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CHICK WEBB JAZZ COMBO COMPETITION, PRESENTED BY MECU ANNOUNCES WINNER

Mayor Sheila Dixon and the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts announce the winner of the second annual Chick Webb Jazz Combo Competition, presented by MECU, which was held Saturday, July 18 at the Everyman Theatre as part of Artscape 2009. Jazz band Wolf Pac wins the top prize. Its members include Warren Wolf, vibraphones; Eric Kennedy, drums; Richard Johnson, piano and Kris Funn on bass. The annual competition featured local and regional jazz trios, quartets and quintets. Chick Webb Jazz Combo Competition is sponsored by MECU, Baltimore’s Credit Union, and presented by Mayor Sheila Dixon and produced by the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts.

The Chick Webb Jazz Combo Competition continues to honor the legacy of Baltimore’s own Chick Webb (1905-1939), whose powerful technique and virtuoso performances as a jazz drummer made him the premiere drummer of the swing era. Five talented musical groups were selected to compete for top honor. The winner receives a $1,000 cash prize and opportunities for exposure including a performance at Artscape.

The jazz giant, William Henry Webb, popularly known as Chick Webb, was born in Baltimore in 1905. As a child, he worked as a newspaper boy to save up money to buy a drum set and played professionally for the first time at the age of 11. At 17, he moved to New York City and by the following year had assembled a band of his own, a quintet called the Harlem Stoppers. By the early 1930s, Webb’s quintet had grown into the Chick Webb Orchestra, which became the house band at the Savoy Ballroom, one of the top night spots in Harlem. Chick Webb was considered the premiere drummer of the swing era. His powerful technique and virtuoso performances were emulated by many jazz drummers that followed. Chick Webb died in Baltimore in 1939 at the age of 34. His influence on jazz music continues today.

For more information about Chick Webb Jazz Combo Competition, visit www.artscape.org or call 410-752-8632.

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