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VF Outlet Berks Jazz Fest celebrates rich heritage with Reel Jazz Classics event

Reading, PA -- Feb. 23 -- Jazz isn't just a music genre. It's an art form steeped in rich tradition with a widely celebrated, inspirational past.

While many of jazz's great musicians are gone, their music lives on through music lovers and musicians alike.

Now, jazz lovers have an exciting opportunity to experience a treasure trove of audio-visual footage from six timeless legends of jazz, thanks to the Jazz Icons DVD series.

The VF Outlet Berks Jazz Fest has partnered with the producers of the Icons series -- four boxed sets, 30 individual DVDs -- to screen selections of these vintage, unseen concerts at this special "Countdown to the 20th" community event.

Reel Jazz Classics is slated for Sunday, March 7, at the Miller Center for the Arts on the campus of Reading Area Community College in Reading, beginning at 2 p.m. There is no cost.

The schedule is as follows:

2 p.m., Woody Herman

Live concert: England, 1964

Woody Herman features a blistering concert from 1964 showcasing one of the hottest lineups of the "Swinging Herd," including trumpeter Bill Chase, trombonist Phil Wilson and saxophonist Sal Nistico. Woody and band roar throughout the show which includes standards such as "After You've Gone," "Lonesome Old Town" and "Sister Sadie."

2:30 p.m. John Coltrane

Live concert: Germany, 1961

Saxophone legend John Coltrane was a true giant of 20th century music. This incredible video features Trane's classic quintet of Elvin Jones on drums, Reggie Workman on bass, Eric Dolphy on sax/flute and McCoy Tyner on piano performing three classic songs -- "My Favorite Things," "Ev'rytime We Say Goodbye" and "Impressions."

3 p.m. Wes Montgomery

Live in-studio: England, 1965

Wes Montgomery was one of the most unique and influential guitarists in music history. This beautifully filmed program features Wes, in an intimate studio setting, performing some of his best-known tunes, including "Four On Six," "Full House," "Here's That Rainy Day" and "Twisted Blues."

3:30 p.m. Duke Ellington

Live concert: Holland 1958

Filmed at Amsterdam's famed Concertgebouw, this film features the 16-piece Duke Ellington Orchestra that includes legendary musicians Clark Terry, Johnny Hodges, Harry Carney, Paul Gonsalves, Quentin Jackson and Ray Nance. Duke and the band are in top form performing an outstanding set that features "Sophisticated Lady" and "My Funny Valentine."

4 p.m. Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers

Live concert: Belgium, 1958

This historic film features what many consider to be one of drummer Art Blakey's finest ensembles in jazz history -- Bobby Timmons, piano; Jymie Merriitt, bass; Benny Golson, sax; Lee Morgan, trumpet. Lost for nearly 50 years, this concert is the only known visual document of this influential band who were together for only six months.

4:30 p.m. Ella Fitzgerald

Live concert: Belgium, 1957

In one of the first Ella Fitzgerald concerts captured on film, "The First Lady of Song" joins jazz greats Ray Brown, Herb Ellis, Jo Jones and the legendary Oscar Peterson on classic songs such as "Lullaby of Birdland," "Angel Eyes," "Love for Sale," "Tenderly," "April in Paris" and "Just One Of Those Things."

These special screenings will be hosted by former WEEU 830AM Radio personality Lew Runkle.

The Jazz Icons DVDs feature full-length concerts and in-studio performances by the greatest legends of jazz, filmed all over the world from the 1950s through the 1970s.

"The release of Jazz Icons is like the unearthing of a musical time capsule ..." -- Quincy Jones

Come celebrate the past legends of jazz at this special Reel Jazz Classics event.

The 20th annual VF Outlet Berks Jazz Fest, presented by the Berks Arts Council, runs March 19-28, and features an expansive array of musical styles featuring contemporary and traditional jazz and blues artists. Over 130 events at major venues, clubs and restaurants throughout Greater Reading make this a truly unique music festival. For more information, including ticketing, artist bios and archived releases, visit www.berksjazzfest.com. For more information on the Berks Arts Council, a nonprofit arts organization dedicated to promoting the arts in Greater Reading, visit www.berksarts.org.

To order tickets for Berks Jazz Fest shows:

Visit the Sovereign Center box office, Seventh and Penn streets, Reading.

Call Ticketmaster at 1-800-745-3000 to charge by phone; or visit ticketmaster.com.

Order online at berksjazzfest.com.

For a complete schedule of concerts, visit www.berksjazzfest.com

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