

Jazz/Instrumental Trio Weaves Spell

By OWEN McNALLY

Trumpeter Leo Smith with his New Delta Ahkri trio Friday night tapped the softer, more lyrical side of the new music as they performed at Real Art Ways' avant-garde jazz festival.

Smith and his two collaborators, saxophonist Dwight Andrews and vibraphonist Bobby Naughton, played three extended pieces that were graced with a quiet fire, a mix of sweetness and light.

Smith, who's a key member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, the innovative artists' collective from Chicago, is very much concerned with musical forms. Each of his three works stressed logical links between the written with parts the improvised sections from which new structures evolved spontaneously.

Smith's playing was mellow on muted trumpet and flugelhorn—a 1978 version of that museful mood once favored by Miles Davis. Without the mute, Smith was brassier and sometimes used the horn's upper register

to italicize one of his pithy phrases. Besides his trumpets (including a pocket trumpet), he also played wooden flutes, a tiny harmonica and a thumb piano.

Andrews brought an even wider variety of instruments including alto, tenor and soprano saxes, flutes, a bass clarinet, a penny slide-whistle and a siren wind instrument that produced breezy, synthesizer-like effects.

Andrews and Smith mixed and matched these instruments in various combinations, with Naughton chording supportively with four mallets on vibes.

Andrews, a graduate of Yale Divinity School and a practicing preacher, played tenor saxophone with a certain mournful, appropriately spiritual style. There was just a hint of the hymnal in the light, humming timbre of his tenor. (After the Real Art Ways' performance that night, the Rev. Mr. Andrews' very next "gig" was to marry a young couple Saturday morning at his home church in Washington, D.C.)

Naughton played with sensitivity whether

comping (accompanying) or when soloing, as he did on one of the Smith compositions that stressed the voice of the vibes.

Smith and the present version of his New Delta Ahkri will travel to Europe next month for radio appearances and a recording date with Manfred Eicher's ECM Records in Germany. Later this week, the West Haven trumpeter-composer will record a solo album on his own small, struggling record label, Kabel Records.

The delta in his group's title refers to Smith's birthplace, the Mississippi Delta. And "Ahkri," says Smith, is a made-up name which means "the union of ensembles,"—no doubt, much like the successful union of his present, pleasant ensemble.

Real Art Ways' jazz festival closes tonight with an appearance by vibist Khan Jamal, heading a trio that includes saxophonist Byard Lancaster and the noted drummer, Sunny Murray. Performances are at 8:30 and 11 p.m. at the downtown arts center located across the street from the Civic Center.