

**\$2,000 - Matthew Porcelain**

J.P. Taravella High School, Coral Springs, FL

**\$1,000 - John Diaz**

Florida State University

**\$500 - Benjamin Britton**

Eastman School of Music, Rochester, NY

***The Ellie Lawson \$500 Scholarship - Tyler Clibbon***

Spruce Creek High School, New Smyrna Beach

## The Winners?! The Jazz World

by Ike Flores

He was curly-haired, dressed in dark pants and white shirt, and played *Body and Soul* as well as anybody I've ever heard, including Coleman Hawkins. He is this year's top (\$2000) scholarship winner, Matthew Porcelain. I've heard many pros who were nowhere near the musicians that this teenager is. He was one of four alto saxophone players who demonstrated on Sunday, April 15, (is that a familiar date?) that this particular horn has the most allure for some of Florida's best up-and-coming musicians.

Okay, New York too. The Empire State was represented by Ben Britton, 23, a tenor saxman who is a junior at the prestigious Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y. He came here from Washington D.C., where he took part in the week-long **Betty Carter's Jazz Ahead** at Kennedy Center, celebrating its 10th anniversary. Britton earned a \$500 scholarship in the keenest competition the Central Florida Jazz Society has ever had the pleasure of hearing and judging.

Before becoming a musician in earnest, Britton spent two years in Brazil's Rio Grande do Sul, in the Latter Day Saints Church program. He was there at the age of 19. I spent two years there in the 1970s, so we rapped a bit in Portuguese.

Taking the \$1000 scholarship was John Diaz of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, a sophomore at Florida State University. We spoke Spanish to each other.

The final \$500 scholarship went to 17-year-old Tyler Clibbon, a true-blue American musician choosing to stand out in a crowd of excellent saxophonists by wearing a natty lime-green shirt, khakis and neat-looking tennis shoes. He played *Misty* with his eyes closed throughout and would have done its composer, pianist Errol Garner, proud. Anyone who likes Garner's *Misty* or Pete Fountain's version should listen to it and then hear the one this kid will surely be making soon. This scholarship was awarded in honor of our late and long-time treasurer, Ellie Lawson.

"I like to be different. Black is a sad color," said the green-clad high school senior, who may be headed to the University of Miami, which is turning out some fine saxophone players these days. Clibbon was

accompanied to the scholarship tryouts by his girlfriend, Virginia Presswood, a trumpet player who may vie for a scholarship next year as a freshman at Florida State University.

CFJS President Eddie Betros called it "one of the best groups we've ever had."

Jim Roberts' piano work was exceptionally strong on Clibbon's *Misty*. Completing the trio of local rhythm makers playing behind the eleven scholarship competitors were Doug Matthews and Dru Betts.

The very difficult decision of judging this group of future jazz stars was left to Chris Acrigg, Carol Stein and Frank Yokus. Not a job to be envied!

This Sunday was special. Those Jazz Society members who decide not to attend these things because they don't think they'll be listening to some good music, or that they will hear a few bad tunes by amateurs, are mistaken. They are missing out on something special.

The turnout in attendance and participation in that relatively small but grand music room at Steinway Galleries was outstanding.

But the Jazz Scholarships Project wasn't always that successful. I remember just about 10 years ago when the number of applicants could only be described as dismal. Maybe two competitors for each scholarship granted.

But in those years in-between, we've had some great winners. Along with the great artists that keep coming back year after year, we've had scholarship winners that we can proudly point to and say, "We knew him (or her), back when." In fact pianist Jeff Phillips, vibes player Christian Tambour and 2007 applicant Joey Chindamo, alto sax, are all previous winners