

APRIL 13, 2007

## BLUES AND JAZZ CLASSICS



WOODROW WILKINS / DELTA DEMOCRAT TIMES

**Blues guitarist Alvin "Youngblood" Hart** talks to East Side High School students in Cleveland before performing a solo, "Mama Don't Lie."

# A musical disconnect?

**Musicians have been touring Mississippi this week, talking to students about the relationship between blues and jazz**

**WOODROW WILKINS**

woodrowwilkins@ddtonline.com

**CLEVELAND** — America's children are disconnected from this nation's musical history, Thelonius Monk Jr. said before a program aimed toward changing that

fact.

The result, he said, is that young people know very little about jazz, which, like rock and hip-hop, has roots in the blues.



**Monk**

See **BLUES** on A8



# BLUES

FROM A1

Monk's father, jazz legend Thelonius Monk, is widely considered to be one of the three architects — with Charlie Parker and John Birks "Dizzy" Gillespie — of modern jazz.

Thelonius Monk Jr., also known as T.S. Monk, is board chairman of the New Orleans-based Thelonius Monk Institute of Jazz.

In an effort to re-establish that connection, the Institute has begun a pilot program, "The Blues and Jazz — Two American Classics." Six musicians have been touring Mississippi this week, performing, demonstrating and talking to students about the relationship between blues and jazz.

Participating in the tour are Grammy-nominated saxophonist Antonio Hart, Grammy-nominated blues guitarist and Mississippi native Alvin "Youngblood" Hart, pianist Richard Johnson, bassist Reginald Veal, drummer Otis Brown III and vocalist Lisa Henry.

On Thursday, the group spent the day in Cleveland, first visiting East Side High School and later Delta State University. The musicians and Institute officials also visited Dockery Plantation.

Today, they completed the tour in Ruleville.

Because the plantation is known as the birthplace of the blues, the tour was underwritten by Carolyn and Bill Powers in memory of Joe Rice Dockery and Keith Dockery McLean.

Plans are to expand the program nationwide with visits to major cities, including Chicago and Memphis, as well as returning to the schools visited this week.

On the gym floor at East Side, while the musicians set up and students filed in, Monk talked about the disconnect, saying jazz was America's dance music for 25 to 30 years.

"When academia intellectualized jazz and stopped people from dancing, that began the disconnect," he said.

During the program, each performer gave a brief demonstration before the group performed a song. Selections included James Brown's "Gonna Have a Funky Good Time," Sonny Rollins' "Tenor Madness" and Thelonius Monk's "Straight, No Chaser." With the aid of a visual projector and sheet music, the performers talked about chords and the bars used in blues and jazz.

During "Tender Madness," Henry performed a vocal scat,

reminiscent of Ella Fitzgerald. During Veal's solo on the electric, upright bass, one student shouted, "All right, he feelin' that."

One group of girls in the audience was so vocal that Henry dubbed them "The Blues Girls."

The program ended with a brief question-and-answer session.

Afterward, East Side Principal Richard Gray said the school's objective was to give students exposure of different kinds of music. Such cultural efforts continued today with a performance by the internationally-acclaimed Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit, who performed "Speak for Yourself," a candid play about race and ethnicity.

"I think it's very important," Gray said of students' introduction to performing arts other than what they're used to.

"Our children don't know. They don't know the history of the blues and jazz," he said. "It's our job as educators to teach them."

"The Blues and Jazz — Two American Classics" is a component of the Institute's free online Jazz in America curriculum. For more information, visit [www.jazzinamerica.org](http://www.jazzinamerica.org).