in working on a committee? Yes ☐ No ☐ Later ☐

JAZZ NOTES is sent to all members of the West Michigan Jazz Society to inform members of area jazz and to promote jazz in general.

Your contribution to the West Michigan Jazz Society is Tax Deductible.

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