

Hall of Fame History: Design

The design of a Boston Jazz Hall of Fame on the waterfront should take into consideration every aspect of providing convenient access to adjacent businesses, the waterfront and walkways, and an enjoyable experience for visitors and a world-class year-round listening venue.

In addition to the Jazz Hall itself, natural satellites would include a family-oriented live-music venue, an area designated for dancing and open-space presentations and demonstrations, a shop for marketing Hall of Fame collectables, a Boston Jazz broadcast center that could include its own hall of fame, and, of course, the necessary offices and archival storage and organizing areas.

THE HALL

Ideally, the physical plant should be located near Samuel Maverick Square, which currently is in the process of being redesigned to accommodate wider sidewalks, a new MBTA Blue Line stop, bus shuttle service from Logan Airport, Boston Harbor ferry service, and a chain of new bicycle paths, walkways and parks.

It should be closely linked to a live-music venue, which would do much to attract visitors.

Every proper dignity should be paid to those inducted, which means that displays should include accurate likenesses of those in the Hall and brief summaries of their achievements. Certainly headphones on which samples of their music could be heard would be most appropriate. An auditorium for lectures and films also should be included.

Institutions that already have done a great deal of important work in this field should be major consultants, including the Berklee College, New England Conservatory, the Boston Public Library, the Boston Jazz Society, the Smithsonian Institution, Mosaic Records and Down Beat and Quarter Notes magazines.

Every design proposal should keep the building low-profile so as not to interfere with other neighborhood projects or interfere with the sightlines of the harbor now being enjoyed by East Bostonians.

PERFORMANCE AREAS

The most desirable location of the live-music venue/venues would be on the waterfront, and the area should be indoors to facilitate quality acoustics and year-round use. The largest area should have its harbor-facing side made of glass to take full advantage of East Boston's view of the downtown skyline. Ideally, the performance area would have movable internal partitions, flooring and staging that would accommodate a multitude of functions. There might be a need to provide a large, open area for major functions such as inductions and perhaps a "First Night" fund-raiser, but there also must be an option to provide a more intimate atmosphere during off-season slower periods. Musicians should be consulted every step of the way regarding acoustics, sound system, seating and staging.

Backdrops could include replicas of the facades of Boston's most famous jazz clubs of the past. A revolving stage could provide transitions between performers that could be on-going. Every effort should be made to design the Hall and Performance Center to be family-oriented, and the facility should incorporate or be near retail (or push-cart) businesses that could reap peripheral commercial benefits by selling collectibles or food and beverages.

RELATED FACILITIES

Since waterfront property is so limited and valuable for other worthwhile projects in East Boston, it may not be possible or even desirable to locate Boston Jazz Hall of Fame offices, broadcast center or archival work areas at the same site as the Hall and Performance buildings.

Arguments could be made to locate offices and as broadcast center underground or in a nearby renovated buildings. And since the roots of Boston's jazz tradition are in other neighborhoods of Boston, it might be desirable to locate part of the operation in Roxbury, the South End or Hyde Park. Two related fields - broadcasting and dance - should be part of this mix. The advocates of a Jazz Hall of Fame include many dance studios and teachers, and it certainly would not hurt the cause to

accommodate their interests when possible. Throughout jazz history, the music and related dances were a natural alliance.

A Boston Jazz broadcast center also would be a most appropriate way to keep the tradition alive, to promote the enterprise, and also pay tribute to the broadcasters who spent their lives putting forth an art form they believed in.

Within the past year, jazz listeners have lost two very good friends in Norm Nathan and Bill Marlowe, and recent changes at WBUR and WGBH have led to the disappearance of the incomparable Tony Cennamo and Ron Della Chiesa's Music America.

What could be a more appropriate place to honor the greatest BJs (Boston Jazz presenters) of all time than a Jazz Hall of Fame-related broadcast center?