

## JAZZ

# His jazz mix has the flavor of the islands

By Jack Lloyd

INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

It isn't that big a deal now, since many of the old taboos that once prevailed in jazz circles have broken down, but when pianist Monty Alexander first surfaced, his ideas were on the unique side. Here was this island kid, experimenting with Caribbean folk, calypso and, yes, jazz.

Alexander, who appears with his trio Sunday night at Zanzibar Blue, was born in Kingston, Jamaica, where he lived for 17 years before his family moved to South Florida. Naturally, he was influenced by the music that was characteristic of that region. But he also was affected by other musical forms — R & B to some extent but especially jazz.

Among those who fascinated Alexander the most were Art Tatum, Nat "King" Cole and Oscar Peterson.

Another sound that Alexander heard while growing up was the one produced by the steel drums, which are native to Trinidad.

"I remember as I was growing older I developed this imagination that if the [steel] pans and the piano got together in a certain setting something in the sound would be very inspiring," said Alexander, who is now 48. "I heard this in my mind long before I actually heard it."

After establishing himself as a recording artist, Alexander did indeed incorporate the pans into much of his music, along with other Caribbean and Latin elements.

While his roots are a strong factor, however, Alexander's music is much too complex and far-ranging to be easily pigeonholed — as you can tell by listening to his latest album, *Caribbean Circle*, on Chesky Records.

"We musicians are the last people to try to categorize what we're doing," he said. "We're too busy trying to make some music to find a label for it. For me, at least, the word 'jazz' means a positive celebration of your person, utilizing the elements you have at hand. It's a spontaneous thing that just happens at that moment and will never again happen that way."

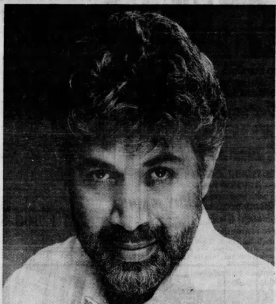
Monty Alexander Trio at Zanzibar Blue, 201-305 S. 11th St., at 8 and 10:30 p.m. Sunday. There is a \$15 cover charge. Phone: 215-829-0300.

**Jez Hot at Bellevue.** Ronnie James and the Jez Hot Swing Club are going into their third year as the weekend attraction (for listening and dancing) in the Barrymore Room at the Hotel Atop the Bellevue.

James, who had been a busy session guitarist at Sigma Sound Studios and other area recording facilities, formed the group — patterned after the famed Hot Club of France — five years ago. Jez Hot has been steadily gaining in popularity ever since.

Jez Hot has a new three-song release (CD and cassette for Private Club Records), *Swing Into Christmas*.

By the way, "Runaway" — a number that James composed with another local musician, Vince Montana, during the late '70s disco boom



Pianist Monty Alexander and his trio will play their complex and far-ranging music at Zanzibar Blue Sunday night.

— is the theme song for the new Robin Leach TV series, *Run Away With the Rich and Famous*. This follow-up to Leach's *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* is aired locally at 7 p.m. Saturdays on Channel 10.

**Ronnie James and the Jez Hot Swing Club in the Barrymore Room at the Hotel Atop the Bellevue, Broad and Walnut Streets, beginning at 9:30 p.m. every Friday and Saturday. No cover charge. Phone: 215-893-1776.**

Unless noted, phone numbers are in area code 215.

### Limited engagements

**ONE VOICE JAZZ CONCERT** Women vocalists perform seasonal music, solo and in ensembles. Unitarian-Universalist Church, Stanton Ave & Gargas Lr; 247-2561. \$10. 3 p.m. Sun.

**JAZZ VESPERS** Old Pine Street Presbyterian Church, 412 Pine St; 925-8052. Offering, 5-6 p.m. Sun.

### Ongoing

**ABBEY BAR & GRILLE** Radnor Hotel, 591 Lancaster Ave, St Davids; 688-5800. (w) Fris, City Rhythm Orchestra. Sats, Joy Adams & Bruce Klauber's Men of Jazz. Suns, Michelle Leigh Frank.

**AT SAMUELS** 503 W Lancaster Ave, Wayne; 687-2840. (w) Weds-Sats, Connie Rainis. To 12/31.



Connie Rainis can be heard at A.T. Samuels in Wayne.

**BULL'S HEAD INN** 901 N 2d St; 574-1750. Tonight, Jimi Odell's "Sumpt'n Special," featuring Marian Carter McLaughlin. Sat, Al Karaam Quartet.

**CAFE EINSTEIN** 208 Race St; 625-0904. Sun, (brunch) Roseanne Sarkissian, (evening) Zan Gardner Trio.

**DOCK STREET BREWERY** 2 Logan Square; 496-0413. (w) Variety. Sat, Rick's Mini Cramp.

**FOUR SEASONS** Swann Lounge, 1 Logan Square; 963-1500. (w) Fris-Sats, Tom Lawton Trio, with Sy Platt & Al Stauffer.

**HAVANA** 105 S Main St, New Hope; 862-9897. Sat, Steve Green & the Elevators.

**HOTEL ATOP THE BELLEVUE** Broad & Walnut Sts; 893-1776. (w) Barrymore Room; Mons-Fris, Jimmy Rudolph. Fris-Sats, Ronnie James & Le Jez Hot Swing Band. Founders Restaurant; Mons-Thurs, Suns (brunch), Jimmy Rudolph. Fris-Sats, The Minnie Acosta Trio.

**JENNY'S** Peddler's Village, 202 Street Rd, Lahaska; 794-4020. Tonight, Randy Saries Trio. Sat, Katie Eagleson Trio. Sun, Ray Razzi Dixieland Trio.

**LE CHAMPIGNON OF TOKYO** 122 Lombard St; 922-2515. Sat, Summit, featuring Roseanne Sarkissian.

**LIBERTIES** 706 N 2d St; 238-0660. (w) Tonight, Katie Eagleson. Sat, Jimi Odell's "Sumpt'n Special," featuring Marian Carter McLaughlin.

**LONDON GRILL** 2301 Fairmount Ave; 978-4545. Fris, Zan Gardner.

**MELI-EN** Pier 19 North, Phila Marina Center, Delaware Ave & Callowhill St; 592-7100. (w) Fris-Sats, Trudy Pitts & Mr C Trio. Suns (brunch), Trudy Pitts & Mr C.

**ORTLIEB'S JAZZHAUS** 847 N 3d St; 922-1035. Tonight-Sat, Mickey Roker Quartet, with Frank Taber (tenor saxophone), Mike Natale (trumpet), Sun, Bob E Bard Quartet.

**RICHARD'S LOUNGE & RESTAURANT** 237 W Mt Pleasant Ave; 242-2620. Fris-Sats, Catch 22.

**THE SPOTTED HOG** Peddler's Village, Rte 202 & Street Rd, Lahaska; 794-4000 ext 6001. Tonight, Jonathan Ash. Sat, John Flynn. Sun, Mike Meade.

**TAVERN BAR** William Penn Inn, Rte 202 & Summerytown Pike, Gwynedd; 699-9272. (w) Thus-Sats, Father John D'Amico.

**THE TEMPERANCE HOUSE** 5-11 S State St, Newtown; 860-0474. Fris-Sats, Mark Kramer. Sun, Duff Nold's Dixieland Jazz Group with Pete Pepka (brunch).

**UNCLE BILLY'S** 50 S Main St, New Hope; 862-0220. Sats, the Michael O'Rourke Group.

**VALLEY FORGE HILTON** Rain Forest Room, Rte 202, King of Prussia; 337-1200. (w) Sats, Two Gents.

**ZANZIBAR BLUE** 301 S 11th St; 829-0300. Fris, Arpeggio Jazz Ensemble featuring Denise King (5-9 p.m.). Fris-Sats, Colonel Byrd Quartet featuring Juanita Holiday. Suns (brunch), Paula Breslin Trio, with Zan Gardner. Upstairs Blue Bar; Fris-Sats, The New Conversation, with Christian Dockins. Sun, Monty Alexander Trio.