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Happy Birthday Hank!

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New York's Blue Note was more about the man than the music on August 11. But that's not to say that the music wasn't sincere and swinging as well, as an overflow crowd filled with musicians and fans celebrated Hank Jones on his 85th birthday. "He is the premier jazz pianist alive today, everything he plays is a revelation," said pianist Bill Charlap, who performed "It's Easy To Remember" with trumpeter Joe Wilder at the tribute.

"He is such an elegant and graceful person, and you hear that in his music," said pianist Monty Alexander, who played "What A Friend We Have In Jesus." "He set the standard for us all." Marian McPartland echoed those thoughts: "He is urbane, apart from being such a wonderful and funny guy." McPartland, who also celebrated her 85th birthday this year, played "Yesterdays" with bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Ben Riley.

Other memorable performances included Eric Reed with Russell Malone and Reid on "Blue Monk": Candido swinging with Hilton Ruiz, Andy Gonzalez and Bobby Sanabria on "Mambo Inn"; and Kenny Barron with Peter Washington and Roy Haynes on "East Of The Sun (West Of The Moon)."

Clark Terry, George Coleman, Ray Barretto, Harold Mabern, Don Friedman and Barry Harris also performed. Early in the evening, birthday wishes by Dave Brubeck and Oscar Peterson were read; and Peterson actually showed up, making the trek from Canada. "Hank Jones is everything that's music," Peterson said.

"I have known him since 1947 and I'm still waiting for him to make a mistake," said saxophonist Jimmy Heath, who provided a highlight by playing "Happy Birthday" with trumpeter Jon Faddis while descending from the second floor staircase into the main room.

The night would not have been complete without music by Jones, who performed "Au Privave," "Round Midnight" and "Polka Dots And Moonbeams" with bassist George Mraz and drummer Louis Hayes. "It was a memorable evening for me," Jones said. "I have never had a birthday celebration of this scale. The performances were outstanding. I couldn't ask for anything better."