

INTRODUCTION

“East Coast Jazz Party”

I’ve recently come to realize that my Jazz (ad)ventures, or ‘trilogy’ if you will, would be incomplete without including what I’ve been doing since returning east in June 2013. Well, I’ll have you know that I didn’t let up on the proverbial gas pedal and was fortunate enough to catch nearly 500 Jazz performances in New York City (NYC) between June 1, 2013, and December 31, 2015!!!

This large number resulted from driving from Baltimore to NYC practically every Saturday, a 200-mile, 3-hour trip, seeing my four pre-selected performances back to back at several Jazz venues, then driving back to Baltimore afterwards – Mission Accomplished!!! (4 shows per week x ~52 weeks per year x 2½ years)

Below is a breakdown of the different NYC Jazz venues comprising the 496 performances:

- Smalls: 105
- Smoke: 102
- Village Vanguard: 65
- Dizzy’s @ JALC: 47
- Jazz Standard: 45
- Blue Note: 28
- Birdland: 27
- Kitano: 24
- Mezzrow: 14
- Zinc Bar: 6
- Fat Cat: 4
- 54 Below: 3
- The Garage: 3
- Miller Theater: 2
- Tribeca PAC: 2
- Café Noctambulo: 1
- Joe’s Pub: 1
- Marcus Garvey Park: 1

NYC Jazz Chronicles – Introduction

- Iridium: 8
- Grant's Tomb: 1
- Jazz Gallery: 7

Total: 496

The Jazz artists and/or groups that I saw/heard, too numerous to list, were outstanding!!!

Where possible, I always purchased my tickets in advance in order to avoid missing out on a performance after driving 200 miles... And thanks to most of the Jazz venue managers and staff, great upfront seats/tables were awaiting me upon my arrival.

Typical Jazz itineraries included: (a) 7:00 – Smoke, 8:30 – Birdland or Village Vanguard, 10:00 – Kitano or 10:30 – Village Vanguard or Blue Note, and 12:00 – Smalls; OR (b) 7:30 – Jazz Standard or Dizzy's @ JALC, 9:00 – Smoke, 10:30 – Blue Note or Village Vanguard, 12:00 – Smalls.

With sets usually lasting ~70 minutes and me out the door immediately afterwards, transportation between venues via walking, taxis, and subway worked out perfectly. Rarely did I show up late at the next gig. However, due to a set either starting late or running long, I did have to occasionally adjust my itinerary in real time. Overall, every Jazz night turned out great!

One of the conveniences of residing on the east coast is the relatively close proximity to several major cities, all within a three-hour car drive via Interstate 95 (I-95): Philadelphia, NYC, Atlantic City, Washington, or Baltimore. That is, if you don't mind driving... And I don't mind the ~200-mile journey.

A typical Saturday NYC Jazz run would comprise departing the Baltimore area at ~2:00 P.M., all gassed up, a Subway tuna

EAST COAST JAZZ PARTY

foot-long sandwich in town, and toll money at the ready.

By leaving at that time, I avoid the earlier Saturday morning I-95 north 'east coast thoroughfare' rush, as well as the later NYC/Philly/Atlantic City Saturday night party folks. This was especially true at the Holland Tunnel ('bridge & tunnel crowd').

Assuming no major traffic accident or weather conditions, I'd usually exit the Holland Tunnel by 5:30 P.M. in lower Manhattan! Yes, New York City... So nice, they named it twice!!!

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that as of last December, total round trip toll fees (Harbor Tunnel, MD/DE I-95 tolls, N.J. Turnpike, Holland Tunnel, Delaware Bridge) amounted to \$69.00, no chump change! However, the convenience and time savings, especially the N.J. Turnpike (expanded to six lanes 60 miles out), cannot be underestimated.

Since the last of my four Jazz performances were usually in Greenwich Village, I always parked on the same block, Barrow Street, between Washington St. and West Side Highway, or a few blocks away.

This way, when departing Smalls at ~1:30 A.M. after the 12:00 midnight set, my car was a short 15-minute walk away. I'd start my car, hit the Holland Tunnel, gas up at the Exxon station as I exited the tunnel, and would be on my way on I-95 south back home. Cruising at 75-80 mph all the way, with very light traffic, if any, and listening to my burned Jazz CDs makes for a very pleasurable ride. (I came to realize that no one else is crazy enough but me to be driving down the turnpike that late/early!)

NYC Jazz Chronicles – Introduction

Assuming a short one-hour nap along the way at one of the very safe N.J. turnpike service rest stops, I'd arrive home at 5:30 A.M. Then, lights out... zzzzzzz!

I've felt very blessed to have safely completed these numerous Jazz trips on the road and, through it all, have continued to send out my monthly NYC Jazz calendar to my many Jazz buddies, recommending four performances for Friday or Saturday.

The whole irony regarding these Jazz trips from Baltimore to NYC is that when I relocated from Detroit to Baltimore back in January 1981 to start my first job just out of college, driving to NYC, the Jazz capital of the world, to see 'live' Jazz never crossed my mind, opting instead to continue to listen to my numerous Jazz records.

Perhaps feeling intimidated to walk into a Jazz club as a twenty-something newbie had something to do with it. I'm sure economics ('funds' or lack thereof), having an old car, and rippin' & runnin' locally also had something to do with it... I did eventually begin to check out Blues Alley and Charlie's in WDC for my exposure to 'live' Jazz, but never did check out The Left Bank Society at the Famous Ballroom in Baltimore.

In looking back to those lost opportunities to check out all of the amazing Jazz artists who were around in the 1980s before my foray into Jazz clubbing, but who I never got to see years later and are no longer with us, I sure blew it! Years later, I lived near Atlantic City, only 115 miles away (late 1987 to 1992), but never visited NYC for Jazz. Oh well, that's life...

So, there you have – my Jazz trilogy is now complete! And the adventure continues...

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