

Jazzing it up at CHS

Katrina Otuonye
Guest Contributor

Everyone enjoys those smooth soulful sounds of jazz. Those trumpets wailing and the tickling of the piano keys immediately bring to mind a dimly lit jazz club in the

1940s, with the black-clad band rocking away. His music has spanned far past his death thirty years ago and his music is still very prevalent in the jazz community, as shown by New York's music contest.

The jazz group with the best recording of some Duke Ellington's songs will win the music competition. The winners will receive an all expenses paid trip to New York City to meet Wynton Marsalis. Wynton Marsalis is renowned for being an amazing jazz trumpet player, and in 1997, he became the first jazz musician to win the Pulitzer Prize in Music.



JAZZ BAND ROCKS OUT -- Jazz band members taking a break from practice.
Photo by Katie Coe

Of course, sometimes when a person hears the word "band" they immediately think "this one time, at band camp...", but this is not your same old marching band.

This is the Cookeville High School Jazz Band. These guys (and girls) practice every Tuesday from 3:15PM to 6:00PM in the band room.

The Jazz Band is rehearsing for a Duke Ellington music competition in New York. Duke Ellington is one of the world's greatest jazz composers and musicians.

The jazz band is led by trombonist Mr. Billy Stepp, percussionist Mr. David Talbert and is student taught by saxophonist Mr. Tony Babecka. The members of the jazz band include select students from the award-winning Cookeville High School Marching Band.

Lead saxophone player, Michael Kelley, says, "Jazz band is awesome. We rock." Fellow jazz band member and saxophone player Jason Tripp calls jazz band "the shizzle."

A lot of hard work and discipline is helping this group go far. Good luck and just remember: don't be sharp, don't be flat, just B-natural!

Popcorn and Politics

If con is the opposite of pro, then what is the opposite of progress?

Erin McMillan
Charger Staff

With the election past, Washington is settling back into routine. There is all the usual brownnosing, backstabbing, and political scandal that ensures the norm will never be boring.

Gearing up for his second term, Bush is cleaning house and ousting cabinet members left and right. Out of the fifteen cabinet members serving with Bush, seven have decided not to stick it out for a second term and he is scrambling to find replacements within his circle of supporters.

The biggest change in the cabinet came when Secretary of State Colin Powell resigned. Though this is not a surprise (speculation of his resignation has been circulating since August 2003), his departure will cause a shake up because he is the most crucial secretary, instrumental in keeping the country going.

He has confirmed that he will stay on board with the Bush administration until his replacement, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, is ready to take over. Powell has been regarded in polls as the most

popular member of the Bush administration with 20% of people trusting him over Bush and other Republican leaders.



Another shake up in Bush's inner circle came with the resignation of controversial Attorney General John Ashcroft.

In his resignation letter to the president, Ashcroft said, "The objective of securing the safety of Americans from crime and terror has been



achieved. I believe that the Department of Justice would be well served by new leadership and

fresh inspiration. I believe that my energies and talents should be directed toward other

challenging horizons." Ashcroft has been widely criticized for giving too much importance to religion in the Justice Department and also for supporting anti-terrorist acts, particularly that of the Patriot Act, that many feel infringe on the rights of innocent citizens. After experiencing gall bladder problems earlier this year, Ashcroft decided

he needed to step down and retreat into retirement. His replacement has been named as White House counsel Alberto Gonzales.



Alberto Gonzales will be the first Hispanic to serve as Attorney General, the nation's top law enforcement position. He will be the second Hispanic to serve in Bush's cabinet. Gonzales is an attorney with a degree from Harvard. He



has worked alongside Bush since 1995, when he was still Governor of Texas.

The same day Ashcroft stepped down, Commerce Secretary Donald Evans jumped ship, too. A



very close friend of Bush for nearly thirty years, Evans stepped down simply saying he wished to return to Texas. He told his aides he was ready for a change.

No replacement has officially been named, but all eyes are on this year's finance chairman for Bush's campaign, Mercer Reynolds, who raised more than \$260 million for the campaign trail.

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge will be moving on to greener pastures also. "After more than 22 consecutive years of public service,

it is time to give personal and family matters a higher priority," Ridge said in his resignation letter to President Bush.

Bush's second term will also have to go on without its Education Secretary; current Secretary Rod Paige has given notice as well.

He is set to possibly be replaced by Margaret Spellings. Bush is also losing his Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman as well as his Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham.

Second term presidents often strive to improve upon their cabinets. They fight to rid themselves of thorns in their side and controversy and always hope that for the second go around they can throw together a cabinet of perfection.

The presidential advisers hold much influence in the government, and this time, Bush is throwing caution to the wind and appointing those who have stuck with him throughout his political career.

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The life and times of the "unforgettable" Nat King Cole

Alison Palmer
Editor-in-Chief

During this holiday season, people often remember the lyrics "Chestnuts roasting on an open fire and Jack Frost nipping at your nose." These famous lines are in "The Christmas Song" sung by one of the major stars of jazz in the 1940s and 50s, Nat King Cole.

Nat King Cole is also known for songs like "Unforgettable" and "L-O-V-E," songs that are still popular half a century later. While everyone has heard his name, most are unaware of the road that Cole took to attain his immortal reputation.

Nathaniel Coles was born on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1919, in Montgomery, Alabama, to parents Edward and Perlina Coles. His family moved to Chicago when Nathaniel was four years old, and his musical abilities became apparent when he started taking piano lessons at five years old. By the time he was in high school, he had his own band.

While still in school, Nathaniel, now known as Nat, and his younger brother Eddie formed a sextet called Eddie Coles Solid Swingers. They performed in Panama, a club in Chicago, for six months.

Nat should have incredible dedication to his music by performing into the early hours of the morning, snatching a few hours of sleep and then going to school.

During the six months that he performed at Panama, he also recorded his first album with Eddie Coles Solid Swingers, singing several songs on the album. It was also during this time that he met Nadine Robinson, a dancer at the Panama.

Shortly after, Nat dropped the "s" from his last name, and he and Nadine joined a touring show called Shuffle Along. While on tour in 1938, nineteen-year-old Nat and twenty-nine-year-old Nadine married.

After the tour, Nat performed in various bars and struggled financially, but his sparkling personality

and outstanding talent ensued a large following of fans.

One supporter of Cole was Bob Lewis, who was also the manager of a night club called The Swanee Inn, and he hired Cole to perform with a trio on a regular basis. They became known as the King Cole Swingsters and later as King Cole and his Swing Trio. He performed at The Swanee for six months. Eventually, the members of the trio were



AN AMERICAN LEGEND -- Nat King Cole remembered. Photo courtesy of celebritypictures.com.

dropped from the name and became a backup band that accompanied Cole's singing.

In 1943, Nat Cole's big break came when he was performing at the Radio Room in Los Angeles. John Mercer, head of Capitol Records, attended the concert and signed Cole to his label.

Cole soon became Capitol's number one artist, and the Capitol Records building in Hollywood is nicknamed "The House That Nat Built."

Nat's first major hit was the self-written song "Straighten Up and Fly Right" in 1943. Other hits followed, and on March 15, Nat King Cole reached No. 1 on the Billboard charts.

Cole's first ballad to receive high

acclaim was the famous "The Christmas Song," recorded in 1946. Throughout his life, Cole recorded this song four times, and in 1974 it was placed in the Hall of Fame at The National Academy of Recorded Arts and Sciences.

In 1947, Nat divorced his wife Nadine after falling in love with fellow singer Maria Ellington while performing in Club Zanzibar in New York. He and Maria married in 1948 and would eventually have five children.

The newly-married couple soon experienced several obstacles in the entertainment industry. After finding a house that they wanted to buy in an up-scale section of Hollywood, their offer was rejected because the house was located in a "white only" neighborhood. After much fighting, Cole and his

wife were allowed to move in to the house without the support of their neighbors. Throughout the course of their stay, one neighbor hired police guards, obscenities were burned on their lawn, and someone poisoned their dog. Despite these trials, Nat continued recording music, becoming more and more popular with the national public.

"The Nature Boy" was Cole's next big hit and was No. 1 on the charts for seven weeks. Other artists, including rat packer Frank Sinatra, also recorded this song, but no one received the acclaim for it that Cole did.

Cole also sang several duets with other Capitol artists including Nellie Lutcher, Stan Kenton, Woody Herman, Johnny Mercer and Dean

Martin. He also recorded songs with his wife Maria and daughter Natalie.

Nat King Cole's next success was the song "Unforgettable" which received worldwide acclaim.

Many of his songs appeared in film credits, and he made personal appearances in several movies including *Saint Louis Blues*, *The Nat King Cole Story* and *China Gate*.

In 1957, Cole became the first black person to host his own television show. It aired for sixty-eight weeks and featured several prominent jazz musicians and vocalists.

Later in his career, Cole appealed more to his worldwide audience by performing songs in Spanish, Portuguese, German, Italian, French and Japanese. In 1960, he even sang in *The Royal Command Performance* in London, England.

Despite being under the exclusive contract with Capitol Records, Cole still performed with other jazz artists like Lester Young, Buddy Rich and Willie Smith. He sang in these performances without the permission of the label and under the aliases of Sam Schmaltz, Shorty Nadine, Lord Calvert, Eddie Laguna and Aye Guy.

In 1962, Cole strayed from the norm and recorded two Country and Western albums entitled *Ramblin's Rose* and *Dear Lonely Heart*, the title track of the former reaching the No. 1 spot on the Billboard charts.

In 1964, he was in Chicago starring in the show "Sights and Sounds of 1964" and filming the movie *Cat Ballou*. He also began recording another album that featured the hit "L-O-V-E."

The album was released on Dec. 1 and on Dec. 7, Cole was admitted into the hospital and diagnosed with lung cancer. Nat King Cole died on Feb. 15, 1965.

Aside from being a great singer, Nat King Cole was also a talented pianist, made several historic moments in black history and influenced several other artists. His amazing life and talent make Nat King Cole one of the major icons of music.