

# THE JAZZ OF THE CITY

At 20, WCLK-FM is celebrating its nomination as one of the country's best radio stations

By John D. Thomas  
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One spring day in 1974, a Clark Atlanta University student slipped Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage" out of its transparent plastic sleeve and placed the needle on the title track. The tune was a fitting one to inaugurate WCLK-FM (91.9), the college's fledgling jazz radio station. But considering WCLK's puny 50-watt signal, Hancock's recording could be heard only in the immediate neighborhood.

Two decades later, WCLK's reputation reaches clear across the country. The station, owned and operated by Clark Atlanta University, is celebrating two important milestones — 20 years on the air and a nomination as jazz radio station of the year by the Gavin Report, a respected industry journal. Program/music director Bobby Jackson, who hosts the "Midday Renaissance" show, is also nominated for a Gavin award, as jazz radio person of the year.

The station's nomination is all the more prestigious because it includes both commercial and noncommercial stations. The award will be announced Saturday in San Francisco. (The other stations nominated are KJAZ-FM in San Francisco/Oakland; KLON-FM in Long Beach, Calif.; KPLU-FM in Seattle/Tacoma; KXJZ-FM in Sacramento, Calif.; and WBGO-FM in Newark, N.J.)

"They [WCLK] see the big picture as far as the pieces of the puzzle that is jazz, which is expanding daily," says Kent Zimmerman, Gavin Report jazz editor. "A lot of stations that I talk to aren't so wide-eyed in their definition of how they program jazz."

"Bobby Jackson incorporates a pretty wide variety of music in the playlist," says Zimmerman. "That might sound weird, but a lot of jazz radio stations are set in their ways as far as pure jazz, acoustic jazz or what kind of jazz they play. But when I look at what Bobby is doing, he is incorporating somebody like Joshua Redman with Ronny Jordan, or somebody like Candy Dulfer with Sonny Rollins. So that's probably what makes [WCLK] stand out."

Says Dwight Andrews, a music instructor and composer at Emory University: "It's an important station to Atlanta because of the kind of jazz that they play, and the variety that they play. So many of the jazz stations around the country have changed their programming over the years to a more pop orientation, and CLK, I think, has maintained a certain kind of programming integrity."

But the noncommercial station, whose slogan is "The Jazz of the City," boasts more than just a reputation: Its signal has grown to 2,500 watts (still



W.A. BRIDGES JR. / Staff

**Bobby Jackson:** A Bronx native and University of Georgia graduate, WCLK's program/music director has been nominated as jazz radio person of the year by the Gavin Report.



LOUIE FAVORITE / Staff

**Juandolyn Stokes:** WCLK's gospel coordinator has been at the station since 1981.



JOHNNY CRAWFORD / Staff

**Claude Motley Jr.:** The smooth baritone hosts "Jazz at Sundown," which includes "The Vocal Hour." He works during the day doing professional voice-over work.

● **Format:**

A noncommercial jazz station, with shows that also feature blues, gospel and reggae.

● **Location:**

Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center campus.

● **Power:**

2,500 watts — low even compared with other non-commercial stations. (For example, WRFG-FM boasts 24,000 watts.) But it can be heard in most areas within the Perimeter.

● **The deejays:**

Some have part-time jobs, some work full time at the station and a few, like Ken Rye, who attends Morehouse College, are students. General manager Reggie Hicks says the pay for deejays is low. "For many of them, it's gas money."

● **Expansion plans:**

Adding a rap/hip-hop show, once they figure out how to program it.

## Program highlights

"Morning Jazz News"

The time: 7-10 a.m. weekdays.

The hosts: Ken Rye and Tony Phillips.

What you might hear: Contemporary jazz including Viro, Stanley Clarke, Ronny Jordan and New York Voices, along with the news.

"Midday Renaissance"

The time: 10 a.m.-2 p.m. weekdays.

The host: Bobby Jackson.

What you might hear: Mainstream jazz featuring anyone from Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton to Wynton Marsalis and Benny Green. Also, interviews with jazz artists, authors and record industry executives.

"The Vocal Hour"

The time: 8-9 p.m. week-nights.

The host: Claude Motley Jr. (a.k.a. CMJ).

What you might hear: Vocal artists including Sarah Vaughan, Dinah Washington,

Nancy Wilson and Aretha Franklin.

"Latin Aura"

The time: 10 p.m.-1 a.m. Saturdays.

The host: Judy Manuel.

What you might hear: Latin jazz including Jerry Gonzalez, Eddie Palmieri, Tito Puente and Dori Caymmi.

"New Atlanta Blues Show"

The time: Noon-3 p.m. Saturdays.

The host: Rojane Bailey.

What you might hear: Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, Mighty Joe Young and Robert Junior Lockwood.

"Gospel Powerhouse"

The time: 8 a.m.-noon Sundays.

The host: Juandolyn Stokes.

What you might hear: Progressive gospel featuring a mix of contemporary and traditional performers including Shirley Caesar, Richard Smallwood, Kirk Franklin and Yolanda Adams. Also, information on the gospel industry, local gospel events and artists.