ART AND WINE FEST

PARK STREET

JULY 31, 2005

For a music genre that arose from the whore houses and housing projects of New Orleans with a name that came from a sordid sexual act, Jazz has done fairly well for itself, gotten a bit hoity toity as some claim. That upper class association caused a long year's decline in favor of the rock-us plebian Rock 'n Roll and the lower denominator of Elvis' hips. Nowadays, however, jazz appears in a bit of a revival with a bit more urge to please the crowd creeping into the gigs and we have less of the Eric Dolphy Memorial BBQ atonic celebration suffered by all of us in our stiff, straight-backed chairs of music Appreciation.

A resurgence of smoky voices, with Madeleine Pereu and Joss Stone heading the list, have helped channel the bluesy chanteuse of the past and the aging hippies of yore, now embarrassingly flush, have rediscovered Cuban jazz in the form of the Buena Vista Social Club, etc.

No surprise then that the annual North Beach Jazz Fest has been busting all records for attendance. North Beach held forth in force this weekend and early reports indicate heavy attendance this year for the Latin in the Park sessions on Saturday and the Taste of New Orleans on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the Island held its own annual Art and Wine Fest on Park street with music and food and fun for all. We managed to take in Jazz Caliente on the Buena Vista stage and the Shade on the Encinal Stage.

Jazz Caliente has the vibrancy of unknowns trying like fire with original compositions and a bevy of multiinstrumentalists on flute and mouth harp as well as a willingness to jam to the nth bar. We would expect that they will not remain unknown for long.

You will note the keyboards before the harmonica player and the congas in front of the sax player who also does a wicked flute. And that is a six-string bass back there.

Shade has the advantage of hosting as lead sax a member of the internationally renowned Sax Quartet which performs frequently with the SF

Symphony. They were polishing off a tasty Thelonious Monk number when we arrived.

All along the blockaded Park Street there were kiosks packed to the awnings with leather walkabout hats, atrocious kitsch, wooden carvings, delightful food including artichokes stuffed with shrimp, jewelry of dubious origin and even pins that doubled as eyeglass holders. There were stilt walkers and balloon ladies and jumping up and down in "bounce houses". In short, a fine time was had by all.

On other fronts all the Big Names are appearing at the Big Venues, and our policy is to avoid attending and reporting on any and all events at the massive ampitheatres that ring the Bay Area. Of course we must pay due notice that the Rolling Stones return again for a series of shows here, with scalped ticket prices surely pushing the four digit range by this date. Last time around we

estimated that some 500,000 people paid the full price to see the "guy with the tire tread lips" run up and down the stage.

We have to admit that the fellow has done rather well as a businessman and a performer after being urged to give it all up for a modest income as an accountant.