

**Arts and Entertainment****Jazz player says local jazz scene at risk**

by Sarah Rude

*Black history includes a unique contribution to American music: jazz. In honor of Black History Month, Voices sat down with noted local musician and educator Dr. Andrew Jackson to discuss the past and future of Centre County's jazz scene.*

*Voices: Tell me a little bit about your history as a musician in Centre County.*

Andrew Jackson: I was here as an undergraduate from 1970-74, and I was in the Blue Band for four years—Sugar Bowl, Cotton Bowl, Orange Bowl. I had a band called Creed, and we opened up for Earth, Wind, and Fire at Rec Hall. Later when I came back in 1986, I had a band—we opened up for Ziggy Marley in 1988—the Earthtones. I had a Latin band, Passport, and a jazz band, Urban Fusion—we opened up for Spyro Gyro in the HUB. I always play the People's Choice Festival and the Arts Fest with whatever band I'm playing with.

*Voices: What kind of jazz scene did you encounter at Penn State?*

AJ: When I came back to Penn State in '86, I couldn't find anybody to play with because it was sort of like a little clique. The few guys who played had their own guys they played with, and Dan Yoder had his School of Music Bands—Inner Dimension, Outer Dimension, Center Dimension—so he always had guys to play with. I played with a lot of groups that I started. I started jazz at the American Alehouse, and I started jazz at Bar Bleu and Tony's Big Easy. My thing was just creating gigs and creating places to play.

It wasn't ever really a heavy jazz scene—although Dan Yoder used to inspire students. They did mostly concerts on campus. When I came, I started dragging guys downtown to play for money, you know, instead of just credits, stand up take a solo and sit down. When they played downtown, they actually had to lead the band and solo.

*Voices: And you found that making opportunities to play brought different groups of musicians together to play?*

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There's another audience here who would come. I'm disappointed because I see a lot of people who could make a difference and they don't."

--Andrew Jackson

AJ: If you build it, they will come. If there were more opportunities and more venues, more guys can improve their musical style and craft. It's kind of a respect thing, where you study it in school, but you play it not just on campus or not just in class or one or two concerts a semester, but you play it all the time. It's part of your life.

I used to think there was discrimination in the music community—number one, with people who weren't used to playing with people of different ethnicities and difference backgrounds. There are only a few jobs, and the guys who get them are the guys who know somebody. If you're new in town, unless you make a name for yourself, you don't get called. So, I just used to create my own bands. I didn't wait for somebody to call me. I created a band and just played.

*Voices: Where is Centre County's jazz scene?*

AJ: Even today, if you go downtown and look for a jazz band, there's only two or three places you might find some jazz: Zola's on Friday night, and the American Alehouse. Strictly jazz, that's about it. Experiment for yourself. Go downtown and say, "I'm going to find some jazz." When I was playing at Tony's, there used to be jazz every Friday, but now that he's closed up,

that's one less venue for people to play at.

The thing is that there are a lot of people who like jazz, and you have new clubs like Elk Creek Café in the Centre region area. There could definitely be more venues for a musical outlet.

From what I hear it's that people are looking for venues. When we played at Bar Bleu, the reason we phased it out is because one time there was a football game with Ohio State and everybody ran out before 11:00 to go see this riot on Beaver Avenue and never came back. The establishment

said we didn't draw anybody in. Well, we had been drawing a packed house every Saturday, but that one night was just a freak night. So, we stopped playing there, and then they got some young college students. The professional musicians that play for a living find it hard to have enough venues to sustain our payments, mortgage, apartments, food, clothing, shelter. In terms of pay scale, it's always been an issue. One of

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**Amazonia visits Millheim**

Photo by Suzan Erem  
Photo of an Amazonian girl from the exhibit "Intimate Views of Amazonia" by Campbell Plowden at Elk Creek Cafe, Jan. 5 through Feb. 2. Proceeds from the Jan. 10 reception went to the Center for Amazon Community Ecology, [www.amazonecology.org](http://www.amazonecology.org).

# Night club's vague dress code causes debate

by Tunomukwathi Asino

The Cell Block, a State College night club soon to be re-named Mezzanine, is confusing some customers with what appears to be an arbitrary dress code that causes some to get turned away and others to gain admittance.

The club's dress code is no baggy jeans, no plain white T-shirts, no dark glasses and people with un-tucked T-shirts will be made to tuck them in. Sneakers are allowed though, according to Lance Falkowski, the club's general manager.

"We want people to look nice," Falkowski said.

Falkowski said the reason baggy jeans were not allowed is so that people do not come in with concealed alcohol. On Wednesday nights people 18 to 20 are allowed to enter but are not permitted to consume alcohol.

Some club attendees have said that the dress code was racist.

Greg Garcia, a white Penn State student, said last year he was in line to get into the Cell Block wearing baggy jeans, "the guy [a black male] in front me who was also wearing baggy jeans was turned away," and Garcia was allowed in, he said.

Adam R. Schick, the club's front door manager, denied the allegation and said he has more black bouncers than white bouncers. Schick said he has turned away the same amount of people, white, black and Asian.

The dress code is not posted on the Cell

The Cell Block is now Mezzanine. Bar manager Stella Cho said they will still encourage people to dress nicely. Whether people will be allowed to enter wearing baggy jeans will depend on the person at the door.

Block's Web-site or anywhere in the club. Therefore, new customers or those from out of the area would not know about the dress code. Schick said the Cell Block is privately-owned and does not have to post the code. He said he sees a lot of people every day and if he did not know them he would warn them about the dress code. Another alternative, Schick said, is to wear a sponsorship T-shirt that they hand out, such as Bud Light T-shirts.

Steven G. Knox, a Penn State student, went to the Cell Block in October last year and was turned away. He said he was told that his clothes were too baggy. Knox was wearing a long-sleeved shirt. He tucked it in and went back in line but still he was forbidden from entering.

"In my opinion, they were not baggy. I do not wear clothes that hang off my hips," Knox said.



Photo by Kelsey Stratton

The club formerly known as The Cell Block, now Mezzanine, has undergone an ownership change, but will the ambiguous dress code stay?

Chris Javan, also a student, said he was not allowed to enter the Cell Block because he was wearing pants that were rolled up.

Brian Goldman, a student at Penn state, said he always dresses nice for the ladies. "I always dress nice, polo, for girls. I want to impress the girls," he said.

The reasons some people are turned away from the door and some aren't remain open to debate.

"People that wear baggy jeans cause trou-

ble," Mike Hunt said, who was at the Cell Block. Hunt was visiting State College and said he was speaking from his experiences in Philadelphia.

Katie Swift, student at Penn State, has never seen people turned away. Nor has Kelley Fitzgerald, who is also a student at Penn State. She said she has only seen peo-

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# Precious conveys powerful message of hope and respect

by Mallery MacPhee

Gabourey Sidibe plays the role of Claireece Precious Jones in the 2009 Golden Globe Award winning drama *Precious*. The film was directed by Lee Daniels, producer of the 2001 drama *Monster's Ball* starring Halle Berry. While most of the actors in the movie are new to the big screen, singer Mariah Carey plays the captivating role of Mrs. Weiss, a social worker who helps Precious in finding a better life. Singer-songwriter Lenny Kravitz also stars in the drama playing Nurse John, a young man who truly makes Precious feel beautiful.

This film has been criticized as a misrepresentation of the African American community, yet the focus of this film is not on race or gender—the focus is survival. Actress Mo’Nique, who plays Precious’s distraught mother, spoke out recently about the film’s portrayal of the black community. In her opinion, there is no such thing as a black or white movie. She points out that

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the cast for this movie happens to be predominantly black and this should not define the entire black community. She states that it is up to society to stop classifying a movie as simply black or white and start looking at the bigger aspect—the message the movie wishes to convey.

This film gives hope to men and women, of any race, who have felt that they do not belong or that they are not good enough. The many scenes involving incest, rape, and physical abuse can be hard to watch, but all

the while the crowd is rooting for Precious.

This heart-riveting drama takes place in Harlem in 1987. Precious (Sidibe), is an overweight 16-year-old girl living a life filled with torment. Her unemployed mother Mary (Mo’Nique) mentally, physically, and sexually abuses Precious. Her father Carl, whom we see only once throughout the film, repeatedly sexually abuses her leading up to her two pregnancies by the age of 16.

Precious deals with self esteem and body

image issues due to her mother’s continuous verbal abuse. She dreams of one day being beautiful, thin, and loved.

When Precious’s school becomes aware of her second pregnancy in three years, they decide to provide her with an opportunity that will result in a better life for her and her two children. Precious attends an alternative school where she is presented with better opportunities. At the alternative school, Each One Teach One, Precious, meets Miss Rain, played by actress Paula Patton, who shows the girl what it feels like to be loved for the first time in her life. Miss Rain coaches Precious in reading and helps her to strive for the important things in life. She pushes Precious to take the initiative to give her children the life that she never had—a life filled with love.

After Precious gives birth to her son, Abdul, she returns home to live with her mother who attacks both her and the child

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the things the local union has been trying to do is get a sustainable music venue where everyone can get at least a sustainable living wage.

*Voices: Do you think the challenge of finding audiences or venues relates to Centre County’s challenges with diversity?*

AJ: I think that if you do enough promotion or advertising, you can get a packed house. Ronnie Burrage is a local drummer in town who’s played with some national and regional people, but he still needs to establish a local audience. So, if they don’t know him or know anything about him and he has a gig, they’re not going to come unless you do advertising and promotion and sell it to them.

The club owners, they just want to sell beer and make money. Most of them care about the music, but a lot of people don’t care as long as there’s a beat. Everyone’s going there for a cheap beer or cheap drinks. That’s why Tony’s got in trouble—he was [allegedly] selling cheap drinks past happy hour or something. Here Tony had



Photo by Kevin Black

Local musician Andrew Jackson is known for his efforts to diverse groups together through music.

three of the nicer bars in terms of ambience, but they got the impression that he was just concerned about selling alcohol. But I have to admit that he did support live music.

*Voices: What can we do to recover from the blow of Tony’s being closed?*

AJ: That’s three bars that closed, not just

one bar. First of all, whoever buys it should open up all three clubs. Make one a jazz club in the basement, make one a DJ spot at the top, and the middle, make that a dinner club. You’ve got three venues: jazz for folks who just want to mellow out, dinner, and then the DJ crowd upstairs. If I had the money, I would buy it and do exactly that.

You need to create the interest. They probably need to do a survey of who would go where and then find some good financial investors to invest in bring a club like that. The music union or organization should try to find some business investors to invest in entertainment and music. It might even take asking somebody asking the right people.

Some of these clubs who could have music and who do have music but not jazz need to change their mindset to have jazz—and have different types of jazz. There’s another audience here who would come. I’m disappointed because I see a lot of people who could make a difference and they don’t.

*Voices: What are ways to entice more local youth to be interested in jazz?*

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Photo by Lace Abel-bey

Jazz musicians like these at Zola's can still find a few friendly venues in Centre County but the choices have gotten slimmer, said long-time jazz musician Andrew Jackson.

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AJ: I think more promotion. I think that you have to identify the parents that would support it and try to get them involved. And bring in seminars to the elementary, middle, and high school on performances and the business of music. The cultivation of individual musicians obviously has to start real early. They need tutoring—people to hang out with who do what they do well.

*Voices: Do you think that making an increasingly active jazz scene would benefit our community in particular ways?*

AJ: Yes, because remember, jazz brings a history with it—the history of the music and the history of the people. If people would open up the curriculum and include that, then students would get that diversity. The reason I got interested in multicultural education and diversity in the first place is that I didn't see it—I heard about it, but I didn't see it. Even in the schools. Right now if I go to all the schools, I couldn't find five black teachers or Hispanic or Asian. I would challenge anybody to do the same thing. I subbed in the district and I had students coming up to me saying, "I never had a black teacher before." There must be some. We're a university. We must turn out

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--Andrew Jackson

a couple hundred teachers a year. You can't get a couple?

*Voices: What does it take to play jazz well?*

AJ: Now it's not just black people playing jazz. Music transcends around the world. I think you have to have that connection with the people who have the background and history and experience. I think that it takes that empathy and understanding and capacity about music that is not restricted to just race. It's part of the whole experience. I think a lot of people can't get into it because they haven't been exposed. Even in the State College High School Band, there's probably not one black guy in there, but they've been exposed to people like Wynton Marsalis. There's no way you can

hear jazz and not hear some black musicians, white musicians, Latino musicians. It transcends all races. It's not just one person's music. Jazz is a combination of European music and African influence—an eclectic experience. They had to create their own style because they couldn't infiltrate the other styles. And then when people cross-pollinated, now it's an eclectic thing. Everyone's added something to it. That's the way life is supposed to be.

*Joey DeFrancesco, one of Jackson's former students, performs with saxophonist Dave Sanborn at the State Theatre Feb. 2.*

*Andrew Jackson will perform with an ensemble Feb. 20 at the Penn State HUB in honor of Black History Month. He encourages the community to support local high school musicians, dancers, actors, and visual artists by attending the Sixth Annual Centre Region Talent Hunt Competition Feb. 27 at Mt. Nittany Middle School.*

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ple being turned away when it was a 21 over night and people were not at least 21 years old.

Black people come and go from the Cell Block and not all black club goers were aware of people being turned away. Some confirmed Schick's comment that people wearing sneakers will be allowed to enter. Others said the club was just strict on people that were "dressed exaggerated."

The Cell Block's name was recently changed to Mezzanine as a result in change of ownership. Asked if the dress code will be the same, Stella Cho, bar manager, said it will be less strict. She said they still encourage people to dress nice. Cho said whether people will be allowed to enter wearing baggy jeans will depend on the person at the door.

## New artists' co-op donates to others



Photo by Phil Lynott

The Surface Artist Co-operative in State College offers space for artists to work in. Co-op artists' work includes fused glassware, jewelry, pottery, web design and photography. This past Jan.14, the co-op donated 15 percent of art sales to the Clearwater Conservancy. Pictured here is Lee Anne Jeffries of Lovely Mud Pottery, working on a bowl.

## Ping and Dazee in the Dead Forest



Photo provided

Ping and Dazee, center, are part of an animated short film by Penn State students Jason Oshman, director, Debra Cohen, producer and Mark Romano, editor who plan to submit the finished product to local and national festivals. Oshman and Cohen's work won the people's choice award at the International Festival of Animation Online last year.

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forcing Precious to leave home with nowhere to go. Precious breaks into her school to keep her newborn son off the streets. The next day Miss Rain discovers Precious and her son. She knows that she cannot let Precious return home and does all that she can until she finds a place where Precious can live. Now Precious can begin living a new life with her son and without her abusive mother in her way.

Precious is a symbol of courage and determination. Her ability to turn her life

around is remarkable and shows the audience that life is a gift and it is up to us what to do with that gift. Precious's determination to provide her children with the best life possible is honorable and proves to all genders and races that the future is in our hands.

Precious is an epic film with a message for girls everywhere. This film is emotional in all aspects but worthwhile no doubt. Daniels ends the movie with the words "For Precious Girls Everywhere" which undoubtedly is what the movie is conveying: That all girls are precious and deserve to be treated with respect.



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