

Talent night has moments

By IFAN PAYNE
Music Critic

There were a number of reasons why the Arts in the Park local talent night on Friday was worth more than a cursory listen.

Two of those reasons came during the performance by Ray Baker's group, Touch, and were called Star Pugh and Karita Baskin.

Star Pugh is a native of Salina and is currently an instructor at the Crum Beauty College in Manhattan and to judge by her singing on Friday evening she has a voice that is full and secure and well suited to singing jazz and standards.

Karita Baskin lives in Kansas City and plays the trombone with Eddie Baker and His New Breed Orchestra and, in her own words, "just plays for practice." Her playing is strong and clear and impresses with its force and precision. There was little opportunity on Friday evening, however, to enable one to judge what she can do with that technique in terms of jazz musicianship. Her one solo, *Amazing Grace*, did not contain any material out of the ordinary, but the personality of her playing still grabbed the attention.

Ray Baker is a talented local musician and composer and each time out he seems to be able to put together a group of interesting and competent players.

As seems to be the usual case with our local musicians, there is plenty of talent here, but not enough opportunities to perform in public, let alone get paid for it.

For the second half of the talent night double-header there was a sharp change of mood from contemporary Christian to doo-wap, oldies-but-goodies vocal music as rendered by the Streetside Vocal Quintet.

This group is fun to listen to and fun to watch as it brings back reminiscences of the nineteen-fifties, though the songs themselves range over the past thirty years; the newest of them being *Two Kinds of Love* from the film *Rocky II*, a song that has background harmonies and rhythms strongly reminiscent of Glass' *Einstein on the Beach*...which is about as far from the fifties as you can get...or perhaps it gives one new slant on the basis of some of Glass' ideas. And we all thought that minimalism was some kind of fusion of Orff and Gamelan music!

You live and learn.

Anyway, Streetside Singers brought its claque with it to City Park and the group was (deservedly) called back for an encore.

What a night!

The group even sings in tune (a capella) thus breaking my recent streak of consecutive out-of-tune concerts.

What a show!

If you haven't heard *Mr. Bubble* yet, you owe it to yourself to catch Streetside Singers wherever its talent is next on view.

Actually, there is enough musical talent in Manhattan to keep a series of local talent concerts running monthly from now 'til this time next year.