

Jazz musicians' artistry praised

To the Editor:

David Sturm's enthusiastic review of Diane Schuur's appearance at F&M's Friday gave credit to an outstanding performance.

We would like to add some comments about the first half of this exciting concert. For over an hour, Fred Hughes and Alterna-hour, Fred Hughes and Alterna-hour, Fred Hughes and Alterna-hour...

giving us the opportunity to hear them in concert. We in south central Pennsylvania are fortunate to live where we have access to such fine live jazz.

Meredith Rousseau
Robert A. Harris
Lancaster

Regular musician at club has many credits

Pianist and keyboardist Fred Hughes is one of the jazz musicians who appears on a rotating basis at Lounge 21.



Hughes

At 24, Hughes is a strong, accomplished player whose multifaceted style is charged with unharnessed energy. His book is vast and his approach to jazz is marked by the styles of Erroll Garner and Oscar Peterson, both of whom influenced Hughes during his early studies.

A Lancaster resident, Hughes' background was laden with both classical and jazz influences. His father played bass fiddle and tuba and the younger Hughes studied piano and tuba. Private piano lessons were paired with formal tuba ones where he put his talents to work playing with the Baltimore Symphony and the Philadelphia Orchestra. Later piano studies were with Eiman Anderson, who is conductor, arranger and pianist with Liza Minnelli.

Shearing and Art Tatum. He also listened acutely to Bill Evans and Chick Corea. Nowadays, he practices from two to five hours daily to develop his chords. Sometimes found with his trio, "Alternative," which includes J.J. Wiggins on bass and Sam Banks on drums, and other times on solo piano, Hughes also appears at the Edgemont Fire House in Harrisburg and in Lancaster at the Golden Eagle and the Treadway Inn.

His six-year army stint had him playing in the army band and as assistant conductor of the concert band and leader of the stage band, show band and jazz combo. Stationed in Korea for the final four years of that military commitment, he formed a quartet called, "Just Friends," and recorded six albums with them. Those records are only available in the Asian market but on Saturday, Hughes' quartet will release "Alternative from the Stars" on Mark Records.

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clientele connected by the brotherhood of jazz

man, glued by the joy of jazz.

Such a kindred spirit is most evident Hiltmar. And the band that knits the happy feelings together is Alternative. Led by keyboardist Fred Hughes, who is white, the trio also includes two black men — bassist J.J. Wiggins and drummer Sam Banks.

In keeping with its name, the group's composition demonstrates an alternative to separateness.

With Alternative, the age difference of its members also dispels the myth that young and old can't work well together. Banks is almost triple the mid-20s age of Hughes.

Wiggins bridges yet another gap. He's been exploring the European market for the past several months, playing in the pit band of a musical show in Paris. He stands as proof that the music of one continent can comfortably meld with that of another.

And although the expression "cult following" has come to be

aply describes the people who trail Alternative. One can speculate with reasonable accuracy who will visit a club where Hughes' group is playing. The crowd will be half-and-half, black and white. Excitement will be the common denominator.

Hughes has a special knack at generating excitement. His pulsates and throbs to the point that sitting still becomes a chore. Ballads, too, but the problem with slow songs is that the crowd is so revved up by Alternative that it doesn't sit down long enough to listen to them.

That doesn't mean Hughes draws

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From the Start' opens LP
Hughes' first album wins praise for energy

By Harriet Wesley
Sunday Patriot-News

Fred Hughes is a trendsetter. He's also a jazzman of amazing acumen and endless energy. And he lives here. And has just released his first LP.

Titles, "Alternative — From the Start," the Mark Records album (MJS-57617) features Hughes on piano, J.J. Wiggins on bass and Sam Banks on drums. Hughes' avowed purpose as a musician is to continue the jazz heritage by referring to ideas laid down as a foundation for the idiom.

The album selections have the trio adhering to that principle as composers and trio members themselves are presented through creative variation.

OPENING THE LP is "From the Start," a brightly swinging original composition by Hughes. The clever little melodic passagesetter immediately shows Hughes' keyboard prowess as he peppers the piece with subliminal

hints of Erroll Garner, employing a lagging left hand technique. Banks kicks into the beat with the ease of the professional, seasoned drummer that he is. Wiggins solos, fingers a-popping, all the way to the surprise ending.

"One Note Samba" by Antonio Carlos Jobim is a drummer's dream and lets the agile Banks demonstrate his expertise with Latin rhythms while Hughes doubles-time over him. Wiggins' soaring solo on the cut is masterful.

"Autumn Leaves" opens with an arco bass solo that sets the tempo for a medium swing version of the Johnny Mercer melody. Wiggins again receives ample time to shine and Banks stays subtle while sure, avoiding flamboyance to opt for what he calls, "ensemble feel."

"MY ONE AND ONLY LOVE" is soft and lovely and it is here that Hughes calls upon his constantly developing sense of musical maturity. He exercises effective control, operating on the late Count Basie's adage, "the empty spaces count, too."

"Jay's Tune," composed by Wiggins, is rhythm and blues at its best. In the infectious cut, Wiggins assumes the stance of preacher delivering an especially succinct, rhythmic communique. Hughes is the collective class reciting answers while Banks taps out the message on the blackboard.

Hughes introduces "On Green Dolphin Street" with a clever vamp that utilizes notes belonging to associative augmented, diminished and minor chords. In the piece, the pianist frequently emphasizes the "common tone" technique, wherein he strings a variety of standard chord changes around a single note. He also cleverly inserts a quote from the well known Sonny Rollins jazz tune, "St. Thomas."

Composer Thelonius Monk would have loved Alternative's rendition of "Straight, No Chaser," and that statement should serve as a supreme compliment because Monk didn't like very much. At least he didn't say so.



Fred Hughes Creative LP

IN THE ROLLING rendition the trio fricassoes the turntable with its sheer, boiling energy. Hughes' driven piano cadenza en-

compasses a wealth of jazz styles — boogie-woogie, ragtime, swing, gospel, stride and Garner-esque. A "St. Thomas" quote again crops into the piano part as does a funny smack of Scott Joplin's, "The Entertainer." The interlude breaks into a big finish piano solo.

Banks is among that select group of fine jazz drummers who knows how to grasp "the sound" that is unique to each fragment. That sound is the number of jazzmen playing but rather, is a unification of the collective contributions of each. Banks hears "the sound" and drums subtly to stay within its boundaries, carefully avoiding either territorial encroachment or extraneous showboating.

By simple translation, that means that Banks clearly defines the downbeat on the bass drum and the up- or backbeat on the sock cymbal. Sticks or brushes on snares and cymbals are feathery light, acting as simple rather than exclamatory punctuation. Banks

Hughes

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by Hughes and is a straight-ahead, up-tempo swing tune. "Jay's Tune" is a medium blues melody with gospel overtones. A Wiggins composition, it features a bass solo by that musician.

The album also includes "On Green Dolphin Street," "Autumn Leaves" (with arco or bowed bass solo), "One Note Samba," "Miles Davis' "Straight No Chaser" and "My One and Only Love." Miles Hughes also writes. Equipped with a bass keyboard, Hughes also writes.