

Life in LAMORINDA

Jazz Record Producer Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

By Jennifer Wake



John Burk

It's one thing to love the sound of jazz. It's quite another to be known as a visionary for the genre. In recognition of his important work in the world of jazz, Executive Vice President of A&R and Chief Creative Officer of the Concord Music Group, John Burk, will be presented with a lifetime achievement award on Saturday, March 7 at the Acalanes Performing Arts Center during the 9th annual Lafayette Jazz Festival.

Burk worked as an independent musician/producer/engineer

until 1989 when he was recruited by Concord Records' founder (and Bay Area jazz icon) Carl Jefferson to be his successor in guiding the label.

"Carl Jefferson had a great love for jazz, and it was with his vision that the Concord Pavilion became a reality," said one founder of the Generations in Jazz (GIJ) Foundation, Maurice "Mo" Levich. "Because John Burk is both a musician and an engineer, he is able to produce a sound and balance; he has an incredible ability to recognize talent."

During his career, Burk has produced more than 100 albums and has worked with wide array of talent including George Benson, Al Jarreau, Paul McCartney, Jill Scott, Tito Puente, Gladys Knight and many more. One of his productions, Ray Charles' "Genius Loves Company," won a record 8 Grammy awards including Album of the Year and Record of the Year. Burk was also one of the visionaries for the Lafayette Summer Music Workshop that, for the past 11

years, has taught young people about the American original art form of jazz.

"The future of jazz and education was what we all had in mind when we met in [John Burk's] office in 1998," Levich said. "Behind it is a lot of heart and soul. Our foundation is a presenting foundation that presents young students, and allows them to see the future through professionals and jazz educators. Funds from the Festival go to the foundation so we can continue to present this American art form within the community and continue our role in education."

In a conversation with Levich, Burk said he would personally like to "further promote the education of jazz to American youth." He envisions podcasts from different artists, forming a network of student jazz enthusiasts, and allowing direct communication with well-known jazz musicians.

"It would be great to connect Concord Music Group fans with artists and artists with fans," Burk said.

Burk is the third to receive the GIJ lifetime achievement award; others included Bay Area broadcast legend Al Hart and current Rossmoor resident Frank Como, who was Lionel Hampton's arranger for 20 years.

Other award recipients this year include ninth-grader Connor Anderson and his brother, tenth-grader Trevor Anderson of Concord, who will receive the Harvey Rosenblum Scholarship Award, and Lafayette resident Greg Lahey, who will receive the Community Service Award.

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Lafayette Jazz Festival Not to be Missed

The ninth annual Lafayette Jazz Festival will kick off on Thursday, March 5 with a private party at the Del Valle Clubhouse in Rossmoor. The following is a list of the Festival's participating bands, times and locations:

Thursday, March 5 (7:30 p.m.) – Double Take, which features students from Stanley Middle School ages 12 to 14, will open for the Big Band of Rossmoor which will feature the Bay Area's own Mary Fetig on saxophone and Countess Felder from the Alabama Hall of Fame on vocals. Del Valle Clubhouse in Rossmoor. Tickets, \$5.

Friday, March 6 (7:30 p.m.) – The award winning Stanley Jazz Messengers, directed by Bob Athayde, will begin Friday night's evening of music, followed by the Faces of Jazz (featuring Rich Fongheiser and Bob Athayde, and other local musicians). The Acalanes Performing Arts Center. Tickets, \$5.

Saturday, March 7 (7:30 p.m.) – Touted as "the Big Night," the evening will begin with the Acalanes Jazz Ensemble followed by the first East Bay appearance of Ray Brown's Great Big Band. The band is led by composer, arranger, trumpet player and teacher Ray Brown, who has worked as jazz trumpet player and arranger for the orchestras of Stan Kenton, Bill Watrous, Bill Berry, Frankie Kapp-Nat Pierce, and the Full Faith and Credit Big Band. The Acalanes Performing Arts Center. Tickets, \$10.

Sunday, March 8 (6:30 p.m.) – The festival's final traditional performance will feature the Contra Costa County Honor Middle School Jazz Band and High School Jazz Band (with guest directors Dave Gregoric and Dr. Aaron Lington). The middle school bands represented are from Diablo View, Diablo Vista, Foothill, St. Perpetua, Sequoia, Walnut Creek Intermediate and Stanley Middle School. The high schools represented are Acalanes, Campolindo, College Preparatory School, College Park, El Cerrito, Northgate, Home School and Las Lomas. The Acalanes Performing Arts Center. Tickets, \$5. Tickets are available at the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce (www.lafayettechamber.org or (925) 284-7404.

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