

# Hot jazz doc, bassist from 'Ray' to play JiA Sept. & Oct. Parties

By Joel Robin Goldenthal

## Dr. Chris Stewart plays "fresh" Cannonball tribute Sept. 18

You'd probably be as likely to know him as "Doc Stewart" in the emergency room of the Mayo Clinic Hospital as you would a saxophonist. You'll have a chance to hear this remarkable musician at the monthly Jazz in AZ party at Johnny's Uptown on Sunday, Sept. 18 from 2 to 5 p.m.



Chris "Doc" Stewart

Stewart was born in Chicago in 1960, and raised on a farm in Rockford. "I was the sixth of nine children and everybody in the family played something. I picked up the alto when I was 10," he said. "When I was in eighth grade, our family moved to Anaheim, CA, just three doors down from my future wife. While in high school, I scored some jazz and classical awards on flute and sax at high school competitions. I then won a talent contest at Disneyland, which gave me the opportunity to be part of the then vibrant music scene at the Magic Kingdom."

After high school, Stewart played gigs whenever he could, and in many of the local rehearsal big bands. "I got to play with Louis Bellson, Bill Watrous and Matt Catingub, to name a few. I even got a steady gig with the Toshiko Akiyoshi-Lew Tabakin Big Band!"

After an interest sparked in clarinet, he transcribed all of Eddie Daniels' clarinet solos from his "To Bird with Love" LP. He then started a huge transcription project of Cannonball Adderley solos, but said he burned himself out on practicing and transcribing.

So, at the age of 23, and already married for three years, Chris hit the proverbial fork in the road and chose the stability of a career in medicine. Fast-forward 20 years: Stewart's interest in Cannonball was rekindled by the accessibility of information on the legendary Cannonball via the Internet, plus Stewart had collected every recording Cannonball ever made! Stewart committed himself to creating a 21-volume transcription library of Cannonball solos a project that is ongoing. Best of all for us, Stewart's interest in playing was reignited!

The September party will mark the official release of Stewart's new CD, "Phoenix," which is, not surprisingly, a tribute to Cannonball. "I wanted to produce a fresh sound that didn't simply duplicate the Cannonball Adderley Quintet, so tenor sax was used instead of trumpet.

"I chose all Phoenix musicians for the recording: Dan Delaney, a pianist originally from Boston who has much of the spirit of Joe Zawinul; 21-year-old bassist Chris Finet who just lays it down without being overbearing, much like Sam Jones was for the Cannonball Adderley Quintet and Sextet; drummer Dom Moio whose musical reputation is unsurpassed; and the tenor player who gives this session the feel of the Cannonball-Coltrane session is Lucas Pino. At 18, he already has been recognized by Down Beat Magazine, and is off to a flying start with a full scholarship to the Brubeck Institute in northern California. His raw, innate understanding of music and improvisation is clearly an epic gift."

The musicianship of the players and the integrity of the music are bound to turn a few heads and provide an outstanding afternoon of

live jazz. And, you'll be able to take it home on a CD!

## Edwin Livingston headlines Oct. 16th party

Headlining the Jazz in AZ party from 2 to 5 p.m. Oct. 16 at Johnny's Uptown will be jazz virtuoso bassist Edwin Livingston, with Mike Kocour on piano, Tony Vacca on sax and flute, Cleve Huff on drums and special guest 17-year-old alto sax whiz Alex Han.

Although only in his mid-'20s, Livingston has extensive performance and recording credits with such musicians as Ellis Marsalis, Delfeayo Marsalis, Jason Marsalis, Joanne Brackeen, David "Fathead" Newman, Donald Harrison Jr., Bill Summers, Mulgrew Miller, Elvin Jones and Billy Childs.

Livingston appeared in the movie, "Ray," which portrayed the life Ray Charles, seen playing the double bass in 14 scenes during the second half of the movie. Livingston has played in the Valley on several occasions with trumpeter Irvin Mayfield, with whom he has performed and recorded extensively.

Mike Kocour, pianist and director of jazz studies at ASU, played a tribute to Ray Charles at the first annual Phoenix Jazz and Blues Festival, held last May. This common thread gave rise to the personnel for this party, which promises to be an exciting musical experience. In addition to his responsibilities at ASU, Kocour is a highly respected working musician, who has performed in Chicago and elsewhere with James Moody and other jazz luminaries.

Local favorite tenorman Tony Vacca has played with Livingston during appearances at the Chandler Jazz Festival. Alex Han is a rising star jazz artist, who has already performed at a dozen major jazz festivals and is touring this summer with the Monterey Jazz Festival Youth Orchestra. Kocour said recently, "You can always count on the performance level being kicked up a notch when you have the stimulation of young players."

Cleve Huff, one of the valley's finest drummers, will complete the rhythm section and ensure that this afternoon of jazz swings. Huff's career spans from playing with Joe Lovano's father in Cleveland where then-teenager Joe sat in regularly, to playing behind numerous jazz artists and show-biz icons, including Bob Hope. Cleve is one of the rare players who can go from an intense reading show-gig to a free-flowing jazz gig.

Johnny's Uptown is located in Uptown Plaza at Central Avenue and Camelback Road, Phoenix. Admission is FREE to Jazz in AZ Lifetime and Gold members, \$5 for Silver members and \$10 for non-members (waived if they join Jazz in AZ at the party.)

*Editor's tip: If you'd like to hear this extraordinary group, but can't make the Sunday party, or you'd like to get a "double-dose," you can also hear them on Saturday night, Oct. 15, at 98 South Wine Bar & Kitchen in Chandler (see 98 South's ad in this issue.)*



Edwin Livingston