

## BRINGING OUT EARL 'FATHA' HINES

by Eric Myers

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Earl 'Fatha' Hines & His Jazz All Stars, featuring Marva Josie, Quill's Folly  
York Theatre, Seymour Centre  
Sydney Morning Herald, February 23, 1980

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**F**ew musicians have exerted more influence over the course of piano jazz history than Earl (Fatha) Hines. It was he who, in the 1920s, finally broke the last ties with ragtime, opening up new concepts of keyboard improvisation. But, last night, there were few glimpses of the pianistic genius which made him such a legendary figure.

Admittedly there were suggestions of the famous octave style which he developed in the 1920s to enable the piano to cut through the sound of an array of horn players. At the age of 75, he has not lost his stunning facility to play fast octaves, with intricate figures inserted by the inside three fingers of the right hand. When one hears more modern pianists stabbing sparsely with the left hand, it is a revelation to hear Earl Hines's rippling runs, and his ability to break into the old Harlem stride style.



*Hines: he broke the last ties with ragtime, opening up new concepts of keyboard improvisation... PHOTO CREDIT LEE TANNER*

But Hines, who plays with a giant silver ring on the little finger of his right hand, is first and foremost a showman. He generously featured his sidemen, who played

competently but, in my view, were not outstanding enough to warrant their long solo spots. The exception was singer Marva Josie, whose voice was marvellous in all registers, including a strong and warm falsetto sound.



*American singer Marva Josie, with Hines in the background: a marvellous voice in all registers... PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN*

She has an entertaining act with some nice repartee with Hines at the piano but, again, her emphasis was on cabaret entertainment. When I left the concert at 10.40 pm to write this review, I felt a sense of loss that the legendary "Fatha" had not given us more of the piano style we had come to hear.

Ironically, far more genuine jazz was provided by Quill's Folly, the Australian group which played a lovely set to open the concert. This group featured David Glyde (saxophones and flute), Steve Murphy (guitar), Ray Forster (keyboards), Dieter Vogt (bass) and Willie Qua (drums).