

# DAILY NEWS

## REFINEMENT DROWNS OUT POP CHAOS: [SPORTS FINAL Edition]

STANLEY CROUCH. *New York Daily News*. New York, N.Y.: Aug 14, 2003. pg. 41

It is inevitable that we lose more and more people who represent for our culture higher versions of ourselves. It is not always inevitable, especially in a time as decadent as our moment, that people from the best elements of show business will be recognized as supreme human alternatives to the ongoing garbage, chaos and greed of our species.

But this past Monday night at the Blue Note, jazz musicians and listeners came together to celebrate the 85th birthday of Hank Jones. Jones is not only one of the greatest piano players to have arrived from the world of jazz; he is a symbol of something we sometimes seem to have forgotten in our time. In his taste, his manners, his wit, his professionalism and his belief in the weapon against ignorance that we know as refinement, Jones stands in for all the best that our nation has produced in any era.

Hank Jones shares those standards that underlie our country's finest victories - gleaming workmanship and empathy. As a jazz musician, he is an artist who achieves individuality in a way that does not express the grand sorrow of alienation, but the grand collectivity of working to make everyone else sound good at the same time.

As a professional for more than 60 years, Jones is not so much a member of a dying breed as he is proof that such qualities of finesse and style can maintain themselves under even the most trying circumstances. He came through racist periods with the best answer to stereotypes, which was consistently high quality. If one wanted it more than well done, Jones could do it, which is why he helped break the color barriers in the recording studios and in television orchestras. Along the way, he performed with almost every one of the most supremely talented jazz artists and popular music entertainers of our time. Under his own name, Jones recorded some of the best music his idiom has produced.

So all that jazz and the color-blind utopia that it represents was in attendance at the Blue Note to celebrate this great man and the tradition out of which he arrived. On that same bandstand where the kings and queens of jazz have been presented for the last couple of decades were musicians young and old, black, brown and white.

In the audience were people from all over the world who possessed that special recognition of human value and community that is central to jazz and to New York and to the most uplifting and humbling human occasions anywhere on Earth.

A signal moment came when Roy Haynes, a genius of jazz percussion, spoke of having first worked with Jones in 1952, when they accompanied Ella Fitzgerald. The warmth and the undaunted elegance of the world these artists made and the inspiring sense of community that their art offered all who would listen became palpable. Even those who didn't know suddenly came to know.

As we would hope, the love came from within the music itself. Pianist James Williams and producer Charles Carlini organized the whole affair, and the musicians came forward, and the audience, so symbolic of New York, came to the Blue Note, where the meanings of elegance and craftsmanship were made evident once more.

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