

Quintet's show proves jazz is welcome in area

■ The Teddy Pantelas Trio proved to be a pleasing opening act.

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YOUNGSTOWN — A sell-out performance by Pieces of A Dream on Saturday night at the Playhouse proved that contemporary jazz can be both artistically and commercially successful in the area.

It was the second of a new series of concerts under sponsorship of T.Q.E. Productions. At intermission, the husband and wife team who established this promotional organization 10 years ago were given an award for their efforts.

The earlier concert, an appearance by contemporary jazz saxophonist Marion Meadows, was well-attended, but the second, featuring the Philadelphia-based jazz-rock quintet Pieces of A Dream, was sold-out.

Opener: The Teddy Pantelas Trio, an area group, did an excellent job as opening act. Pantelas, well-known and admired locally for more than a decade, showed himself not only to be a gifted electric guitarist and improviser, but also displayed his talent as a composer in three of the numbers.

His bluesy modal guitar solo in "Kickin' Back" was melodically expressive, and was well-supported by the electric-organ soloist and the sensitive drummer.

In "Show Me Your Eyes," he further displayed his virtuosity on the electric guitar in rapid runs with a hint of Latin influence.

Took the stage: After inter-

mission, Pieces of a Dream, the nationally known headliners, took the stage. The group consists of an amplified sax, two electric keyboards, electric bass and drums, and has released several CD albums on the Blue Note label, a subsidiary of Capitol Records.

The gifted core members — keyboardist James Lloyd, Cedric Napoleon, bass, and Curtis Harmon, drums — have been together for 22 years.

Saxophonist Eddie Baccus Jr. showed incredible technique with fine improvisational style on alto and soprano. His circular breathing on long phrases and individual notes was truly remarkable. He also doubled effectively on percussion. Keyboardist Sheri Mitchell, newest member of the ensemble, fit in quite well in a supporting role.

Versatility: Though much of the group's work is straight-ahead jazz-rock, they showed their versatility in a slower balladlike mood on Lloyd's "D'Vora," from their latest album. His keyboard solo, supported by Ms. Mitchell with synthesized string sound, was beautiful. Later in the number when the other members joined him, Lloyd's scat singing, in note-bending unison with his keyboard solo, was a delight.

Bassist Cedric Napoleon's playing was sensitive and funky throughout. His contributions as lead vocalist make one think of Stevie Wonder. Curtis Harmon's drumming was also excellent.

Pieces of a Dream demonstrated its originality by playing mostly its own compositions. The group also showed its connections to rock, soul, Latin, and rhythm and blues, by playing its own arrangements of pieces by Babyface and Stevie Wonder.