

Jazz greats put the cool in school

BY BRYAN CAIRNS
Correspondent

Markham Jazz Festival founder and artistic director Hal Hill sure knows the sweet sound of success.

Last year, when he approached the Trillium Foundation of Ontario for a grant for the festival, the application suggested putting some of the money back into the community.

Hill opted to educate a whole new generation about the magic of jazz.

"I came up with the idea of bringing musicians into the schools," he recalls.

Five schools were chosen and, along with the teachers, Hill determined which performers suited their curriculums.

Among the players were Sean Bray, a contemporary guitarist; Arche Alleyne, a drummer; and Dell Dako, a multi-instrumentalist who spotlighted the baritone saxophone.

Since January, Huron

Heights Secondary School, Markham District High School, Unionville High School, Thornhill Secondary School and Dr. G. W. Williams Secondary School have all had demonstrations, followed by a Q and A session.

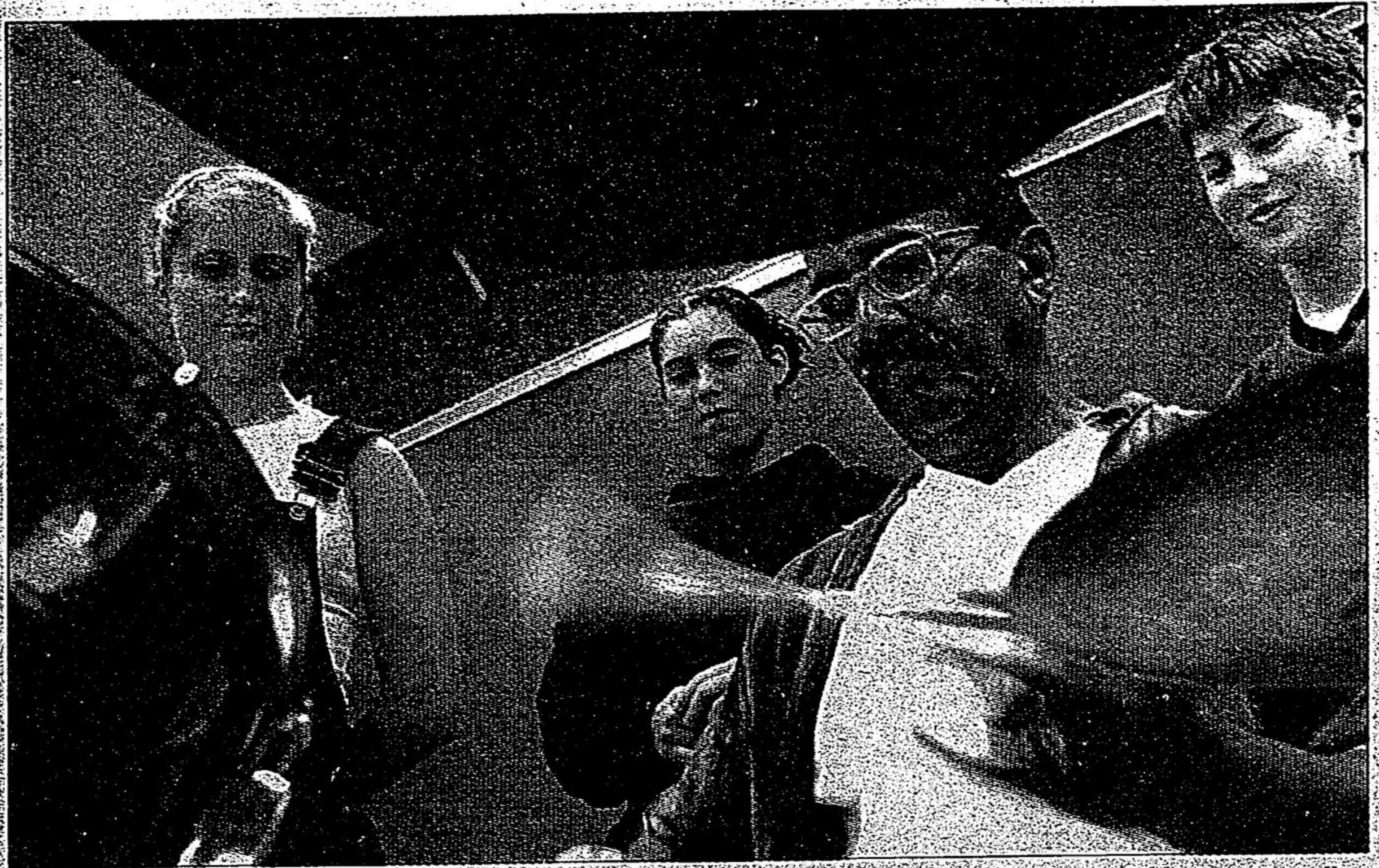
Unfortunately, due to time constraints and exams, more shows were impossible to book. However, Hill said the teachers were thrilled, while students never stopped asking questions. Plus, the musicians were floored by the knowledge of their listeners.

It seems there are quite a few jazz enthusiasts in their own back-yard. So what's next?

How about an encore? Hill plans to go back to the Trillium Foundation next year but with a more ambitious schedule in mind.

"I want to make it a whole year's project, this time starting in late fall or early winter."

Jazz on a regular basis in more schools? Now that's music to the ears.



Jazz drumming great Archie Alleyne in session with students at Dr. G. W. Williams Secondary School in Aurora. As well as talking to students about his life and the history of jazz, Alleyne demonstrated his technique to percussion enthusiasts Caleigh Dauphinais (left), Jackie Morris and Michael Richardson.

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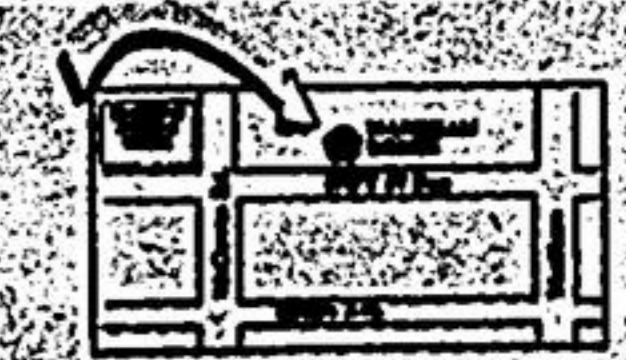
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