

Jazz Inside Out

By PAUL DE BARROS

McCoy Tyner puts the power of thunder and light in piano

McCoy Tyner's piano playing is a drama between density and light.

He takes tunes to climax almost immediately, and holds them there, using his powerful hands to create a dark, throbbing world, with almost-constant tremolo or filigreed runs.

Yet, once inside that world, Tyner always opens little windows to let in some sunlight. Suddenly, he'll release the tension by playing a pretty treble figure, or by coming to a rhythmic cadence with his rhythm section. It's in that interplay, and its unpredictability, that his music really lives.

Tyner's trio, with **Avery Sharpe** (bass) and **Aaron Scott** (drums), returned to Jazz Alley for its annual appearance Tuesday and plays there through Sunday.

Scott's solos were strong, but even more impressive was the active, multi-directional style he has developed to complement Tyner's drum-like piano. Sharpe, always technically impressive, has evolved to a richer sound on stand-up bass and a looser approach.

As is his custom, Tyner took one solo spot, playing a crystalline, tender ballad, carefully avoiding harmonic clichés and making some subtle references to earlier piano styles. The trio closed with a funky crowd-pleaser, an up-tempo, minor blues number, complete with thumb-popping bass solo.

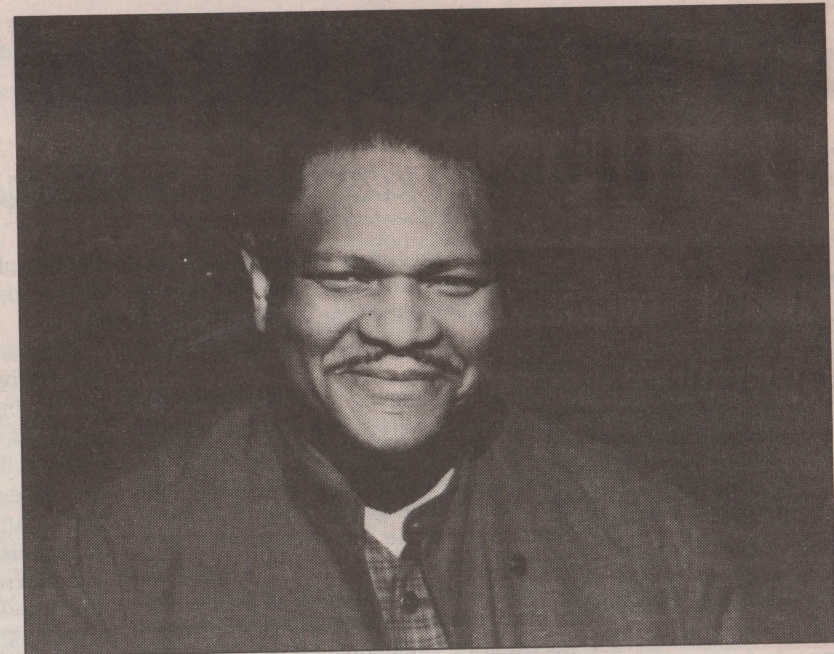
Tyner's thunderous style, which eschews melody and swing in favor of percussive intensity and thick harmonies, is not for everyone. Sometimes, he seems to be in a

rut, using the same, high-test dynamics for every tune.

But then he fools you and plays one of those patented, pentatonic runs that leave you breathless. The silence in the room when he quits is deafening.

- The 1997 Earshot Golden Ear Awards for local excellence were handed out Tuesday at a warm and well-attended community event at Jazz Alley. The winners: "Don Still Loves Midge," **Don Lanphere** (recording); **New Stories** (acoustic group); **Zony Mash** (electric group); **Mike Bisio/Joe McPhee, Seattle Repertory Jazz Orchestra's Tribute to Quincy Jones** (concert, a tie); **Jay Thomas** (instrumentalist); **Davis/Taylor Project** (emerging group); **Edmonia Jarrett** (vocalist); **Bill Ramsay, Lola Pedrini** (Hall of Fame, a tie); **Gary Bannister and yours truly** (Special Awards), for co-founding Earshot Jazz in 1986. Thanks!

- **Rich Cole**, an excellent saxophonist who hasn't gotten the attention he deserves, has staged a double-disc release party with bassist **Paul Gabrielson** at the Old Town Ale House in Ballard, tonight at 8:30. Cole, who also plays locally with Phil Snyder, Chuck Bergeron and an ensemble called Extensions, produced "A Glance Back" several years ago, with **Dave Peterson** (guitar), **John Hansen** (piano), **Jeff Johnson** (bass) and **John Bishop** (drums). Cole has a fusion background, but in the intense, modern vein of, say, Bob Berg with John Scofield. His



McCoy Tyner's trio brings its percussive intensity to Jazz Alley, nightly through Sunday.

thorough, Coltrane-ish command of the horn is supported nicely by the aggressive Bishop. Gabrielson's disc, "This is New," is an energetic piano trio album featuring Bishop on drums, with New York pianist Jon Davis. Cole and Gabrielson perform tonight with Bishop and Hansen.

- Every time you blink, another jazz musician moves to Seattle. One of the best new arrivals is saxophonist **Chris Fagan**. A student of Bobby Bradford at California's Pomona College, where Arthur Blythe and David Murray came up, Fagan worked in New York from 1986 to 1992, with Jack McDuff and Dave Douglas, among others. His first album, "Lost Bohemia," featured Bradford, Andrew Cyrille and Reggie Workman.

This new one, "Signs of Life," with Seattle-based musicians **John Hansen** (piano), **Chuck Bergeron** (bass) and **Brian Kirk** (drums), showcases Fagan's juicy, piquant

tone on alto, a brisk, non-clichéd sense of phrasing and a dynamite feel for swing. Fagan's quartet plays at Tula's, Saturday at 9 p.m.

- Renowned bassist **Rufus Reid**, who lived in Seattle from 1966-69, is in town Sunday and Monday for the **Pacific Northwest Music Festival**. Sunday from 1:30-4:30 p.m., Reid offers an informal workshop at the University of Washington's Studio Theater in Meany Hall. At the same venue on Monday from 12:30-2 p.m., Reid gives a public clinic with the **University of Washington Big Band and Jazz Ensemble**, as part of a full day of performances by high school jazz bands. You need not be a bassist to attend either event. Information: 425-228-4506.

Paul de Barros is a free-lance writer. His Jazz Inside Out column appears every other week in Ticket.