

Braxton and Brown tootle, talk at E. Quad

By PAUL SHAPIRO
and CONSTANCE ENNIS

Marion Brown and Jodi Braxton offered a recital of jazz and poetry Friday night in East Quad auditorium, both demonstrating a strong individual power and craftsmanship for their art. The performance began with a set of solo saxophone by Brown, whose talents have led him through associations with Archie Shepp, John Coltrane, Sun Ra, Anthony Braxton, and Chick Corea.

Brown opened with an improvisational piece that in a sense really defined what jazz is about. His speed, energy, texture, and melodic phrasings were awe inspiring. His improvisation was direct from his heart and soul.

Following with a blues composition by Clarence Williams entitled, *Hurry Sundown, See What Tomorrow Brings*, Brown took a traditional blues standard, twisted and turned the tempo, and offered a totally original interpretation of the work.

Describing *Angel Eyes* as a song about how it feels to lose somebody, Brown blew a jazz-drama, running up and down scales, painting musical pictures, and again his phrasings were excellent.

With the original composition *And Then They Danced*, Brown and his golden alto saxophone blew the house down. Sweeping into upper register work that defies description, he used a repeating theme as a base for an energetic and surging improvisational solo.

Brown completed his set with 'La

Placeta,' and original latin influenced composition reminiscent of Sonny Rollins' *St. Thomas*. Employing a thick textural technique, Brown closed his set demonstrating his explosive power as a soloist.

The second set brought the demonic presence and dynamic poetry of Jodi Braxton. Accompanied by two conga players and Brown alternating on flute and saxophone, Braxton offered a unique hour of poetry-drama.

By using her voice as an instrument Braxton took poetry to its ultimate form of expression, with images and sounds becoming almost undistinguishable from each other. As she writes in her new collection of poetry, *Sometimes I Think Of Maryland*, "The oral tradition constitutes the source of my artistic consciousness and personal strength." Each of her words seemed guided by both a musical and physical force, with the immediacy of her poetry rising to infinite mystical realms.

Her interaction with Brown varied, but was most excellent in one poem relating to a lover recently lost. Brown stood in the corner of the dramatically lit, smoke-filled stage blowing a sweet, soft and soulful saxophone, as Braxton's images interacted with his horn. The scene evoked a dream-like jazz fantasy.

In *Hoo-Doo*, a folk poem derived from Afro-American slave music, Braxton's Staccato rhythmic patterns worked as ritualistic chants, transe-like in nature. Her imagery and voice texture had great fluidity and strength.

Braxton's poetry embodies the cultural influences of her being both black and a woman, and that is where her artistic strength is derived. A constant theme in her poetry is a spiritual and cultural renewal, that is very political in nature:

And I close my eyes to see
no longer growing up but older
a woman who bleeds with the moon
and waits for a child
to burden with this heritage.

The concert was the first in the Eclipse Jazz 'Bright Moments' series, which promises to offer unique jazz programs inexpensively to the Ann Arbor community.