



Trio

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idea, he might say, 'Hey, you remember this?' It's not completely out of bounds to say something. But nine out of 10 times, we just hit it and it gets right back on the tracks like we left it."

The goal of any show the trio does, he says, is "to create a thrill for ourselves and for the people. There's a lot of artistry going on with jazz today, a lot of sensitive playing and marvelous piano players doing incredible things. They sound like three people at one time playing. What this trio represents are three individuals but we feel like we're the Count Basie Orchestra. It's a stampede. Look out. We're coming to take the paint off the walls."

Alexander was three when he started, as he calls it, "banging on" an old piano in the house.

"I started playing little tunes," he recalls, "and my ear was developing. I would play for the neighbors, the uncles and aunts. I was entertaining from the time I was about five years old."

He even took some lessons.

"I did go to the piano teacher for some elementary studies," Alexander says. "I kept that up as long as I could tolerate because I didn't have the pa-

"Whenever we got on the bandstand, it was some kind of unforgettable event. ... And it's just been that way. You can't define those things. It's what it is."

MONTY ALEXANDER

tience. I wasn't as disciplined as one needs to be to be a classical pianist. When I was advised to play simple early pieces of Bach, I found myself playing boogie woogie. I was developing the instincts of a free kind of spontaneous musician. I was kind of a rebel in that department."

What drew him to jazz, he recalls, is "it gave me a smile to see musicians playing musical instruments on the street corner. I would listen to the local radio station. And the whole thing to me was fascinating, especially because I could pick out the melody on the piano, for the most part, and play the rhythm with my left hand. I was my own band."

His biggest heroes were jazz vocalists — Bing Crosby, Louis Armstrong, Nat "King" Cole.

"And then, one day, I heard this thing people called be bop," Alexander says. "And I was like, 'What was that?' Because I could see the whole religion behind that whole thing. I call it religion because it was a different attitude behind the whole thing. It was coming from

another ethic, so to speak. It's all connected but I would hear musicians play a solo and I would say, 'Uh oh, that's another language there.' And I would pick up on some of that. But I was still into the joy of jazz, the happy notes."

Although he mentions "Montreux Alexander" more than once while discussing the trio, Alexander says he doesn't listen to his old recordings and prefers to keep the focus on the future, always moving on.

To that end, there's a project in the works, he says, that has his so pleased, "I don't even want to talk about it."

He does talk about it, though, and it does sound exciting.

"I'm from Jamaica, you know," he says. "And I love to relive my Jamaican heritage in the music. I have several recordings that reflect that, right? Well, I am working on a project that will take one of our beloved American composers to my roots, the rhythms of Jamaica. I'm combining the world of jazz with the world of Jamaican heritage."