

## **Blues great Jay McShann serves as Regents' Lecturer with Department of Music**

**May 8, 1986**

Legendary jazz pianist and band leader Jay McShann, a major catalyst in the creation of the Kansas City style of jazz, is scheduled to serve as a Regents' Lecturer at the University of California, San Diego.

His appointment at UCSD is sponsored by the Department of Music.

McShann, regarded by many as "the world's greatest blues pianist," will be on the UCSD campus Tuesday, May 13, through Sunday, May 18. During his visit he will meet with Department of Music faculty and students, conduct lectures/discussions with acclaimed jazz trombonist Jimmy Cheatham, who heads up UCSD's Jazz Program, and attend a showing of the film, "The Last of the Blue Devils," a movie about Kansas City style jazz.

McShann, a contemporary of the late alto saxophonist Charlie "The Bird" Parker and band leader Count Basie, arrived in Kansas City in 1937, and started his own band in 1938. He played in Kansas City and New York City before serving in World War II. After his military stint, McShann returned to Kansas City to form a septet.

McShann is credited as one of the developers of a style of early big band music which revolutionized not only the genre of jazz, but all of American music. The music represented a synthesis of the New Orleans style, blues, boogie-woogie and spawned the earliest seeds of be-bop. McShann's ability as a band leader helped him discover and present the next generation of jazz greats, most notably Charlie "The Bird" Parker and jazz vocalist Al Hibbler, whose record, "Unchained Melody," became world famous during the 1950s.

In 1945, McShann was invited to play at renowned jazz club, Downbeat, in New York City. After a successful run in New York City, he moved to Los Angeles where he fronted small rhythm and blues combos until the end of the decade. Returning to Kansas City in the early 50s, McShann worked at a number of clubs, recorded several albums, and played many dates outside of Kansas City, including Chicago and New York City.

In 1981, director/producer Bruce Ricer released the award winning documentary film, "The Last of the Blue Devils," filmed from 1974-79. The film pays tribute to Kansas City style jazz and its practitioners, with particular focus given to Count Basie, Big Joe Turner and Jay McShann. In the film, alto saxophonist Charles McPherson stood in for the late Charlie Parker. The film is a montage of footage shot at two reunions of surviving Kansas City musicians and footage also of a Basie concert at the University of Kansas at Lawrence.

McShann now represents the last living link with a formative period in the development of Black-American culture. His prolific career serves as an indicator of an extremely significant era which revolved around Negro migration northward and the Tom "Boss" Pendergast mayoral machine which abetted the growth of jazz in Kansas City during the 30s.

The schedule of events during McShann's lectureship is as follows:

Tuesday, May 13, 2:30-3:50 p.m., lecture class (Music 127-B), Music of Black Americans, room B-152, Mandeville Center, with Jimmy Cheatham; 4-6:50 p.m., performance class (Music 131), jazz improvisation, with

the UCSD Jazz Ensemble, with Jimmy Cheatham, room B-152; 7-10 p.m., Jazz Ensemble (Music 95-J), with Jimmy Cheatham, room B-202.

Wednesday, May 14, 7-10 p.m., film, "The Last of the Blue Devils," followed by discussion and demonstrations, room B-210, with Jimmy Cheatham.

Thursday, May 15, noon-12:50 p.m., music department seminar, room B-210; 2:30-3:50 p.m., Music of Black Americans (Music 127-B), room B-152, with Jimmy Cheatham.

Sunday, May 18, 6-10:30 p.m., Jay McShann will appear at Jimmy and Jeannie Cheatham's Kansas City style jam session at the Bahia Resort Hotel, Mercedes Room, no admission charge.

All classes and events are free and open to the public. For more information, contact the Department of Music, 452-3229.

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