

Legendary jazz pianist Dave Brubeck is set to headline the First Annual Maine Jazz Festival at Portland's Merrill Auditorium on Labor Day weekend.

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Dave Brubeck & the First Annual Maine Jazz Festival

Jazz great Dave Brubeck is coming to Portland this summer to kick off the **First Annual Maine Jazz Festival** with performances at Portland's Merrill Auditorium this Labor Day weekend. But his love affair with the state goes back to the 1950s. Born on December 6, 1920, in Concord, California, he was trained at an early age in classical music by his

mother and was performing as a pro by the time he was 13. He studied classical composition with Darius Milhaud, the famous French composer, and formed The Dave Brubeck Quartet with Paul Desmond on alto saxophone in 1951. Their distinctive harmonic approach and daring improvised contrapuntal choruses caused a stir in the jazz world, creating "West Coast" or "cool" jazz. He has com-

posed several large-scale works, including two ballets, a musical, an oratorio, four cantatas, a mass, numerous solo piano pieces, and works for jazz combo and orchestra, a number of them jazz standards, notably "Take Five," "Blue Rondo a la Turk," "In Your Own Sweet Way," and "The Duke."

As one of America's foremost goodwill ambassadors, Brubeck has entertained world leaders at the Reagan-Gorbachev Summit in Moscow and performed before eight U.S. Presidents, princes, kings, heads of state, and Pope John Paul II. He's also a perennial summer guest at the Black Point Inn in Scarborough, which appears on the cover of his Grammy-winning CD, *Just You, Just Me*.

Can you describe the first time you came to Maine, and what it was like for you?

DB: Well, not counting Bowdoin College (I performed at a number of Maine colleges in the 1950s – I've even been up here when it was all snow and people had those little red flags on their fenders... you know, it was really a lot of snow, I remember)... not counting that, do you know Swan's Island. One of my close friends lives there, Eric Kunzel, conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony, and I used to go visit Eric on Swan's. It was fun to go to Swan's Island because the crab were so abundant that you could eat all you want and not feel like you were spending a lot of money. The people would give you crab and say, "Here, take this." Fishermen would come by once in a while. We like Monhegan Island, too. You know the Black Point Inn? We like to go there, too.

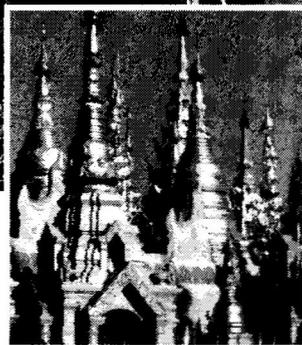
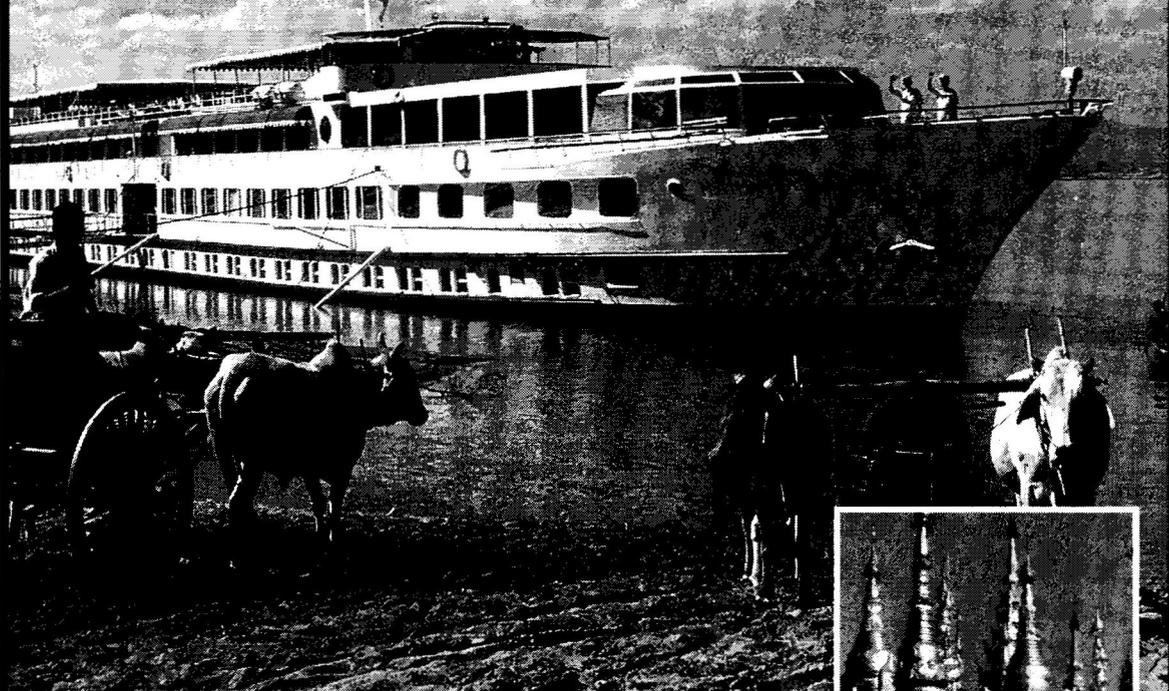
You've even featured two empty Adirondack chairs from the inn facing the seashore on one of your recent CDs. What about the inn inspired you?

DB: Oh, it's just a wonderful, relaxed place; the food is great. My wife just said to me, "I wish we could go back to Black Point," but we're so busy we can't go back this summer. Our first summer there was about three years ago.

How do you know you're really in Maine?

DB: A lot of things come to mind. There's whale watching, but it doesn't work because it wasn't on purpose! A whale came right up to our very small boat almost like it was looking at us and

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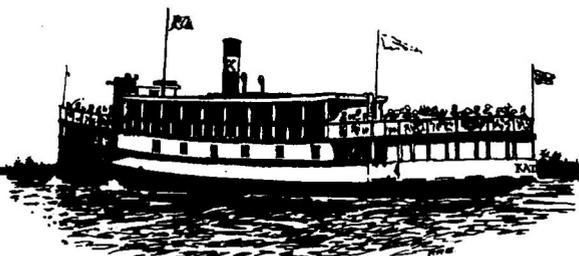
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dove right under. You could *hear* him. And it was so wonderful that he didn't tip us over or do something funny, you know. Whale being almost eye level with you, and then diving down. Our boat was stalled; the motor had conked out. The captain was on a two-way radio trying to get help out there and then this whale came up. The sea was absolutely calm, and it was foggy.

What was wonderful about Monhegan was eating all the crabs outside. They didn't serve them in the restaurant. You went out on wooden tables on the lawn so you could make all the fuss and mess, and I remember them telling us they have no electricity on the island. That was funny, because Edison's son was living out there.

Who were your early influences on the piano... was it people like Teddy Wilson?

Well, Teddy Wilson was important, but Art Tatum was a big influence, and I knew him slightly because I wanted to and then I got to actually play in Boston at Storyville, you remember that club, opposite Tatum. I was like the intermission pianist for Art Tatum. Before either of them there was Billy Kyle. He was with Louis Armstrong.

Can you describe a galvanizing moment when you just knew you were breaking through and doing something that maybe had never been done before? I mean, for Chuck Yeager it was easy. He could feel the sonic boom. But where were you when you first broke the sound barrier?

DB: A couple things stand out. One time when I was in the Army in World War II I hadn't been able to play for over a month and I found a piano on a stage out in the woods where they gave concerts, and I was so glad to see that piano and I went up and played it and rather than sound bad to myself, I sounded great. It was so thrilling and inspiring to touch a piano again. And that was a big happening for me, and I could hear all the harmonies I was doing and I knew they were different than most guys and it was a very inspiring hour or so I spent out there, all alone. Nobody came around. We shipped out of Texas and then we went up and shipped overseas. You know where Lynn, Massachusetts, is? I remember visiting with a soldier that lived there. It's near Boston, in a camp

where you just boarded huge ships. We got on a big ship called the *Washington*, which was a passenger liner and we went out with a convoy and then the captain of the *Washington* got tired of staying with the convoy because there were submarines trying to get you, so he figured out if you go a certain distance and then change course completely a submarine can't keep you in their sights, so we zigzagged away from the convoy and went to Europe that way.

Do you believe in the myth of the repeatable moment? Many people visit Maine every summer to recapture a perfect moment they had once. What are you looking for that's uniquely here?

The last time I had that feeling in Maine is near Cadillac Mountain. We were on the *QE2*, and it was a jazz cruise. We went into Bar Harbor and then we took buses and went sightseeing and then went back down to the Newport Jazz Festival, which I'll be playing at this year. That was beautiful, the scene, the *QE2* from up on the mountain down on the harbor. The ship looks so huge from up there! We'll be on the *QE2* going to London this summer. I like ocean cruising because I can get a lot of work done and people can't bug me because I can just get in that cabin and work.

What's the loneliest song you ever wrote?

DB: It's called "So Lonely," written on Maui in the Hawaiian islands. I wrote three songs that haven't been recorded because it was a year ago January. One was called "So Lonely," and one was called "All My Love," which I dedicated to my wife. The third is "Day after Day." We'll probably record those in three or four months, on our next album, which is solo piano. I do "Harbor Lights" and "Red Sails on the Sunset," some wonderful songs, and it's going to be called "Over the Rainbow." I do that, too.

What's your most biographical song?

DB: Oh there's a lot of them. Yeah. The one I'm writing now for the Stockton California Symphony is full of inside things that only I would pick up. There are hidden little things all the way through it.

What writer writes most like the way you play?

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DB: Maybe Thomas Mann. He understood music. *Dr. Faustus* is full of references to music. I've set quite a few poets and art songs to music. I usually look for a cadence or a rhythm, yeah. I just did Robert Penn Warren and Carl Van Doren. For children I've just set "I Have a Little Shadow that Goes In and Out with Me" and "The Wind."

Ever thought of buying property up here, or would that spoil it?

DB: No, I've wanted to. I almost did, out on Swan's Island. In fact, I was all ready to go and they couldn't give me clear title, so my friend who is an attorney said you don't want to buy property that somebody else might come and kick you off of after you've built a house, so that ruined that.

A whale came right up to our very small boat, almost like it was looking at us, and dove right under. You could hear him.

So you really like islands.

DB: Yeah, I like islands. Or peninsulas. Any way you can be near the ocean.

The Maine Jazz Festival is a not for profit organization whose goal is to produce a world-class music festival on the coast of Maine, while raising money to fund youth programs throughout the state. The four directors are all from the Greater Portland area. Jim Clifford is a lawyer and lobbyist, his cousin Paul Clifford teaches English at King Middle School, Andy Holman runs Global Tele-Services, and Keith Canning is sales Manager for Pine State Trading Company. The four plan to fund the jazz performances through donations and personal and business sponsorships. Profits will be turned over to two institutions for music education. They have already garnered support from Gov. Angus King, the Hon. Stephen Rowe, and Congressman Tom Allen, to name a few.