

MUSIC

ARTS & E

This is the summer of jazz

ARTS BEAT

Barry
Bassis



My first reaction to hearing the opening track on Tessa Souter's new CD "Obsession" is "wow." The singer has a rich contralto and uses it to great dramatic and musical effect.

She starts with the familiar "Eleanor Rigby" in a completely fresh arrangement that she created, featuring Jason Ennis' hypnotic work on guitar. Every word comes through with remarkable empathy for "all the lonely people." Her rendition ranks up there with the Beatles' original and the classic one by Ray Charles. She also completely remakes the Cream's "White Room" in an ingenious arrangement by Ennis that for the first time made me think about the lyrics.

She fearlessly takes on jazz instrumentals that have had lyrics added, such as Oscar Brown's words to Mongo Santamaria's "Afro Blue." Souter adds her own lyric (and arrangement) to Freddie Hubbard's "Little Sunflower." She reveals her own songwriting gift with "Now and Then" and "Usha's Wedding."

Whether digging into Brazilian tunes (such as the title track) or Nick Drake's moody "Riverman," Souter makes a strong impression. Reports are that she is sensational in live performances. We can find out soon.

Souter will have a CD release party for "Obsession"

at the Blue Note Club on August 3.

Jazz guitarist **Bobby Broom** was born and bred in New York and graduated from the High School of Music and Art.

In fact, as a teenager, he was already playing with jazz legends, including an appearance at Carnegie Hall in 1977 at age 16 with the saxophone colossus Sonny Rollins. Broom has been recording and touring with Rollins for most of the time since then as well as with his own groups (an organ trio and a trio with bass and drums with whom he usually performs in Chicago, where he has been living for many years).

His new album "**Bobby Broom Plays for Monk**" is a superlative trio recording in honor of one of his heroes (and mine): Thelonious Monk. Except for some early sessions with Charlie Christian that were privately recorded in the 1940's, Monk didn't play with guitarists, though he expressed admiration for Kenny Burrell and Baden Powell, both of whom occasionally performed his pieces.

Broom and his longstanding trio — bassist Dennis Carroll and drummer Kobie Watkins — don't try to follow Monk's own mercurial performances but to use his indelible pieces as a springboard for improvisations. Among the works performed are "Ask Me Now," "Evidence," "Reflections" and "Work" (not among his usually performed pieces) as well as the better known lyrical "Ruby, My Dear" and the swinging "In

Walked Bud" (with a witty reference to his current hometown, Chicago) and "Bemsha Swing."

The trio takes on two standards that Monk recorded: "Lulu's Back in Town" and "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," the latter done as a guitar solo. Broom's style roughly follows in the tradition of Wes Montgomery and calls to mind Wes' earlier, purer work. I think Monk would have enjoyed this album.

Broom and his trio make their New York debut at Birdland on August 18.

The first outdoor jazz festival in the United States was the one in Newport, Rhode Island in 1954. Though sponsors have come and gone, the one constant over the last 55 years is the organizer of the event: George Wein. This year, the festival is back, from August 7-9, with a new sponsor and a new name: **George Wein's CareFusion Jazz Festival 55**. The programming is eclectic with everything from straight-ahead jazz to Latin, soul, blues, pop, avant-garde jazz and world music.

The lineup begins on Friday, August 7 at the International Tennis Hall of Fame (194 Bellevue Avenue) with the soul-jazz diva Chaka Khan backed up by the George Duke Trio. Also on the bill is the Howard Alden/Anat Cohen Quartet; Alden is a swinging guitarist and Cohen is a virtuosic sax-clarinist player, who has recently been performing with her two brothers.

On Saturday, August 8, there will be a full day of music (11:30 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.) at Fort Adams State Park. Rap-

per-actor Mos Def is on the bill; coincidentally, he played Chuck Berry in "Cadillac Records," the movie about Chess Records in which Beyoncé portrayed Etta James.

Sax stars on the bill with their groups are Branford Marsalis, Joshua Redman, and Miguel Zenon (winner of the MacArthur Genius Award). Pianist-composer Cedar Walton will perform with his All-Stars featuring Lew Tabackin and Curtis Fuller. Esperanza Spaulding sings her thoughtful songs while playing a mean bass. Sultry Jane Monheit is a sweet-toned vocalist who can swing in the tradition of Ella Fitzgerald. Bilingual Chilean singer Claudia Acuna released last year's sexiest track, "In My Shoes."

Sunday's program (also from 11:30 a.m. - 7 p.m.) will feature Tony Bennett. The dean of American pop singers, Bennett has a flair

for jazz, as evidenced by his wonderful recordings with the big band of his late intimates, the late pianist Tony Bennett. American pop has always had as evidenced by his full recordings with the band of Count Basie. Evans. Dave Brubeck. "Time Out" the million-selling "Take Five") re-released to celebrate its 50th anniversary. pianist-composer strong.

Another veteran leader Royce Royce has played with her and John Coltrane. countless other artists. ately calls his band of Youth.

The trip was announced at the appearance, "I believe I'm 80." hand, the Bad Company trio (with a Wendy Lewis) t



AudraRox performed last Tuesday as part of families and children. The events, organized by held at Madison Square Park.