By Randy Hawthorne

It was a weekend for jazz as the ever-popular Dave Brubeck concert was held at the Back Bay Theatre while Club 47 presented the young avant-garde Gary Burton Quartet.

Although the Dave Brubeck Quartet is in the process of splitting up it is obvious that they will still perform as one of the top jazz groups ever. Interestingly enough, their material was entirely of recent vintage, rather than the revivals and recreations of songs which seem to dominate a group's final performances. This can be traced to the possibility of Columbia Records using the concert as a sort of prelude to perhaps final, Brubeck release. The concert was characterized by the extraordinary professionalism of the entire group and the unusual appearance they presented on stage. Invidiously, drummer Joe Morello continually impressed the audience with his top-caliber work and then went all out with his seven minute drum solo. Brubeck himself showed that although his silver hair indicates that he may be aging, his music certainly isn't. He often played surreal out-of-rhythm passages and off-brand chords, creating a new style which has progressed radically from the early Brubeck-Diamond days. It was also once again an example of the finest use of contemporary, a technique mastered by the group over the years. Taken as a whole it was an impressive performance of contemporary jazz played at its best.

In a different light was the avant-garde jazz led by young vocalist Gary Burton, guitarist Larry Coryell, bassist Steve Swallow, and drummer Bob Moses. Their sound is unique: often loud and challenging while at other times gentle and introspective. That Burton has mastered the vibes is unquestionable as he often showed Allen. Coryell's jazz technique is impeccable. There are times, however, when his journeys into rock seem out of context. The performance was interesting, to say the least, lacking only consistency largely owing to their relative youth in comparison with other major jazz groups. The conclusion of their set made the mood of it all. While a repeatedly taped segment plays in the background, the four disassemble their instruments, form a pyramid of instruments on stage and, as the music stops, walk off. Certainly impressive and unique.

music...

Airplane takes off, keeps on flying

By Steve Grant

"Flight Jefferson Airplane - get you there on time" - so sang the Jefferson Airplane about themselves, the first group of the current avant-garde genre. Last Saturday night the Airplane, recently with new material - to unprecedented heights - in both sets the mood of it all. While a previously taped segment plays in the background, the four disassemble their instruments, form a pyramid of instruments on stage and, as the music stops, walk off. Certainly impressive and unique.

Ludwik Kaukonen on what can be done with feedback. This ten-minute rendition was rather different from the single previous Airplane song, and much more experimental and improvised. But Steve Grant Grace Slick has gained considerable acclaim for her writing and singing, and she was distinctly good. On both performances of her "White Rabbit" she seemed bored with the song, as though she felt obliged to sing it only because it was a hit single. Marty Balin, the group's leader, also seemed forced on "Today" in both sets. The outstanding performance was easily guitarist Kaukonen. In part his performances he has had a very smooth, powerful style of soloing which he emerged upon Saturday night with his new feedback technique.

The highlights of the evening were easily "Back It Baby," a slow blues piece which Kaukonen also sang, and the two renditions of "Ballad of You, Me and Ponnell," which is probably the rock band's most excellent piece on a solo electric bass. Jack Casady's performance forms the basis for the most interesting instrument in rock today.

Baffled audience

Except for the few mind freaks, the audience was a bit baffled by the lack of familiar songs, especially during the second set. This situation is unfortunate. The Airplane, as a growing group of musicians, have deserted that popular straight style for something they consider better. Hopefully they will continue to progress musically, and the results should remain among the most worthwhile in pop music.

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