

Philly Joe just keeps blowing 'em away

By Philip Elwood

THEY CALLED HIM "Philly Joe" when he came into the jazz ranks. There was, after all, another Jo Jones, jazz drummer.

But Jo was Jo — Basie's long time sidekick — Jo Jones was too much of an insitution, and so Philadelphia Joe Jones quickly acquired his name — "Philly Joe" Jones.

Strangely, ol' Joe isn't doing much now; he plays around New York City in small groups, charms the fans who want a percussion seminar, and, etc.

But Philly Joe is still very much on top of things — as his show last night at Keystone Korner aptly demonstrated.

Philly Joe has always had trouble with dynamics and he's still at it — ripping open the seams of the sound system. Old timers remember well when, seated with his back to the Hyde St. windows in the Blackhawk jazz club, Philly Joe would devastate the crowd with drumnastics of the highest order — and, remember, he was then part of the Miles Davis Quintet (with Coltrane, Garland, Chambers, et al.)

The current Jones group at Keystone is but a bare flicker of the olds days. Advertised trumpeter Tommy Turrentine didn't make it; pianist Sid Simmons, likewise — a no show.

But Philly Joe is there, rarin' to go, and doing it.

Pianist is Larry Vuckovich, bassist Andy McKee. For a patched together group they're making it quite well — and for leader Jones things have seldom been better.

Jones is a drum master — his single-



Drummer Philly Joe Jones kicks his new jazz group through a varied set

stroke rolls and releases are superb. I'd rather he didn't roam the club during his colleagues' solos but that's an old Miles Davis trait and, I guess, Jones prefers things that wav.

It was fun to hear "Hi Fly," again (Richie Cole featured it, last week, too) especially since Jones, ever the rhythm specialist, led the ensemble through the tricky lead-line and inspired others when their solo came (especially Vuckovich.)

On such ballads as "What's New," Bowen seemed most effective and on "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," more used today by jazz groups than ever before, the whole ensemble cooked along in a singularly unsentimental mood.

Jones has a rather peculiar approach to his position within the group, I thought; he often seems to be more interested in listening to them, off stage, than participating in their ensemble activities on stage.

But Jones has just enough of the touch of classic jazz to return to the fray early on.

Last night he didn't work the brushes much (too bad) but he did liven the show with frequent short solo outbursts, with sticks.

Good enough mainstream jazz, but I missed the chance to hear Jones against a strong trumpeter — after all, it's easy for a drummer to intimidate a saxophonist but given a brass antagonist, there is likely to be trouble, and exciting instrumental fireworks.