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### Big names and lesser known acts at the Monterey Jazz Festival

**Hot start, then so cool**  
Mac McDonald At the Jazz Festival  
Updated: 09/19/2009 12:31:03 PM PDT

Friday's stifling heat gave way to the cool of the evening at the Monterey Jazz Festival.

But festival opening act Roger Eddy Band kept things warm and relaxed throughout its hourlong set.

The hot buzz prior to the festival centered around much-talked-about 24-year-old New York singer/bassist Esperanza Spalding and she didn't disappoint in opening the evening's festivities in the main arena. But more on her later.

Local jazz stalwart Eddy and his crew of all-Peninsula players opened its set with an appropriately sultry Antonio Carlos Jobim tune "Once I Loved."

Eddy and his quintet went to the Brazilian music well several times during its performance, and why not? The steamy equatorial music fits Eddy's warm burnished tone on tenor sax and his laid-back demeanor.

The band also performed Brazilian songwriter Ivan Lins' "Velas," another Jobim samba (whose title escapes me at the moment), a Ray Obiedo salsa number, Benny Golson's "Killer Joe" done reggae-style in keeping with a semi-Caribbean theme, a soulful King Curtis blues shuffle and two Eddy originals, "Gospel" and "Bayonne, New Jersey."

It was nice to see an acoustic guitar being played in a jazz setting, a veritable rarity these days in jazz (where have you gone, Charlie Byrd?). Bob Basa took the honors with his spare but evocative playing.

Eddy's band also included familiar Peninsula jazz faces: bassist Dan Robbins, drummer Skylar Campbell and pianist Marshall Otwell, who was playing

with both wrists in bulky hard casts, as the result of a fall.

That gives a whole new meaning to the theatrical expression "break a leg." But, like the professional trouper that he is, Otwell didn't miss a beat — literally.

Eddy and Campbell will be playing at 1:30 p.m. today in the Night Club with the Monterey Bay Jazz Orchestra, which is chock full of top-notch local jazz players.

At the Coffee House Gallery — that often-neglected little venue — New Orleans pianist Jonathan Batiste regaled a relatively sparse crowd

with jaunty ragtime tunes, mixing in classical and straight-ahead jazz, and even playing the melodica (a small plastic keyboard instrument that one blows into through a short tube).

I can safely say I've never heard "Round Midnight" played on a melodica AND come away completely enthralled.

Batiste is a phenomenal talent with a whimsical bent; I mean, opening with "The Entertainer" from the film "The Sting" and not making it sound hokey?

And speaking of the melodica, Spalding's pianist, Leo Genovese, also used the melodica on one occasion during her set. Two melodicas in one night? What's going on here?

Spalding, who plays electric and standup bass, and sings beautifully, is a talented musician on the rise. She plays the bass with authority and élan, singing in a bright, expressive voice, even in Portuguese, which she did on the Milton Nascimento/Wayne Shorter tune "Point of Sale."



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She performed a Shorter tune from his jazz-rock days, which she prefaced with the mock warning, "It's time for us to rock out now. Is it OK if we do a little jazz-rock now? For those of you who don't like jazz-rock, it'll only take about six minutes."

Of course the crowd ate it up, and the band did rock out.

Esperanza played later that night in Dizzy's Den, which I'm sure was packed to the rafters.

That's the thing about this year's festival. Sure there are the big names — Pete Seeger, Dave Brubeck, Chick Corea — but it would behoove you to seek out the lesser-known acts, the Batistes and artists such as singer-guitarist Raul Midon tonight, the Alfredo Rodriguez Trio on Sunday or the rap-jazz outfit The Shotgun Wedding Quintet (check them out on YouTube) late Sunday.

Today offers the best look at our local musicians, such as the afore-mentioned Monterey Bay Jazz Orchestra, pianist Martin Headman's tribute to blues great Charles Brown, and Brazilian pianist and former longtime Carmel resident Weber Iago and his trio.

A full schedule can be found at [www.montereyjazzfestival.org](http://www.montereyjazzfestival.org).

**JAZZ FESTIVAL**

- What:** 52nd annual Monterey Jazz Festival
- Where:** Monterey Fairgrounds, 2004 Fairground Road, Monterey
- When:** Today and Sunday; gates open at 11:30 a.m. today and 11 a.m. Sunday
- Tickets:** Grounds tickets are \$50 today or Sunday, available at 925-275-9255, online at [www.montereyjazzfestival.org](http://www.montereyjazzfestival.org) and at the fairgrounds ticket office
- Information:** [www.montereyjazzfestival.org](http://www.montereyjazzfestival.org)
- Parking:** Severely limited around arena; shuttle available for \$10 from Monterey Peninsula College, 980 Fremont St.; parking areas open at 10:30 a.m. today and 10 a.m. Sunday

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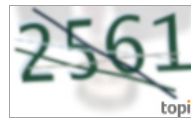
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