

SHOWCASE

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Dizzy Gillespie sees innovation still going strong

By KARLA TIPTON
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The Musician's Union Local 47 building in Hollywood retains an air of the past. That familiar odor associated with old buildings meets visitors as they wind down the dimly lit narrow staircase to the rehearsal rooms.

At first glance, it doesn't seem a likely place for Dizzy Gillespie to be rehearsing his All-Star Big Band in anticipation of their performance Sunday at the 10th annual Playboy Jazz Festival at the Hollywood Bowl.

On second thought, however, the underground setting seems to suggest the be-bop days of more than 40 years ago when dark, smokey nightclubs were the place to go to hear what would prove to be one of the most exciting musical developments of the 20th century. During those formative years, it was Gillespie — along with saxophonist Char-

JAZZ

lie Parker — who became jazz pioneers forging the way for a new music.

At the time, even Gillespie's physical demeanor — including beret, horned-rimmed glasses and goatee, the radical upward angle of his trumpet (bent that way so he could hear himself better) and his blowfish cheeks — suggested that jazz was breaking away from the predictable team effort of the big band and heading toward a more personal and offbeat musical statement within the framework of the small combo.

Gillespie's look set the standard for the be-bop movement.

To many enthusiasts, the style of be-bop represents jazz at its height. Some may insist that such creativity isn't present in jazz today.

But the 71-year-old Gillespie, in a phone interview with the Valley Press, disagrees: "Innovation is going on just as strong," he said. The difference between then and now just seems more marked because, "we haven't had any central figure like Charlie Parker."

Gillespie regularly states that young jazz musicians of today are more talented than were his contemporaries of the '40s. "That's real true," he said. "And the music is spreading rapidly."

At the Hollywood rehearsal, it took only a few times through for the All-Star Big Band — under the direction of Jon Faddis — to polish up Gillespie's jazz classic "Night in Tunisia," before the trumpeter himself arrived to fine tune the number.

When Gillespie came in, the timbre in the room changed. The attentions of the nearly 20 musicians seemed more focused.

As always, Gillespie became the center of attention.

Like the individualist he's always been, he insisted that certain passages be repeated over and over. When he didn't hear what he was listening for, he scowled, ranted and took up his trumpet to show what he wanted.

But when the notes rang true, Gillespie's broad smile was all the encouragement the members of the All-Star Big Band needed.

In the tradition of several of Gillespie's past bands, the All-Star Big Band includes not only musicians of this country, but also many from other countries such as drummer Ignacio Berroa

of Puerto Rico and percussionist Victor Pantoja of Brazil.

In the late '40s, Gillespie was one of the first to work with Latin American rhythms as exemplified by the numbers "Manteca" and "Cubano Be, Cubano Bop" (from *The Greatest of Dizzy Gillespie*).

Now the incorporation of a variety of rhythms into jazz is quite commonplace. On Saturday, the first day of the Playboy Jazz Festival, the "juju" music of Nigerian King Sunny Ade's African Beats band proves to be one of the highlights.

Gillespie believes that jazz will one day become part of a single style of music: "In maybe 16 years, the music of the Western Hemisphere will be unified," he said. "That will be a new music then, but it will have all the attributes of the music around today."

Obvious within that sound will be African rhythms, which have only been discovered recently because "They were cut off from us for a long time," he said.

As for his own immediate future, Gillespie said he hopes to

See GILLESPIE on H14

Gillespie

From H6

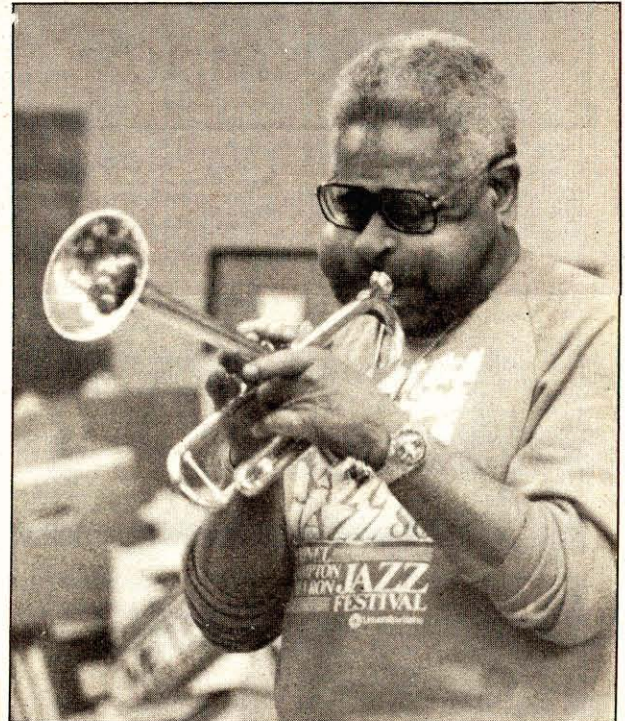
He will follow up his performance on Sunday — his first appearance at the Playboy Jazz Festival since he headlined at the first one held in Chicago in 1959 — with a big band tour of Europe. He'll then return to the framework of a small group.

Does he think he'll ever retire? "Someday," he answered.

As for the music: "Jazz music will be around forever," he said. "It will go through all kinds of

changes, but it'll be here."

Other performers at the Playboy Jazz Festival include Kenny G, Carmen McRae, the Fabulous Thunderbirds, Michael Brecker Band, King Sunny Ade, Ray Brown Trio, World Saxophone Quartet and Bob Florence and the Limited Edition (Saturday) and Ray Charles, Spyro Gyra, Bobby McFerrin, Ahmad Jamal, Latin Jazz '88, Timeless All-Stars and Jeannie and Jimmy Cheatham (Sunday).



rick perrine photo

AT A RECENT rehearsal at the Musician's Union Local 47 building in Hollywood, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie works to fine tune the All-Star Big Band, who will back him Sunday at the Playboy Jazz Festival in Hollywood.