

# New Jazz Singing Star Hailed

KATHIE DIBELL of the Associated Press calls attention to an exciting Negro singer named Ethel Ennis who hopes to rival the late, great Billie Holliday as Baltimore's leading contribution to the World of Jazz.

Miss Dibell points out that Miss Ennis was relatively unknown until recently, except to a few connoisseurs of American jazz and her loyal following in the monument City. Then, in July, Ethel appeared at the Newport Jazz Festival with such stars as Louie Armstrong and Dave Brubeck and became an "overnight sensation" on a national scale, as they say, despite the 31-year-old vocalist's 14-year career as a top performer on the small club circuit.

One critic said she was "the individual star of the festival," and "a singer of extraordinary polish and finesse."

Another wrote: "She is a singer who is likely to develop into the No. 1 performer in her class. She has that rare combination of a faultless technique and an innate feeling for the best in jazz."

Almost immediately she was booked at outstanding clubs in Chicago and New York. She was asked to appear on television shows. New record albums were cut for release later this year.

VARIOUSLY DESCRIBED as a second Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn or Peggy Lee, Miss Ennis tags herself a "progressive pop singer."

"I hate to sing any song exactly as it's written. But I don't want to sing so far out that people don't understand it," she said recently at the West Baltimore club where she has worked off and on for the past nine years.

She says she never consciously copied any singer's style.

Although jazz is her forte, Miss Ennis also likes what she calls the better rock 'n' roll numbers. "The ones that used to be called rhythm and blues, but since the whites are doing it, we call it rock 'n' roll."

"I prefer the ballads, the torchy things, the ones every day people feel."

"I would love to do an album of spiritual songs. It would be subtle. I'm a Methodist and the screaming and hollering bit doesn't particularly appeal to me."

The daughter of a Baltimore baker, Miss Ennis started her musical career with piano lessons when she was 7 years old.

"I hated it. I always wanted to be a ballerina. But my grandparents said I'd be dancing with the devil. Now I'm singing with him," she said.

Her first professional jobs were as a pianist. "I never thought of singing in a club, only in church. Then one night they asked me to

sing. I was well received and decided to hang up a shingle as a singer."

SHE IS NO STRANGER to the big bands. In 1958, Miss Ennis toured Europe with Benny Goodman's orchestra. The tour included appearances at the Brussels World's Fair.

She loved Europe, but she didn't like the big band.

"I'm not a projectionist. I like the small rooms," she said.

Casually sultry, she picks her way softly through a song.

She seems to ignore the crowd during blues numbers. Her head is bowed. Her eyes are partly closed.

"I try to be as sincere as I can," she said. "And I think I am a sincere person."

Offstage, she is a vivacious, warm person, intensely ambitious but not overtly aggressive.

Her husband, Jacques E. Leeds, is a lawyer, the first Negro assistant attorney general in Maryland.

Newport gave her a start and she hopes she's on her way.

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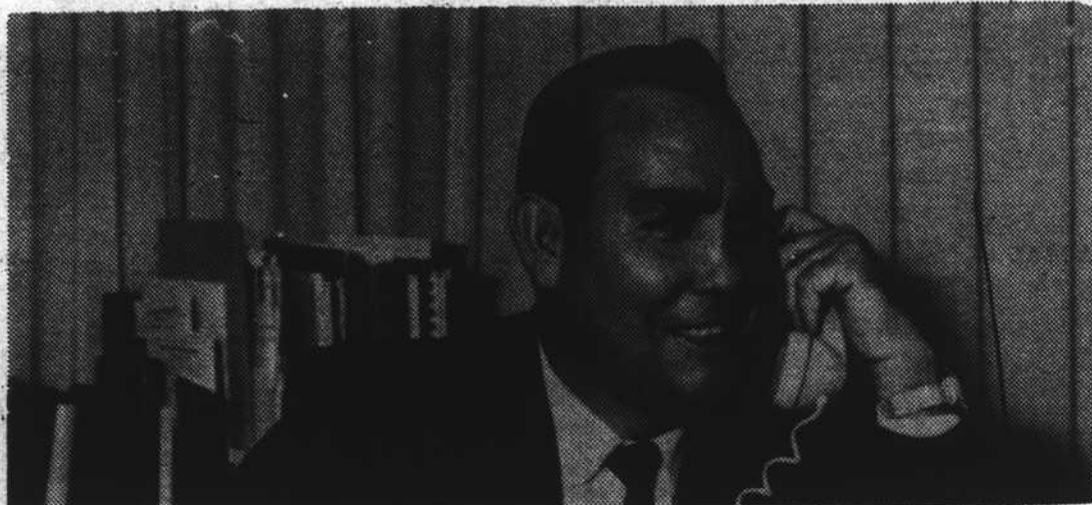
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