

JAZZ

Levy's decade of commitment

By CURT YESKE
Special to The Times

The legacy of the jazz professional too often is one of great artistic accomplishment accompanied by personal heartbreak and frustration. History says the pursuit of a full-time jazz career is not for the faint of heart or those unfamiliar with the price of persistence.

But Jed Levy, who will play at Joe's Mill Hill Saloon in Trenton tomorrow night, is not among the struggling wannabees. The 36-year-old saxophonist, with two new recordings and gigs with some of the top names, is among the accomplished in current crop of jazz-makers.

However, Levy prefers to be thought of as an artist who is still expanding his musical horizons. Despite his success in New York and beyond, he continuously labors toward a higher level in jazz.

"The business end of jazz is a progressive thing," said Levy from his home in Queens. "It's a matter of staying out there. I've done that, and as a result, every year it (opportunity) gets better and better for me and I get better at my music.

"TEN YEARS of hard work in New York City is starting to pay off. I have a lot of optimism, and the thing that keeps me in that mode is my (musical) growth and improvement. If I didn't have those, I might not have an optimistic view."

Levy first came to Trenton more than 10 years ago with a classmate from the New England Conservatory of music who lived here. In performances back then at Joe's, Levy's playing and attitude won him many



Jed Levy performs tomorrow at Joe's Mill Hill Saloon in Trenton.

friends who have had the pleasure of tracking his career.

They will soon be able to hear his new album on the Steeplechase label.

"We did it a few weeks ago," said Levy. "It's about three quarters original music and some standards."

The musicians sharing the project with Levy were bassist Ron McClure, pianist George Colligan and drummer Jerry Gibbs.

"WHAT I basically did was select a repertory that was suitable for a special group of musicians who will bring out what they have that is special to offer to

the music. I picked the tunes and the musicians responded to it."

Ironically, Levy for some time had been wanting to do a CD that was solely his concept and not influenced by the guidelines of a commercial studio.

"Two weeks before the Steeplechase recording, we did a self-produced album. It was a band that worked together and I had a strong rapport with them," said Levy. The musicians on that CD were Marvin "Smitty" Smith, a premier drummer; bassist Essiet Essiet, who will be with Levy tomorrow night; and Geoff Keezer, one of the bright new faces in jazz, on piano.

In early December, Levy will perform at Visiones in New York with the Joe Locke band.

"On Saturday night we'll be doing the trio format. It allows me to enjoy exploring the music without someone else playing the chord changes. It allows me to search out another kind of feeling in the structure of a song"

Also Suggested

■ **Rich Sbarro** — A former lead trumpet for the 1970s jazz-rock band Cut-Glass, Sbarro leads a group at 5 p.m. today at the Tremont Lounge, 332 E. State St., Trenton. Call (609) 392-9600.