

Plenty of beef in '08 lineup

OK, folks, let's just get this out of the way from the get-go: This isn't the 50th annual Monterey Jazz Festival. That was last year. This is the 51st, so don't expect all the glitz and glamour — and let's face it — the big names of last year's momentous event. No more whining.

Imagine last year's festival as a big old cake slathered in rich frosting and topped with 50 blazing candles. This year's is all meat and potatoes, with some salsa and hot sauce on the side. Nothing too fancy, just good old sturdy, rib-stickin' stuff.

While this year's event doesn't have the marquee names, any jazz fan worth his or her salt should be excited about this lineup. I mean come on: Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Nancy Wilson, Joshua Redman, Christian McBride, Terence Blanchard, Kurt Elling, Tom Scott, Maceo Parker and Cassandra Wilson? That's a lot of USDA Prime.

Add some exciting young performers — Jamie Cullum, Ledisi, Kyle Eastwood, Matt Wilson, Rudder and Ryan

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Mac About Town

If you go

- **What:** 51st annual Monterey Jazz Festival
- **When:** Gates open at 11:30 a.m. today and 11 a.m. Sunday; shows start at 1 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. today, and 12:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. Sunday
- **Where:** Monterey Fairgrounds, 2004 Fairground Road, Monterey
- **Parking:** Parking with shuttle bus service (\$10) available at Monterey Peninsula College, 980 Fremont St., Monterey
- **Tickets:** No arena seats available. Grounds for today and Sunday, \$50; whole weekend, \$115. Available at the box office, online at montereyjazzfestival.org or by calling 925-275-9255



VERN FISHER/The Herald

George Young, leader of the George Young Quartet, performs on the Garden Stage Friday during the 51st annual Monterey Jazz Festival

Monterey Jazz Festival

Presented by



VERN FISHER/The Herald

Heath Proskin, bass player George Young, sax player, and drummer Billy Jones of the George Young Quartet, perform on the Garden Stage.

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Shaw come to mind — and you've got a lineup that expertly mixes the old with the new.

And I haven't even mentioned this year's Latin jazz contingent, beginning with Orlando "Maraca" Valle's powerhouse ensemble that played late Friday (too late to review, but you can catch them tonight at 8 in Dizzy's Den), the Maria Schneider Orchestra, Rebeca Mauleon & Afro Kuban Fusion, Antonio Sanchez & Migration and the phenomenal Berklee Latin Jazz All-Stars that played earlier Friday night.

And I haven't gotten around to today's lineup, which begins at 1 p.m. with

Grammy-nominated (for Best New Artist) San Francisco Bay Area singer Ledisi in the main arena and includes former James Brown sax sideman Maceo Parker, Allman Brothers guitarist Derek Trucks and his band and young Georgia-born soul singer Ryan Shaw. Ledisi and Parker will play both the arena and Garden stages.

Friday night's festivities were kicked off by the only local band playing the festival, the George Young Quartet. Young and cohorts eased the audience into the festival with a smooth and swinging tribute to the great composer and Duke Ellington collaborator Billy Strayhorn. The early Garden Stage audience was unusually polite, attentive and appreciative of the quartet's efforts.

Usually, musicians on Friday

night — at least early on — have to fight a boisterous, talkative crowd as fans arrive and settle in. Festival veterans are greeting old friends and reacquainting themselves with the sprawling facilities, while newcomers are just having fun and getting their bearings.

Young's quartet, I should mention, included pianist Bob Phillips, bassist Heath Proskin and drummer Billy Jones, all locals.

Friday night's second act, the six-piece Berklee Latin Jazz All-Stars from the Berklee School of Music in Boston, kicked the festival into another gear with an incendiary set of Latin jazz. This ensemble is as talented a group as I've heard here in the past several years, especially flutist Enrique "Kalani" Trinidad, who lit up the

Garden Stage with his incredible force and technique.

As for tonight, I'm looking forward to the special tribute to Cannonball Adderly featuring Nancy Wilson, Tom Scott and Terence Blanchard, a reprise of Maraca's performance, this time in Dizzy's Den and Antonio Sanchez & Migration (also in Dizzy's Den) featuring two phenomenal saxophonists, tenor man David Sanchez and altoist Miguel Zenon, who also play in Maraca's band and have led their own groups at the festival in the past.

So, this festival may not have the "name" appeal of last year, but I sure am going to get my fill.

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