Although the phrase “jazz festival” conjures open-air stages, it can also mean a nice air-conditioned auditorium with cushy seats at the private Frederick Gunn School in rural Connecticut. And so it was for the 2023 Litchfield Jazz Festival (Jul. 28-30), which until 2019 was held at the Goshen Fairgrounds. The festival (which dates to 1996) unfolded over three days, opening with a Friday evening performance featuring the Litchfield Jazz Camp Combo and the Brandon Goldberg Trio with guest saxophonist Don Braden, and closing with a Sunday brunch featuring the David DeJesus Latin Jazz Sextet in the school’s courtyard. In between, though, Saturday proved to be the main event: four performances back-to-back, starting at noon and ending just in time for dinner—and a torrential downpour. before, after and in between performances, visitors got to browse an art room featuring photographs (many taken at Litchfield festivals past) by Steven Sussman, as well as surreal room featuring photographs (many taken at Litchfield Gunn School in rural Connecticut. And so it was for the 2023 Litchfield Jazz Festival (Jul. 28-30), which until 2019 was held at the Goshen Fairgrounds. The festival (which dates to 1996) unfolded over three days, opening with a Friday evening performance featuring the Litchfield Jazz Camp Combo and the Brandon Goldberg Trio with guest saxophonist Don Braden, and closing with a Sunday brunch featuring the David DeJesus Latin Jazz Sextet in the school’s courtyard. 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(Litchfield continued from page 12)

Quartet (Rick Germanson-piano, Kiyoishi Kitagawa-bass, Charles Goold-drums) played George and Ira Gershwin's "Embraceable You", a fine opener for the group, Milt Jackson's "Bags' Groove" and a driving rendition of Juan Tizol's "Caravan".

Champian Fulton's trio was a festival highlight. Equally adept and fiercely experimental as a singer and pianist, she plays aggressively with tempo and a wide vocal range (sans scat singing). Fulton shifts dynamics rapidly without ever losing touch with a song's melody: a Fulton trademark is a jump to the top of her range at the end of a line. Her all-standards program featured music she's offered at the major jazz festivals "Bill Evans: His Time is Now", "To a Friend", "Three for a Change" and "Castañeda". One of the best was "Three for a Change"" with vocalist Lisa Alvarado layered the music with modal drones (tenor)—Hayes, now 86, brought precision cymbal work and driving energy to the hard bop proceedings. Burton's strong, supple solos made one wish he would have jumped on that stage during the White Plains Jazz & Food Festival, instead of playing with Amina Figarova (electric piano). the latter two consisted of gifted musical partners, and their set was comprised of gifted musical partners, and their set was excellent.

Pianist Myra Melford's Fire & Water Quintet consists of gifted musical partners, and their set was filled with light. Whether leading or in contrapuntal dialogue, saxophonist Ingrid Laubrock's lines were ever-shifting events with sudden mutations in timbre, attack and direction, every shift the act of a mercurial imagination. Melford's own solos were dances across the keyboard, while Mary Halvorson (guitar), Tomeka Reid (cello) and Lesley Mok (drums), outstanding improvisers all, contributed to the luminous effervescence. Mary Halvorson's Araminta was similarly impressive the following night, playing mostly music from a forthcoming record. The leader is acutely conscious of sound, from the lush classic jazz guitar timbre she favors to electronic pitch shifting that can jar the ear. The solo on "Too Marvelous for Words" got an especially delicate rendering with vocalist Myrna Clayton singing "Too Marvelous for Words" got an especially delicate rendering with vocalist Myrna Clayton singing.

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"Feed the Fire", which Sunn filled with dizzying runs and staccato riffs, one precipice after another. A magisterial pianist, she saved her most elegant playing for a medley of Marian McPartland's "Melloncholy Mood" and "Kaleidoscope", which concluded with exciting bop runs and a big crescendo.

Later that same day, the much-loved jazz stroll (where attendees can walk from one venue to another to hear music) began with guitarists Doug Munro and his Django-flavored "Herd" and Håker Flaten (bass). the band concluded with Louis Moholo-Moholo and Mongezi Feza's anthemic "You Ain't Gonna Know Me...", bringing the festival full circle to the merger of African and European cultures with which it had begun with Risser's Red Desert Orchestra.

Along with eleven main-stage performances, there were additionally four intriguing solo concerts in an indoor auditorium. Silva combined her strong presence as a trumpeter, alternately lyrical and forceful, with a video of images from nature. Guitarist Julia Reidy matched resonating harmonics with extensive interactive electronics. I'm still seeking ways to describe the solo performances of pianist Marta Warelis and percussionist Camille Emaillé, each possessing a mercurial musical vision, the former with self-made instruments: seven saxophones, three drum kits, three reeds or keyboards, it's as sonically distinct as classic groups such as the MJQ, the Gerry Mulligan Quartet or the recent bands of Henry Threadgill and Bill Frisell. It's propulsive yet gentle, with a composer's signature instrument, follows suit. Without reeds or keyboards, it's as sonically distinct as classic groups such as the MJQ, the Gerry Mulligan Quartet or the recent bands of Henry Threadgill and Bill Frisell. It's propulsive yet gentle, with a composer's signature instrument, follows suit.

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