

Pipe Lake's boogie meister 4/9/08

The dictionary defines a pipe dream as an unattainable or fanciful hope or scheme. But don't tell that to Manfred Schonauer and his wife, Truan. They've been living their pipe dream now for 20 years. In May they'll begin their 21st year as hosts to local "homeless" musicians in need of a place to ply their passion. That place is a 1901 schoolhouse that the Schonauers have converted into a music studio, concert hall and their home out in the wooded countryside on Hwy. G, west of Cumberland—a place they call the Pipe Dream Center.

Saturday, like the first Saturday of every month, was Boogie Night at the center. But it may have been the Boogie Night of all Boogie Nights with a standing-room only crowd of people who came to hear what I would call a perfect storm of local musical talent in a mostly impromptu jam session of jazz, blues and rock. Everything from Thelonious Monk to Mungo Jerry. Played by musicians who ranged in age from 16 to 60.

Ever hear "Low Rider," the 1970s tune from the group War, performed on a Hammond B3 organ, clarinet, vibraphone, bass fiddle, guitar and harmonica? Well, we did Saturday, and the crowd loved it.

The music was amazing, especially given the fact that many of the performers had never played together before. They didn't even know who, for certain, would be showing up.

Saturday's group comprised Pat Binford on clarinet and soprano sax, Jim Hurst on vibraphone, Mike Dougherty on guitar, Steve Vogt on harmonica, Anthony Cesnik on bass and, of course, Manfred on piano, organ and flute.

Manfred, a native of Germany, has been playing music for more than 5 decades. He's been a teacher and mentor for many local musicians. He's also a professional composer and arranger. But his boundless enthusiasm for music comes to the fore as a performer. The B3 organ is recognized by many as the predecessor to modern music synthesizers, and Manfred gets everything possible out of his B3 when he gets behind its keyboards—a one-man rhythm section.

His flute performance on Ray Dorset's 1970 big hit "In the Summertime" was a wonderful combination of musicianship and showmanship. I can't imagine how Anthony Cesnik kept up

with Manfred's sometimes manic zeal at the keyboard. Cesnik is a 16-year old senior at Rice Lake High School, who is headed to the state music competition in Madison this spring in a handful of categories. He's also been named to the All-State High School Band. Although I'm told that the bass fiddle isn't even his best instrument, he more than held his own in the interplay of improvisation and calls and responses during the jazz-dominated first half of that 3-hour jam session.

And that's saying something given with whom he was performing. Pat Binford, who lives in rural Dallas, is a well-respected jazz performer and instructor. Binford blew the crowd away with his interpretation of "Summertime" on clarinet dedicated to his father who had died just a few days earlier. He introduced Mike Dougherty from Prairie Farm as Wisconsin's best jazz guitarist. Dougherty plays regularly with Jim Hurst's Take

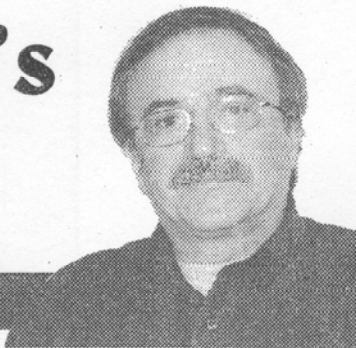
Five jazz ensemble, which performs locally when he's not directing the music program at Rice Lake High School.

The interplay among him and Dougherty, Binford, Cesnik and Schonauer on piano was absolutely won-

Writer's Block

FEATURING

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derful.

The second half of the performance often consisted of Schonauer shouting out the key of the next piece without any further indication of the tune. Then he'd take off on the Hammond and the other performers jumped in where they could. It led to some very inventive moments.

Years ago—when we had more kids than money—my wife and I had been regulars at Boogie Nights, where admission has always been just the request of a donation and your desire for a good time. When we heard our friend Jim Hurst was going to play with Binford and Schonauer, we couldn't pass up that opportunity. Now I recalled what had drawn us there in the past: to hear some talented people play music just for the sheer joy of it. We'll be back.

A couple of things you ought to know if you decide to share Manfred's and Truan's pipe dream. From May through September, in addition to Boogie Night, there's a special concert the second Saturday of each month. All start at 8 p.m. Parking is limited so squeeze in where you can. And be prepared to share the joy of some people who are living their dream.