

Jesse I. Nolan

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Press

Chicago Tribune

"For this engagement, Moody has convened an alert rhythm section. Pianist Michael Kocour, a former Chicagoan, still commands an exquisitely crystalline touch; bassist Larry Gray knows how to make his instrument sing; and drummer Jesse Nolan brings welcome vigor and variety to his drum work."

-Howard Reich, Chicago Tribune, August 18, 2006

"...an evening that overflowed with deeply musical work. That the set included the characteristically adroit playing of bassist Larry Gray and the consistently imaginative accompaniments of the young drummer Jesse Nolan - a real find - only heightened the appeal of the show."

-Howard Reich, Chicago Tribune, August 19, 2005

PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY

"Jesse Nolan decided to make a large multi-setup arrangement of (Clapping Music), which he would perform on his senior recital at Indiana University. Jesse came up with many voicing and melodic possibilities as well as expanding upon the changing pulse idea. In his version he plays the original parts in every possible limb combination at some point during the 12-minute performance. While I concentrated on the conceptual possibilities and Gould on the physical possibilities, Jesse made his version into a solo "tour de force..."

-Glenn Kotche (Wilco), Percussive Notes 26, October 2005



Indy's **alternative** voice

"Last Saturday, lyricist/singer Lorraine Feather made her Indy debut at the Jazz Kitchen. The daughter of the legendary Leonard Feather was a witty knockout. Equally impressive was her pianist/composer Shelly Berg, with his highly energetic style that is as equally comfortable doing breakneck straight-ahead tempos in the trio's opening set, as playing terrific stride piano style behind Feather's '30s hip style vocalese. From her opening outrageous lyrics based on a Fats Waller tune, she labeled "You're Outta Here" to the romantic poignancy of her words on Duke Ellington's "Creole Love Call," which she renamed "Love Call." Feather took us back in time to the future with her clever and sophisticated lyrics and style. Frank Smith's bass and Jesse Nolan's drums supplied strong sympathetic support."

-Chuck Workman, Nuvo, October 26, 2005

"Last Saturday's much anticipated Tenor Madness at the Jazz Kitchen was a big success. In front of a capacity crowd, tenor saxophonists Rob Dixon, Frank Glover, "Pookie" Johnson and Mark Radaway, backed up with a rhythm section of Steve Jones piano, Joel Kelsey bass and Jesse Nolan drums, kept things cooking. There were varied match-ups and pairings throughout the evening. All four tenors opened and soloed on Tenor Madness but things quickly heated up when Dixon and Glover got into some intense, four bar exchanges. All four tenor men had plenty of room to stretch and develop ideas. The rhythm section of Jones, Kelsey and Nolan were a mountain of support, flowing, pushing and swinging to draw the best from all of the players. The evening's winner was the crowd and the Jazz Kitchen."

-Chuck Workman, Nuvo, January 19, 2005



"Cashdollar's group, The Madcap Four, played originals and pieces like John Coltrane's "Ole" with all-out raw energy, the saxophonist evolving licks into the extreme upper registers and trumpeter Ben Syversen using longer deliberative notes in related-but- different-each-time phrases. The backing from drummer Jesse Nolan and Jesse Wittman on bass not only drove the intensity further forward, but the visual cues the band exchanged made it was clear they were locked into the moment."

-Mark Sabbatini, AllAboutJazz.com, July 17, 2005

FULL ARTICLES BELOW

The Salt Lake Tribune

And the Blue Man's beat goes on with SLC shows

Stage • Speechless characters bring their wonder, and tribal beats, back to Utah.

BY ELLEN FAGG WEIST

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

PUBLISHED: MARCH 28, 2014 12:52PM

UPDATED: MARCH 28, 2014 12:58PM

Jesse Nolan got his first drum set when he was 2, thanks to a music- and theater-loving aunt. At 12, the young drummer saw his first Blue Man Group show in New York City. "My mind was boggled," Nolan recalls. "I thought the Blue Men characters were cool, but I thought: 'Wow. A whole show of drummers.'"

Nolan went on to earn degrees in music education and jazz at Indiana University, and to split time between performing in touring Broadway shows and teaching music in public schools. "My love affair with the Blue Man Group started 20 years ago, and I feel really lucky to be traveling with the show," says Nolan, 32, the musical director and percussionist for the group's touring show, which returns to Kingsbury Hall on the University of Utah campus April 1-6.

While in town, Nolan will lead a workshop for music students at the Salt Lake Arts Academy. "We are ready to groove Blue Man style," says Judson S. Armstrong, the school's music director.

The Blue Man Group, featuring three speechless humanoid bald characters in blue grease paint, began as a small performance art piece in New York City in 1987. Over the years, the show exploded into a multi-media theatrical spectacle, yet still features the trio of speechless characters who drum on unusual instruments made out of PVC pipes.

The show's themes play upon technology and information overload, while the Blue Man characters are naive outsiders who connect with audiences through their innocence and curiosity. "The Blue Man wants to look at you," Nolan says. "One of the ideas of the Blue Man character is he's always exploring, he's learning, he's hungry to test things, to experience the world."

Blue Man has translated performance art into a pop-culture phenomenon: Between six city-based and touring shows, some 60,000 people could attend a Blue Man Group show on any given day.

The show features unique instruments, such as a Drumbone, a sliding PVC pipe that opens and closes to change pitch. The Blue Man's on-stage band features two percussionists and two string players, who play the Chapman stick, a form of electric guitar, and the electronic zither.

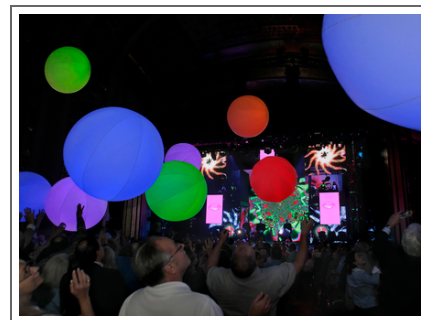
Even the way the score draws upon the drums is different. Instead of rock's timekeeping back beat, Blue Man songs focus on the toms, with the pulsating, churning grooves of a more tribal sound. In many numbers, the drum rhythms of the Blue Man characters and the band become the melody, instead of the rhythm.

That means the musicians are required to play the show drawing upon the improvisational skills of jazz. "Our job as musicians is to play what we see," Nolan says. "We have to be very on the ball, watching all the time."

Brian Tavener, 31, a native of North Carolina, has been playing one of the Blue Man characters for 6 1/2 years, in the Boston show and on the national tour.

"Affectionately and eloquently, we call them "Left," "Center" and "Right" amongst ourselves," he said of the alternating roles. "The goal is to be three as one. If we do our job right, if the three of us are on, we are moving as a pack, and it's almost animalistic. This is definitely a brotherly love job."

With their performances, the actors hope to share that feeling of brotherly love. The show is centered on the idea that Blue Man characters enter the human realm and play around with technology. Along the way, they remind the audience that technology is



Courtesy photo Blue Man Group performing its touring show.

secondary to your connections to the people sitting beside you.

For the actors, one of the challenges is learning how to tell a story using both physical movement and stillness, while energetically playing a specific style of accented 16-note drumming. When the characters interact with audiences, they learn to “throw the ball” to another performer, to spread the energy in the theater, with something as simple as a quick eye movement.

“It’s impossible for a child not to like the show,” Tavener says, “but seeing the 60-year-old-grandmother having a blast is my favorite part.”

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The Blue Man Group plays Kingsbury Hall

The show, featuring the three bald, blue characters who drum PVC pipes to spectacular lighting effects, performs an eight-show run in Salt Lake City.

When • April 1-April 6; Tuesday-Thursday, 7:30 p.m.; Friday, 8 p.m.; Saturday, 2 and 8 p.m.; and Sunday, 1 and 6:30 p.m.

Where • Kingsbury Hall, 1395 E. Presidents Circle, University of Utah campus, Salt Lake City

Tickets • \$32.50-\$64.50, weekdays; \$54.50-\$69.50 weekends; at 801-581-7100 or kingsburyhall.utah.edu.

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Out of the Blue: Blue Man Group surprises Memorial senior's mom by volunteering for workshop at school



1 image

Contributed photo

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By Emily Miels Leader-Telegram staff | Updated 3 days ago

Eau Claire Memorial High School senior Sarah Leppert was excited when her mother bought her tickets to see the Blue Man Group in Minnesota as a graduation present.

[Blue Man Group Show](#) 
universalorlando.com/BlueManGroup
Official Ticket Store - Learn More About Special Offers Available!

She was over the moon when she found out she'd get to go backstage and have the group's band come and do a special performance at Memorial for her and her classmates.

"I was shocked," Sarah said. "I didn't really know what was happening. We really weren't expecting anything."

When Sarah's mom, Sharon Leppert, contacted the Blue Man Group on a whim to do something special for her daughter's upcoming graduation, she expected a note saying congratulations or an autograph at the most.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I expect even an offer of a backstage pass or tour, let alone the event at the school," Sharon said.

Sarah, who's a big fan of the Blue Man Group, has a passion for percussion. She's been drumming since sixth grade and plans to pursue music education at UW-Eau Claire in fall.

"It's going to be a lot of fun, especially with me being a drummer," Sarah said. "It's like, this is an awesome experience. At Memorial, for our indoor marching band concerts, we'll try and mimic what the group does."

The Blue Man Group band plans to stop by Memorial from 10:30 a.m. to noon Friday. Band director Eric Dasher said he was just as shocked as Sarah and her mom.

"Honestly, at first I thought it wasn't going to happen," Dasher said. "I've never heard of something like this before. We've had a lot of great people come through Memorial, but never for free."

The 90-minute event will include the group's resident music director, Jesse Nolan, and the rest of the Blue Man Group band and dive into the music and drumming of the show and explore the connections among music, art, science, comedy, technology and culture that define the group.

"These workshops function as an extension of our show, allowing us to go out into the community and interact directly with our fans, much in the same way we interact with our audiences during each performance," Nolan said via email.

The band does these types of stops for students all over the country, Nolan said.

"Because of my passion for music education — I was a public school music teacher for 10 years — I feel strongly that providing these types of hands-on learning experiences to students all over the country is an essential part of what we do as artists," he said.

Dasher said he hopes to get as many students as possible to experience the event.

"We're actually working with all of the music kids, trying to get them out of class," Dasher said. "We should have 300 or 400 kids there. We're even trying to get kids from North (High School)."

Sarah said the fact that she'll get to experience this with her friends and fellow music students is just icing on the cake.

Miels can be reached at 715-833-9214, 800-236-7077 or emily.miels@ecpc.com.

Blue Man Group

Covered in blue body paint and using no spoken words, the Blue Man Group, founded in 1987, provides a unique theater experience for audiences throughout the world combining improvisation, clowning, props, lights and a variety of dance and rock music.

The critically acclaimed show has been called “visually stunning,” “wildly inventive” and “hysterically funny,” according to the group’s website.



Links

Blue Man Group	
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More than the Blue: Blue Man Group Theatre Workshop at Arts Umbrella

Submitted by Derek on Thu, 03/27/2014 - 16:41

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Mike Brown and Jesse Nolan from Blue Man Group with Arts Umbrella's Pre-Professional Theatre Students

We've had an exciting day at Arts Umbrella!

On top of the normal hustle and bustle of Granville Island, Studio 303 was full of eager Pre-Professional Theatre Troupe students ready for a morning workshop with Mike Brown and Jesse Nolan from [Blue Man Group](#) [3]!

Mike (a Blue Man) and Jesse's (the touring company's Musical Director) kept the young performers engaged throughout the morning with different exercises and student participation. Their 90-minute workshop covered every aspect of a Blue Man Group performance, the Blue Man character development and some of their own personal stories.

The Pre-Professional performers learned all about the Blue Man Group show from beginning to end, including the 12 hour set up for each theatre and how the entire cast works together to continually better the performance. Naturally, the workshop also covered the process of making a Blue Man... well, blue. Let us tell you, it is quite the process for the performers to go through each night!

Students also gained some firsthand experience in the importance of body language and eye contact in non-verbal communication. Students took part in an exercise where they learned how powerfully eye contact can convey emotion on stage. Mike and Jesse discussed how the students, as performers, can also use body language and music to take the audience through the story.

"This is a great opportunity for our Pre-Professional Theatre students to work with professional artists and to see what it's like in the professional world," said Paul Moniz de Sá, Artistic Director for the Theatre and Music program at Arts Umbrella. "This is important for the young artists as these are skills they can use in their own productions".

We are so grateful that Mike and Jesse from Blue Man Group took the time from their busy touring schedules to host this workshop for our students! It was a great opportunity to learn from performers in an internationally-recognized performance company, and hear their experiences.

What did the students take away from this amazing experience? A lot! "I liked learning how the Blue Men communicate with the audience," said one. "It was cool seeing how they actually became blue," added another.

Thank you again to Mike, Jesse and the Blue Man Group for this amazing experience!

Blue Man Group is in Vancouver until Sunday, March 30. If you want to see their performance, please visit: <http://vancouver.broadway.com/shows/blue-man-group-baa-ss/> [4]

If you're interested in more information on the Pre-Professional Theatre Troupes, please visit: <http://www.artsumbrella.com/programs/theatre/pre-professional> [5]

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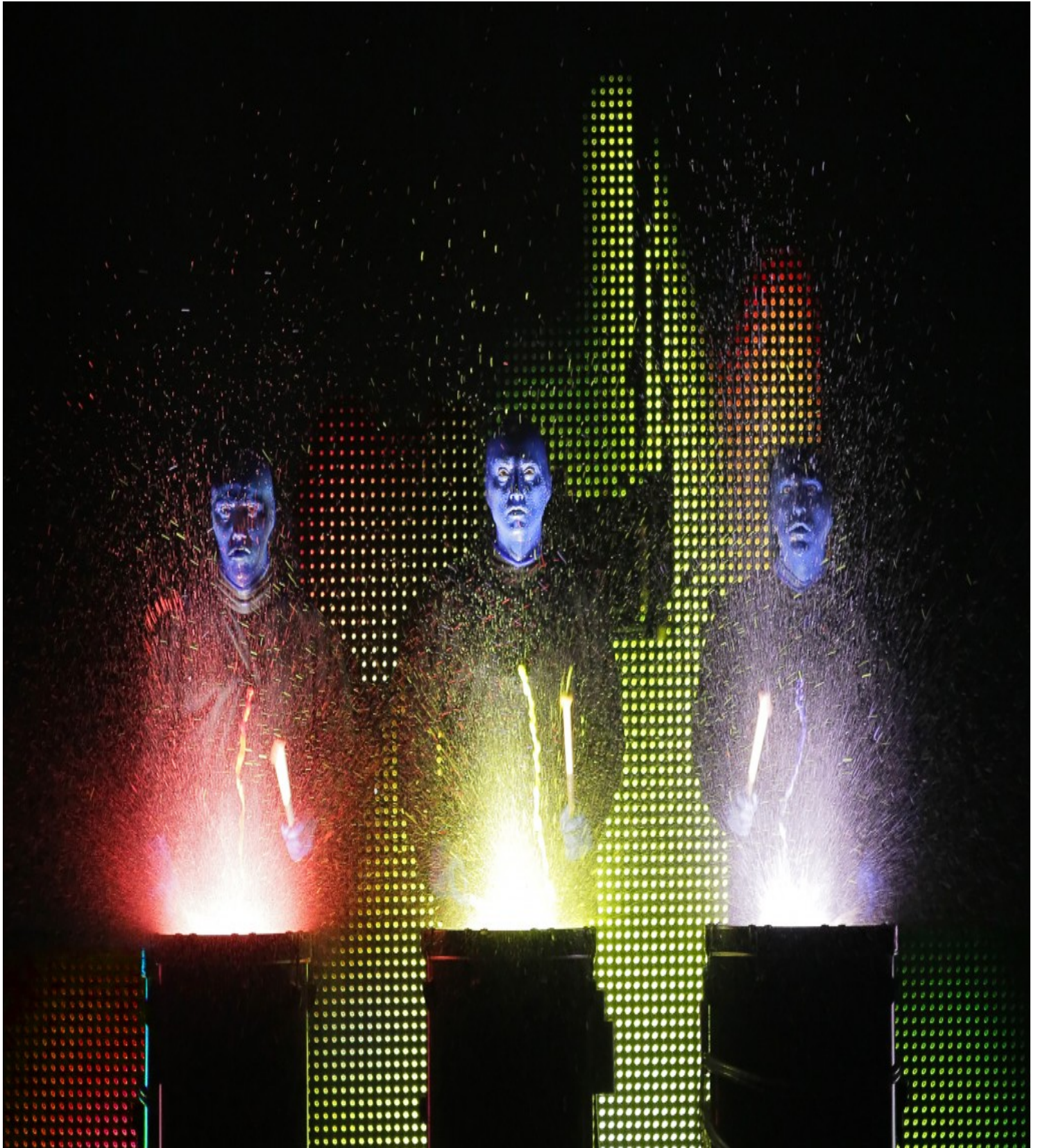
[3] <http://www.bluman.com/>

[4] <http://vancouver.broadway.com/shows/blue-man-group-baa-ss/>

[5] <http://www.artsumbrella.com/programs/theatre/pre-professional>



I'm afraid I just blue myself



Three years of working on the Blue Man Group show has changed Jesse Nolan's perspective on the world.

“It has changed the way that I look at everything,” he said. As the show’s musical director, Nolan said his challenge is to create musical accompaniment that outlines the stories and action on stage. He describes it as “painting with sound.”

Working on the show and thinking like the Blue Man character has helped Nolan expand his own thinking. “I’ve been encouraged to think a little bigger about everything,” he said, “I think more creatively in all aspects of life.”

There is something about the mysterious Blue Man character that people are attracted to. Nolan has been interested in the show since he was 12 and saw it for the first time in New York City.

“There’s a sense of exploration,” he explained. “When you watch the Blue Men move and interact, they’re always exploring. There’s a hunger for learning and knowledge.” Nolan said that children find them especially compelling.

The Blue Men also love to involve the audience in their shows. There are a few signature things that they do in every show, including climbing over the theatre seats up the rows. They literally take the show into the audience, and Nolan said that this creates an interesting atmosphere.

“There’s a sense of wonder coupled with tension.”

Jesse Nolan, Musical Director

“There’s a sense of wonder coupled with tension,” he said, as the audience is always wondering what’s going to happen next. “They have a sense of purpose, and the audience is trying to connect and figure out why,” said Nolan.

This show has a very heavy emphasis on technology and the role it plays in our lives. For example, the Blue Men interact with “Gi-pads,” huge eight foot iPads that allow them to comment on the influence of technology. “The outcome is thought provoking or comedic,” said Nolan, explaining that, compared to previous iterations, there is more video content, lights, LED screens, and even some wearable technology.

The great thing about a Blue Man Group show, said Nolan, is that it’s always fresh and new. Their performance philosophy is one of collaboration and an ever evolving show that is never the same from one night to the next. “We’re using the characters and style to tell a different story,” he said, adding, “we’re doing this thing that can’t repeat itself tomorrow.”

One thing that never changes, however, is the mess they leave behind on the stage. Of course there is splattered paint everywhere as they hit drums covered in it, but the Blue Men also play with food. “It ends up being a mixture of paint, food, and sweat,” laughed Nolan.

The content of each show comes together through collaboration, and the founders (Chris Wink, Phil Stanton, and Matt Goldman) are also still involved from their base in New York along with a team of musical directors and designers.

The essence of a Blue Man is a curious, innocent trickster, and Nolan hopes the show can reach out to adults just as much as it reaches kids. He hopes that adults can also “experience life through the eyes of a Blue Man,” saying, “That’s what we want to leave them with.”

Blue Man Group will be presented by Broadway Across Canada from March 25 to 30 at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre. For more information, visit vancouver.broadway.com.



review
Vancouver

Photo extracted from midiorama.com



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**BLUE
MAN
GROUP**

NETworks Presentations, LLC and Blue Man Productions
An Interview with Jesse Nolan of the Blue Man Group

Interviewer John Jane

Jesse Nolan is the musical director with The Blue Man Group currently on a North American tour and due in Vancouver March 25 for eight performances at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre. I spoke to Jesse by telephone at his hotel in Sacramento, California where the 'group' have been selling out shows at the Sacramento Community Center Theater.

Jesse is excited about bringing the BMG production to Vancouver and believes audiences here should be excited too. "I'm one of four musicians joining the blue men on stage. The show is entirely non-verbal, so we (the musicians) underscore the action" He enthused. "I call it painting with sound" he continued. "The four musicians are visible on stage wearing ultra-violet costumes."

I asked the percussionist what audiences should expect if seeing the show for the first time. "It's always an eclectic performance. It has elements of mime, comedy, music and theatre. There's a clear-cut narrative arc to the show that involves interaction with technology and an explorative concept in high art – a way of looking at things differently."

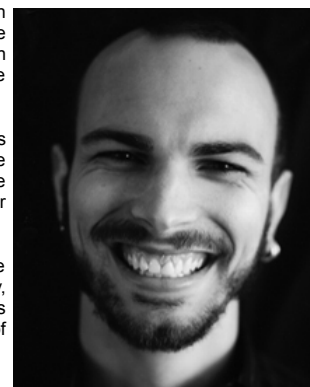
When the busy performer gets a brief break from touring next week, he plans to head back to Palatine, Illinois where he shares a home with Amy, his wife of five years. "Even though it's still winter in Chicago, going back home will be like a vacation. Amy has been a professional performer, so she understands about being on the road."

When the tour ends in San Juan, Puerto Rico in June, the multifaceted musician doesn't expect to have much free time. He will head back home to Palatine, Illinois to continue his work as the Director of Education for MashPlantTM (a digital education system that provides a platform for multimedia sharing in the classroom that combines social media with project creation). Jesse regards the founding of MashPlantTM as one of his prime accomplishments. It's a project he shares with his wife who teaches voice and collaborates on integrating the studio into the curriculum.

Jesse is a consummate musician. I asked if he plays other instruments. "I've been playing drums since I was two-years-old. I've since picked up the guitar, bass and violin, but I'm far less accomplished" he acknowledged.

Outside of his work with BMG, Jesse has played jazz gigs at Chicago's Jazz Showcase, Jazz at Lincoln Center (festival) and Sadler's Wells in London. I asked him if there was a venue he would get a special charge out of playing, "Oh yes, Carnegie Hall."

© 2013 John Jane



Blue Man Group's musical director Jesse Nolan

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By [Thomas Bruch](#)

Print Page

April 09, 2014 9:13PM

Members of the Pulse of Peoria Drumline receive instruction from Blue Man Group

PEORIA — The men of [Blue Man Group](#) were not blue Wednesday afternoon while meeting the members of the Pulse of Peoria Drumline.

Dressed in plainclothes, Brian Tavener took a look at the a group of middle school and high school students who use the drum line to express values of hard work and community service. Tavener, who will be performing Wednesday and Thursday nights in Peoria as one of the Blue Man Group, was amazed when he first heard the drum line perform.

“It’s actually probably the best performance I’ve seen and a great welcome for us,” Tavener said. “It pumps me up so much.”

Tavener, along with Blue Man Group musical director Jesse Nolan and percussion specialist Anthony Riscica, worked with the group for two hours Wednesday afternoon at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church. Known for its spectacular percussion displays at shows, the Blue Man Group members broke down some of the drum line’s separate parts to demonstrate how it could perform as a more cohesive whole. At one point, Nolan had each drum line member say the beat they were playing instead of performing it on their instruments, to the laughs of the group.

Isaiah Smith, a 14-year-old drummer, said he was ecstatic to meet the Blue Man Group after watching videos of the group’s unique concerts.

“When they pull out the tubes, it makes different noises and that’s really awesome,” Smith said. “Ever since I joined the drum line, I’ve been filled with new things I’ve never seen before. This is another one to add to the list.”

Thomas Bruch can be reached at 686-3188 or tbruch@pjstar.com. Follow him on Twitter [@ThomasBruch](#).



PHOTO/ FRED ZWICKY/JOURNAL STAR

Blue Man Group music director Jesse Nolan works with the Pulse of Peoria Drumline during a drum workshop Wednesday at St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

<http://www.pjstar.com/article/20140409/News/140408869>

Print Page



BLUEMANGROUP

Interview with **Jesse Nolan**,
Resident Music Director, Drummer, & Percussionist Blue Man Group
North American Tour January, 2013

by
James Harp
movementSOUTH

The Blue Man Group formed in 1987, and you can really hear the synth and electronic influences of the popular 80's sounds in your work. How would you say your music has changed over the years?

Our music is all-encompassing, with influences derived from nearly every corner of the planet and many historical periods and traditions. From the traditions of tribal drumming to classical musical to modern pop and rock and roll. Blue Man Group combines these influences into a musical style that is uniquely our own. The music in our shows has evolved organically throughout the years, always seeking to enhance the story being told on stage by the Blue Men. As new material is created, Blue Man Group's talented team of music directors and musicians are always searching for new and unique sounds and performance styles that we can call our own. These may include the use of synths and other digital music production. As our shows have evolved, certain musical pieces get retired, and sometimes repurposed into new content. The rhythmic elements inherent in our music, especially the drumming of the Blue Men and band members are very tribal in nature. The drumming is extremely melodic, with most drum grooves having their genesis on the toms, not the cymbals, kick and snare, which is the opposite of most popular music. Indeed, this tribal influence also extends to some of the visual aesthetics in our show such as the face paint and costumes that the band wears. The melodic aspects of our music are performed by the string instruments, electric zither, Chapman Stick, electric guitar and bass, as well as the unique PVC and MIDI instruments invented by our creative team and played by the Blue Men.

Could you give us a little insight to your production technique?

The creative nucleus of Blue Man Group consists of a team of writers, musicians, directors, builders, tinkerers, technicians and performers who are always creating new content, brand new shows, and unique entertainment experiences. Whether inventing and building an original musical instrument, creating or updating content for our shows, or composing new music, our creative team is always at work writing, re-writing, recording, and honing their craft. This team routinely makes visits to all of our shows, overseeing the quality and installation of current and new material. It is then up to the local team of Blue Men, musicians, and technicians to refine this material in a way that fits the venue and local culture. We routinely customize our shows to fit the vibe of a particular city, so even if you've seen Blue Man Group in New York, you will have a completely different experience in Orlando or Las Vegas!

Do you have favorite software and hardware you use, and why do you like it?

Our shows are awash with software, hardware and various other technologies that make our shows the visual and auditory spectacles that they are. While I

cannot speak to the many specifics of our technical production, I know that we use QLab to control video and audio content playback. Additionally, we use MIDI controllers and triggers in some of our instruments. As a Resident Music Director, I routinely use products like GoPro cameras and Final Cut Pro to capture and edit performance video and training materials and Logic/Pro Tools to record and manipulate audio.

You worked with Jimmy Cook from 1996 – 1999. He designed and built experimental instruments with you during that time. Do you still draw inspiration from that work, and who do you work with now, if anybody?

While I cannot speak to the work Jimmy Cook did with the company during those years, we do employ a team of builders and designers that invent, create and refine new instruments, technology and performance styles unique to Blue Man Group. These include the instruments our band members use such as the electric Zither (invented by Brian Dewan) and the many PVC and MIDI instruments played by the Blue Men. All of the band instruments are also customized and altered to provide sounds that are uniquely our own. Additionally, the company has invented props and other pieces of technology, such as our GiPads, used in many of our shows, and most recently debuted new instruments and technology as part of our new Las Vegas show at the Monte Carlo and our 2-night stint at the Hollywood Bowl in September 2013. Because of the nature of our show and the character of the Blue Men, nearly everything is custom-designed for our shows by this team which includes, among others, a talented creative director/designer, tinkerer, inventor and drummer named Bill Schwartz.

Have you created any new instruments for this tour, and, if so, could you describe the creative process for inventing these instruments?

While we haven't created any new instruments for this tour, we have updated all of our band instruments, PVCs, MIDI instruments and other technology to provide a high quality of aesthetic production and entertainment value, as well as making sure these instruments are road-ready and can endure the rigors of a touring production. We have also introduced some new pieces of music/content into the touring production that has been previously unseen outside of our stationary shows.

The Blue Man Group has been a big influence on many experimental performance artists. Who inspires you musically? Visually? Who do you think is pushing the boundaries of performance art today?

Popular culture, music, art, and technology have long been a source of influence for our shows. Additionally, the traditions of miming, Vaudeville, improvisation, and cultural mythology also play a part

in the development of the Blue Man character and help to create a communal experience for both audience and performer. Many artistic references pop up in shows and some are more apparent than others. These references typically serve as a catalyst for both honest expression and, many times, satirical spoofs. Some visual influences include the painting style of Jackson Pollock or Yves Klein, or specific works of art like Jasper John's "Target." Literature also serves as a source of inspiration, with nods (mostly satirical) to great works of the 20th century. These references, however, typically pop up in a unique and unusual ways, often resulting in a through-provoking or comical moment in our show that serves to emphasize the interaction between the Blue Men and/or the audience. We have even used pieces of popular music in our shows, such as The KLF's "Last Train to Transcentral," which was featured in the memorable "paper" finale of our show for many years.

There are Blue Man Group shows, tours, theaters running year long all over the world. How many Groups are there at one time? How do you recruit new Blue Men, and is there a camp or secret underground bunker for training?

There is only one Blue Man Group, and we function as a collective of performers, musicians, directors, technical designers, inventors, and stage technicians to create all of the shows that operate under our brand. The recruitment of new Blue Men and band members occurs through open casting calls around the world. More information regarding auditioning can be found at www.blueman.com. The company is always searching for new Blue Men. The process for becoming a performer (Blue Man or band member) consists of multiple auditions followed by a very detailed and intense training process. Open calls for performers are held at our facilities all over the US (New York, Boston, Chicago, Orlando, & Las Vegas), and sometimes internationally. After a successful audition, which usually consists of 2-3 rounds, a potential Blue Man will be invited to train in New York at our training facility. Here, a "class" of Blue Men hopefuls go through a daily, rigorous training process that typically takes 6 weeks. Blue Man Group's training style is very unique in that no written music exists, and performance directions, musical instruction, and character training is done in a "tribal" manner, being passed down by rote and word of mouth from veteran performers to new trainees. At any point during the training process a person can be cut, and each group of trainees usually results in maybe 1 or 2 new Blue Men/band members. Once a performer has graduated from training, they are sent to be a Blue Man in one of casts. Training for band members is similar to that of Blue Men, except band member training typically occurs in the city where the trainee will be performing, under the guidance of that city's Resident Music Director or instrument-specific trainer.

With your ever-evolving shows, how is it decided which Group does which project, touring, shows at theme parks like Universal, etc.?

Blue Man Group is a single collective, and although we operate multiple shows, projects and tours all over the globe, we are truly one family. Each show has a local or touring cast and performers are regularly moved within the company to fill the needs of any particular show. For example, I started out as a part-time drummer in the Chicago cast in 2011. After 18 months of performing at the Briar Street Theatre, I accepted a 4-month position as the Resident Music Director (RMD) and drummer of our show aboard the Norwegian Epic. Following my time with the Norwegian Cruise Line show, I am now excited to be serving as the RMD, drummer and percussionist with the North American Tour. I look forward to my continuing involvement with the company, wherever they send me next!

What are some of the biggest production and personal challenges when touring?

From a production standpoint, moving venues at a rate of 1-3 per week is perhaps one of our largest challenges for a show of this size. Unlike our stationary shows (New York, Boston, Chicago, Orlando, Las Vegas, Berlin, Norwegian Cruise Lines) which have the luxury of moving into a permanent space, the touring show must maintain flexibility in order to adapt to different size venues, stages, etc.. Thankfully, the show is designed in such a way to make this possible. Both the technical aspects of the production and the actual performance and content of the show are adaptable, depending on the capabilities and size of a particular venue. From a performance and content standpoint, the Blue Men and band members routinely make changes to the show to accommodate a particular venue. These include the addition or removal of music or show content, blocking changes, cue changes, etc.. From a technical standpoint, props, scenery, stage spikes, and other items all have a necessary flexibility. Our cast and crew of immensely talented individuals function as a collaborative group, solving problems together in a way that always has the aesthetic quality of our productions in mind. From a personal standpoint, their is certainly an element of fatigue that comes with the touring lifestyle, but at the same time touring with a company like Blue Man Group is an incredibly rewarding and fun experience that has given me the opportunity to see the world and share the transcendent nature of our show with tens of thousands of people. Working beside some of the most gracious and talented musicians, technicians, and performers has also been a highlight of my touring experience.

Lastly, we obviously know what your favorite color would be. What's your second favorite color?

Still blue!

See **BLUE MAN GROUP**
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MOVEMENT
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BEYOND TWO SOULS

I am a liar, ladies and gentlemen. I told you all last month that I would be reviewing an older game that I should have finished a year or more ago, but that is not what I will be writing about now. When I made that plan, I was in the midst of finally playing *Witcher 2* and was thinking about starting a new playthrough in *Fable 3*, since I never got to finish my original playthrough due to updating my Xbox and losing a lot of my old data. Anyway, irrelevant. What I ended up playing was the most recent Quantic Dream (*Indigo Prophecy*, *Heavy Rain*) "interactive experience," *Beyond Two Souls*.

David Cage's third Sony title through Quantic Dream came out in early October 2013 and stars Ellen Page (*Juno*, *Inception*, *X-Men*) and Willem Dafoe (*Platoon*, *Boondock Saints*, *Spider-Man*) in an engaging, if sometimes meandering, story of supernatural entities, tragic loss, covert operations, government shenanigans, and a gifted young lady getting all grown up. (You know, I was trying to drop the last "g" off of "getting" to make it clearer that I was intentionally pissing about with the fabric of language, but my word processor was reluctant to allow it. What are you going to do?)

Beyond Two Souls is the next step in Cage's endeavor to, for lack of a less pretentious term, transcend video games by instead making what essentially amount to interactive films. This is his third attempt, and the first one I have played all the way to the end. The first, *Indigo Prophecy* for the PlayStation 2, was fascinating, but ultimately flawed – or perhaps just ahead of its time. It shows a lot of promise, some of which was brought to fruition in their next endeavor, this time for the PlayStation 3, *Heavy Rain*. This one only remains unfinished by me because I was without a system to play it on for a while and once I got one again, I jumped right into *Beyond Two Souls*. *Heavy Rain* was notable for several reasons, but what struck me most about it was how fluid everything felt – except, sometimes, oddly, the walking – which stemmed from a level of bizarre detail that I have not seen in many other titles. Some of the most intense, white knuckle gaming experiences I have ever had have come from that game, and now *Beyond Two Souls* as well.

Which I guess should bring us around to the title I am actually reviewing. Here are the broad strokes: Ellen Page stars as Jodie Holmes, a girl with a terrible burden. Or a wonderful gift. No, yeah, mostly a burden, but one that is also her greatest strength and closest companion, Aiden. Aiden gives Jodie the ability to manipulate her surroundings via an array of psychic powers, mostly telekinesis and possession. Actually, when considering the other things they can do together, they basically all come down to telekinesis and telepathy/possession. Here is where things get interesting.

As Aiden, you get to fulfill your lifelong dream of playing a disembodied ghost simulation! Which might only sound intriguing in theory, but ends up being, for the most part, a lot of fun in practice. Sometimes it is just a novel way to check out your surroundings, stretching the ethereal tether between Aiden and Jodie, but often playing as Aiden is the only way to get Jodie out of a bind, be it with puzzle solving, defense, healing, or – well, let's let you play it, yeah? Controlling your floaty partner is akin to controlling a very graceful fish underwater, but it is with the abilities he grants you that the controls really shine. Initially the control scheme for Aiden as he runs amuck seems a little confusing, but the first time you pull back on your analog sticks to sling shot a stack of fold-

ers or a table across the room, or just flip a light switch on and off, you start getting a feel for just how much care was taken in keeping the controls from feeling obtusive unless the story calls for it. It is all very intuitive and, as silly as it seems for this to be a selling point, entirely in service to the story. Novel idea, huh? Gameplay made around telling a story, rather than a story awkwardly crammed into whatever kind of game happens to be selling well that quarter.

Unfortunately, the story is something of a mixed bag. Not because it is bad or anything, don't mistake me, I liked it quite a bit, but with such a well crafted gaming / interactive experience, I would have hoped for a story that held itself together just a little better. That being said, it is not an incredibly common occurrence for me that I want to finish a game because I just cannot wait to see where things lead, but I cannot help but to think that some of the missions and story segments in this game could have been either pared down or part of a downloadable content bundle. Mostly the former, as I don't feel any one part was unnecessary, some just dragged on a bit long for my liking without anything really happening, even in a general world building sense. Really, this is not a gripe against *Beyond Two Souls* specifically, but gaming as a whole. It is rare to see a story just be a story in video games at this point of time, although there have been several steps in that direction, this being one of them. The narrative and its performance by a hugely talented cast were truly top notch. When faced with one of the last big decisions of the story, I just about had a breakdown. No, really, my roommate claimed he felt like he was a grief counselor for someone who had just suffered a tragic loss. It's a multifaceted story very well told, and that is just in one playthrough. The options it gives you make it clear that there are probably about a half a dozen or more ways it could play out and I am anxious to experience all of the possibilities.

I always feel as though I have said way too much and nowhere near enough when I write about games, so I'll do as I always do and boil it down for you. *Beyond Two Souls* is an entirely unique animal and one of my favorite gaming experiences of 2013. It was apparently not all that well received and I think that is just shame. I had a handful of troubles with the controls but found them to be, in the majority, beautiful and intuitive and always indicative of the mood the game was trying to get across. The story was sometimes long winded in weird places, but never to the point where I stopped caring. There are a few key points where you can make one of sometimes four different decisions to sway the outcome and the story I wrote with this game was, a few small bumps aside, more than satisfying enough that I want to see how many variations of this story I can tell myself and my television. If you like something a little outside of the norm, something that tells a good story, something that makes you feel uncomfortable, something that pulls you to its bosom and tells you it will be alright, something that lets you be a crazy flying ghost and the girl turned CIA agent attached to it, something that gives you quiet intimate moments and explosive cinematic moments, something different, something fun, something beautiful and imperfect and entirely worth your time... maybe consider checking out *Beyond Two Souls*. Not only is it something new and exciting, it's something new and exciting and very well done. Let's reward innovation, yeah?

-daveSMASH / MOVEMENTnorth

by
daveSMASH
MOVEMENTnorth



The famous Blue Man Group visits Sac State to speak with students

Posted: Friday, March 14, 2014 8:39 pm

Without the iconic blue face makeup, members of the Blue Man Group spoke to Sacramento State students about their experiences of stage performance Friday afternoon.

Blue Man Group members Mike Brown, Ben Forster, Brian Tavener and Jesse Nolan explained the auditioning process, the performance and creativity aspect behind the nationally known group.

“When you see the performance the audience is attracted to the character,” Nolan said. “The concept of the material of the show is centered around the character of each Blue Man [and] how that character learns and interacts with the world within the performance.”

According to Brown, the Blue Man Group began to gain attention in 1991, beginning in New York and expanding studios in Boston, Orlando and Las Vegas.

Nolan, who is the drumming director for Blue Man Group, said the shows consist of many aspects of art such as music, acting and dancing.

“It has allowed me to combine everything in my life that I am passionate about,” Nolan said. “It’s put into one thing and it takes over as we’re on stage.”

There are 60 members in the Blue Man Group who are taught a variety of skits by a creative team in New York City. The members are then divided into groups to rehearse and perform across the nation and globe.

Humanities major Ignacio Lopez said he was intrigued by the lecture.

“It was insightful to learn how they approach each of their Blue Man characters [and] understanding how their character takes over while performing on stage.” Lopez said.

Forster said there is always new content to keep the performances fresh.

“We are own ambassadors, as we have a say how it goes even if a moment is a particular scripted part,” Forster said.

Theater major Dechelle Conway found many of the groups’ words to be helpful for her future endeavors.

“As a theatre major, we stress the importance of auditions,” Conway said. “Seeing their mindset and saying, ‘Just go for it, just be yourself,’ was helpful to gain some insight in what to expect when it comes to auditioning.”

Brown pointed out times in their performances when it was all about creativity.

“When those moments do happen, there is this creation of emotion,” Brown said. “It’s almost what words cannot describe but it is love, interest and curiosity. It is purely the magic that we create and that we all experience during the show.”

East Scarlets Turn “Blue” for Master Class in Music

Sunday, February 23rd, 2014, dmschools.org



Musicians from Blue Man Group presented a special class for band, orchestra, vocal and drama students at East High School.

Blue Man Group is conspicuous by design but you'd figure particularly so in a Scarlet crowd, right?

Actually, no - Friday afternoon a pair of music educators who also happen to be percussionists in the acclaimed show's band brought the Blues to an eager roomful of students at East High School for a workshop that was red hot.

Jesse Nolan is BMG's Music Director and he brought along a teammate, Anthony Riscica, to demonstrate that those who teach also do, and how!

“Life on tour gets boring,” said Nolan. “Working with students is the sort of stuff that Anthony and I love to do. We look for these opportunities in the cities we visit.”

So when the show stopped in Des Moines for eight performances this week Des Moines Performing Arts Education Manager Karoline Myers contacted the fine arts staff at East to see if there was interest in a peek behind the scenes of a mesmerizing production Nolan and Riscica described as “painting with sound.”

Was there ever! East Band Director Joe Thering, Orchestra Director Jennifer Luft, Vocal Music Director Traci Squires and Drama Director Jamaal Allan packed the band room with their protégés for a full block of role-playing, Q&A, and videos of actual BMG performances that served as prompts for live exercises.

“What happens when something goes wrong in the middle of a show?” one student wondered. “Do you guys just roll with it or what?”

“We have contingency rehearsals,” Nolan answered. “We practice ways to fill in the blanks if something unplanned happens so the audience, hopefully, won’t know the difference.”

Sort of like a football team works on a two-minute drill just in case it finds itself behind because things haven’t exactly gone according to game plan.

Riscica explained that during a show the band doesn’t have a conductor to watch. With BMG the (mute) Blues are the conductors. “We have to watch their every move because our music gives voice to their body language.”

So why is it Blue MAN Group, not Blue Men? Because the three together represent a composite being. By playing off of one another they express the range of emotions and sensations that constitute being alive. One show clip called “Drumbone” featured the use of PVC pipe like a slide trombone played with drumsticks. It was reminiscent of inner-city drum lines that use five-gallon pickle buckets to earn donations from passersby on the street or toddlers making drum sets from kettles and spoons - elevated to a polished art form.

The workshop ended when the last bell sounded. Students left for the weekend. Nolan and Riscica headed for the Civic Center, upbeat. Five more shows, then back on the road. Blue is what they do, but not how they feel.

JAZZ REVIEW

Bebop concedes nothing to age in Moody's ageless hands

By Howard Reich
Tribune arts critic
Published August 18, 2006

There aren't many bebop-era originals still working, but among them, James Moody stands out.

As tenor saxophonist, flutist and comic vocalist, he makes few concessions to the passing years. If anything, he sounds bigger, brawnier and -- when so inclined -- funnier than ever.

Granted, the bebop idiom that he summed up so succinctly Tuesday night at the Jazz Showcase no longer packs the revolutionary spirit it conveyed in the 1940s, when Moody and his brethren were inventing it. The world of jazz long ago embraced bebop as its predominant language -- the frame of reference against which all other styles are measured.

Yet Moody plays this music so fluently, and with such joy, that it sounds almost fresh.

Certainly Moody came to Chicago eager to play, testing himself from the outset. Though it would have been easy enough for him to throw off routine ideas in the opening tune, the standard "There Is No Greater Love," he crafted ingenious, intricately articulated phrases from the start. To hear his skittering lines bathed in a broad, bluesy tone was to be reminded of how much heart the old beboppers brought to this music (a point often forgotten by a younger generation of facile but sometimes mechanical players).

Underscoring the seriousness of his approach, Moody next took on one of the great anthems of his youth, Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight." Here, too, Moody avoided cliches and glib turns of phrase, embellishing his lines with unexpected counter-themes and fleeting, rhetorical asides.

Every Moody performance comes with some comic relief, and this time it arrived in the form of a novelty tune, "Benny's From Heaven" (a loopy spoof of "Pennies from Heaven"). This listener -- and probably almost everyone else in the club -- has heard Moody's manic rendition of the piece repeatedly during the last decades. Yet the wickedly satirical lyrics, plus Moody's comic delivery of them -- complete with shattering falsetto notes and rubber-faced grimaces -- inevitably inspired considerable laughter.

The other high point of the show came when Moody picked up his flute to play one of the dustiest bebop war horses of them all, "Cherokee." The sensuousness of his playing in a balladlike introduction was an unexpected pleasure in a tune that usually is taken at quite a clip.

For this engagement, Moody has convened an alert rhythm section. Pianist Michael Kocour, a former Chicagoan, still commands an exquisitely crystalline touch; bassist Larry Gray knows how to make his instrument sing; and drummer Jesse Nolan brings welcome vigor and variety to his drum work.

Long live bebop.

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The James Moody Quartet plays through Sunday at the Jazz Showcase; 59 W. Grand Ave.; \$20-\$25; 312-670-2473.

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MUSIC: JAZZ REVIEW

Holding his own as a jazz legend

James Moody has an air of joy

By Howard Reich
Tribune arts critic

August 19, 2005

At this late date, the number of certifiable jazz legends before the public has become alarmingly small, but at least one of them still is playing hard.

Though he turned 80 in March, James Moody doesn't look or sound it. Maybe there's something about jazz--its youthful energy or its voracious hunger for fresh ideas--that keeps one of its best practitioners current. Or maybe it's just that Moody, who played in Dizzy Gillespie's big bebop band in the late 1940s and has hasn't stopped swinging ever since, long has personified everything that is buoyantly life-affirming about the music.

Whatever the reason, the set that Moody and his quartet played Tuesday night at the Jazz Showcase had an air of joy and celebration about it, whether Moody was blowing fire on tenor saxophone, sculpting complex figurations on flute or singing whimsically in one of the many comic songs that are integral to his repertoire.

Anyone who wondered whether Moody still can make his way around his horn should have checked out his opening volley--a big, bluesy, barreling version of John Coltrane's "Mr. PC." Hitting the primary notes aggressively from the outset and picking up the tempo and intensity from there, Moody reaffirmed his position as one of the mightiest bebop tenorists still playing. Moreover, the way he re-engineered the main theme--fracturing its rhythms, inverting its phrases and otherwise rearranging a well-worn jazz anthem--attested to the high level of his craft.

Here was classic bebop style, though slightly retooled for a modern era, the frenetic style of the old school tempered by moments of silence and sleekly conceived counter melodies.

The sheer creativity, tonal plushness and ingenious phraseology of this performance inspired pianist

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Michael Kocour--a former Chicagoan who has been collaborating with Moody for years--into crafting possibly the most hard-driving solo this listener has heard from him. Though Kocour, who now teaches at Arizona State University in Tempe, tends to be a comparatively relaxed soloist, the heated nature and harmonically complex vocabulary of his playing represented a new high point for him.

Moody happens to play flute as persuasively as he does tenor, but even longtime fans might have been surprised by the enormous size and slow pace of his vibrato in the ballad-like introduction to another bebop-era warhorse, "Cherokee."

If there was a slight misstep in this set, it came in the old standard "Secret Love," in which Moody often interrupted the glorious tune with surprisingly trivial snippets, such as a quote from Ferde Grofe's "Grand Canyon Suite" (of all things).

Yet that's a small quibble in an evening that overflowed with deeply musical, melodically astute solo work. That the set also included the characteristically adroit playing of bassist Larry Gray and the consistently imaginative accompaniments of the young drummer Jesse Nolan--a real find--only heightened the appeal of this show.

James Moody Quartet

When: Through Sunday

Where: Jazz Showcase, 59 W. Grand Ave.

Price: \$20-\$25; 312-670-2473

hreich@tribune.com

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