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SPEAKEASY

Blue Note Jazz Club Unveils Festival

By Julie Steinberg
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Is jazz a dying art form? WSJ drama critic Terry Teachout once asked in these pages.

Not a chance, according to the Greenwich Village-based Blue Note Jazz Club. In honor of its 30th anniversary, the institution will host the first inaugural Blue Note Jazz Festival during the month of June, the club announced this past week. Throughout the month, more than 80 shows featuring established jazz legends and rookie experimentalists will take place across the city.

The club is hosting the Festival to fill the void left by promoter and producer George Wein's New York Jazz Festival, which usually occurs in June but which is on hiatus this year. Wein himself will perform at the Blue Note's Festival in mid-June.

Programming runs the gamut from more traditional legends like Dave Brubeck and Chaka Khan to edgier picks like Duncan Sheik, The Roots, Igmar Thomas & the Cypher. The Harlem Gospel Choir will also perform. Blue Note hopes to promote cross-pollination of music by mixing different acts in hopes of appealing to varied demographics. Both Mos Def and Lupe Fiasco have hosted shows at the club, a testament to the gradual fusion of jazz with other genres and subsequent interest of younger audiences.

"Over the past five years, we've adapted to changes in music," said Steven Bensusan, president of Blue Note. "We've paired hip hop and jazz, for example. We want to mix up the elements." The Festival events will take place all over the city, including Highline Ballroom, B.B King's, Terminal 5 and Mercury Lounge. There will also be an act at Central Park's Summerstage, which has yet to be announced.

While Bensusan hopes to attract diverse audiences, he doesn't believe jazz has been relegated solely to the milieu of the 50-plus set.

"This isn't a dead industry," he said. "Our audience is a mix of college students, people in their 30s, tourists and the 50-plus."

If the Festival is successful this year, the Blue Note hopes to roll it out on an annual basis. You can see the show schedule [here](#).