

THE OXFORD EAGLE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2007



BRUCE NEWMAN

Drummer Otis Brown plays with Oxford High School band members as the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz held a clinic at the school on Tuesday morning.

OHS students get a lesson they can dance to

Jazz musicians stop by to teach, perform

BY SUE LYNN MILLS
Staff Writer

Dig this: Music is about emotion and expression, not just the notes on a page.

That was one of the messages delivered with a jazzy beat to several Oxford High School students Tuesday by performers from the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz.

Musicians of the nonprofit music education organization named after the jazz great visited the high school Tuesday to give lessons to the jazz band as well as the musical theater and choral students.

The performers included Grammy nominated alto saxophonist Antonio Hart; Grammy nominated blues guitarist, singer and songwriter Alvin "Youngblood" Hart; critically acclaimed vocalist Lisa Henry; pianist Richard Johnson; bass player Reginald Veal; and drummer Otis Brown III.

The visit was one on the two-week tour of Mississippi schools to discuss "The Blues and Jazz — Two American Classics."

During the jazz band clinic and the vocal master classes, students learned how to hone their skills and to take them to the next level.

Hart explained to the students in the jazz band that music is more than the notes written on a piece of paper.

"The music is about joy and happiness — not just the music on the page," Hart said. "The music has to be inside you."

He and the other band members spent the morning teaching the students a piece of jazz music but spent most of the time having the students clap out and hum the beat to catch the rhythm of the music. Hart also explained to the students that they needed to listen to jazz before they play jazz.

"You have to listen to it and hear the masters play it in order to know how it is supposed to sound," Hart said. "You have to listen to jazz because if you don't, you won't be able to capture the essence of it."

After the lessons, the performers gave a concert for the kids and taught them the differences and similarities of blues and jazz.

They also talked about Dockery Farms, which is in the heart of the Mississippi

Delta and considered by many to be the birthplace of the blues and the influence that blues has played on all music.

During the concert, the students were allowed to get out of their seats and enjoy the music. Many students danced in the aisles.

"This was a great opportunity for our kids to learn from the professionals," Matt Rowan, OHS band director, said. "This is something they know more about than I do and there is no substitute from learning from the professionals."

"I really learned how to put myself in the music more," said Silas Reed IV, an OHS senior who plays the saxophone and guitar.

"I usually don't play much jazz, but I enjoy it and learned that it is more traditional and full of technique," said David Frink, an OHS senior and drummer.

McKenna Raney, 10th grader who plays the saxophone, said she learned that jazz is about enjoying the music and the people.

"He told us that jazz has to be like a family," Raney said. "It is much better and more fun when you play it with people you know."

— suelynn@oxfordeagle.com