

It's been a great week for jazz in S.F.

By Philip Elwood

Hearing the "Milestone Jazz-stars" in formal concert at Masonic Auditorium last night, and the quite informal tenor saxophone trio of Arnett Cobb, Buddy Tate and Scott Hamilton playing before a turned-on, jumping Keystone Korner club audience on Thursday proved to be an even more mind-bending experience than I had counted on.

The Cobb-Tate-Hamilton performance emerged as one of the finest fun evenings of club jazz I've had in a while. The saxists were joined by pianist Larry Vuckovich, bassist Ray Drummond and drummer Vince Lateano and the first set by the sextet (in various combinations) lasted nearly 2½ hours.

After the Vuckovich trio spun out a couple of boppish overture numbers (which proved, then and there, that it was going to be a swingin' night) all three saxists came on stage to blow hard and long on "Four Brothers," a misnomer of course, but no matter.

Tate (63) and Cobb (60) are Texans, veterans of superb big bands, notably Basie and Hampton, and have a full-blown, open-spaces sound projection; Hamilton (23) is a much more subdued, cool and mellow tenor man. Tate and Cobb developed their styles in the 1930s when Coleman Hawkins reigned supreme on tenor; Hamilton, who might be expected to play in a Coltrane style, actually derives his sound from Lester Young and Ben Webster, both of whom would still be in their 60s had they lived.

At Keystone, Tate spun away from the sax trio first, playing a half-dozen feature solo numbers



Cobb, Tate and Hamilton — torrid tenor trio at Keystone

with Vuckovich & Co. "Tickletoe" and "Jumpin' At The Woodside" (both Basie) were marvelous, as was "In A Mellotone" (Ellington), on which he played both tenor and clarinet. After a typically elegant coda-cadenza, Tate gave way to the bop-and-blues material of Cobb. A master showman, Cobb squeezes out notes, plays one handed while "conducting" with the other, and captivates a crowd. He's among the fiercest saxmen blowing today.

Vuckovich, meanwhile, had become sensational at the keyboard and Drummond, a late-hour god-send inclusion in the trio, hung in with strong rhythm and a fat tone. Lateano, on one of his few Keystone jazz gigs, proved to be the

perfect drummer for the occasion — steady rhythm, no frills and nothing hot-shot.

After Cobb's half-hour, Hamilton poured out "There Is No Greater Love," "Don't Blame Me," and an exquisite "I Want To Be Happy." On the last, Tate and Cobb eventually made it a sax trio again and, after an extended getaway blues, the marathon set ended.