



Monty Alexander keeps his jazz interesting.

Excellent jazz pianist leaves 'em speechless

MONTY ALEXANDER — Jazz pianist with guitarist Ernest Ranglin, bass player Gerald Wiggins and drummer Frank Gant at Bubba's through Saturday. \$5 cover.

By Ray Recchi

Entertainment Writer

Bubba's and its customers are getting three groups for the price of one this week — the Monty Alexander Duo, The Monty Alexander Trio and the Monty Alexander Quartet.

To understand how much of a bargain that is, one has to realize that Alexander would, by himself, be worth the \$5 cover.

Not one to let himself fall into a pattern for too long, Alexander keeps things constantly changing and always interesting by opening the set with only himself and guitarist Ernest Ranglin onstage. After a few tunes, they are joined by bass player Gerald Wiggins. A little later, drummer Frank Gant steps up and completes the quartet.

Even Alexander is a bit different this time around than he was the last time I saw him. His technique and musicality have been unquestionably good for a long time. But since last he was here, Alexander's playing has taken on a certain elegance and maturity which makes listening to him all the more

satisfying.

There are several straight jazz groups which can be recommended for hard-core jazz fans only. Alexander's group does not fall in that category. Although jazz lovers will certainly be satisfied with what they hear, anyone who has any sensitivity for music at all should enjoy this group.

With only Alexander and Ranglin onstage, the sound is pleasant and laid back. They play some rhythm games, both take nice solos and throw in a little jazz fugue. When Wiggins joins them, things begin to swing a little more with *Tricotism*, then get downright beautiful with *You Call It Madness*.

It's the kind of music that can make a critic forget to pick up his pen and can put the rest of the room in total silence. The crowd was carried away with it.

Then drummer Frank Gant joins them and the mood switches radically with a purely class jazz version of *Midnight In Moscow*.

The group gets its personality from Alexander, who is confident enough to play simply when that's how he feels it and good enough to take off and go when the spirit moves him.

The result is the kind of performance which becomes a very personal communication between artist and audience. No one had to tell anyone to quiet down at Bubba's Monday night. When music is that good, it leaves you speechless.

**Club
review**
