

Jazz ambassadors jam in the schools

By JON O'NEILL
Herald Staff Writer

David Rothstein is on a mission to spread the word about jazz. And he has found just the way to do it.

Rothstein, 25, is taking his message to high school kids in a series of jazz workshops. A professional musician himself, he's getting help from jazz artists who attend the University of Miami School of Music. They get together with groups of kids, talk about facets of jazz and then jam.

"I'm totally enjoying myself," said Rothstein, who graduated from Western Michigan University and moved to Miami two months ago. "The kids have been great and I like the fact I'm able to help them appreciate jazz."

Rothstein has workshops on Saturday mornings and usually has five or six UM musicians with him. So far, he has done them at Jackson and Miami high schools. The most recent, on Saturday at Miami High, drew more than 25 students from several

schools.

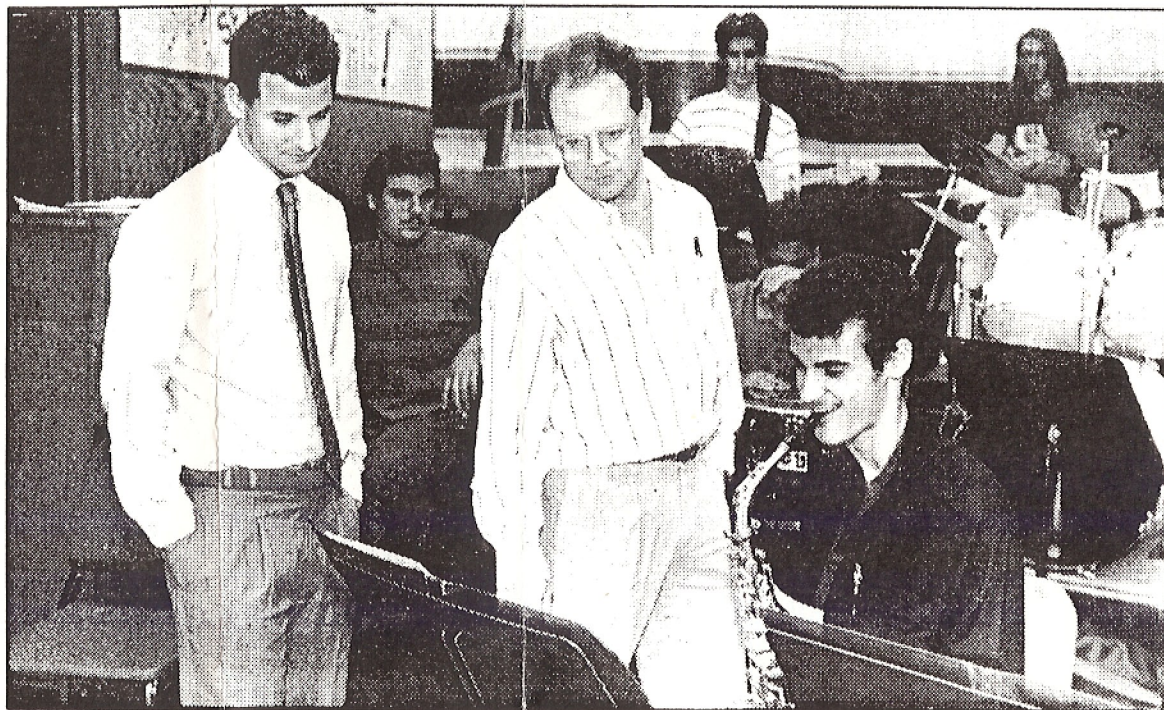
"I think it's great," said Brian Leavell, band director at Miami High, 2450 SW First St. "The kids are getting things out of it. He talks about history and has rare footage of great jazz players. Plus, they get a chance to hear and play with some top-notch people."

Rothstein charges each school \$50 for eight workshops. He said he pays the UM musicians on his own.

"I think everyone ends up benefiting from it," he said.

The workshops came about by chance. Rothstein plays string and electric bass and is now playing gigs and teaching. In January, he stopped by Jackson High to see some kids about lessons.

"In the band room, there was this old string bass in a corner that looked like it hadn't been played in years," Rothstein said. "So we dusted it off and I started playing. The kids were all crowded around. I was supposed to be there 30 minutes and I was



ALBERT COYA / Miami Herald Staff

MENTORS: David Rothstein and Miami High band director Brian Leavell watch David Fernandez on sax.

there three hours. I figured something should come out of all this interest in jazz."

Rothstein talked to Evit Allen, the band director at Jackson, and the first workshop was hatched.

"They've been very inspiring," Allen said. "We don't have a lot

of jazz musicians, most of them are classical or marching band. So this is a way they can be exposed to another form of music and become more well-rounded."

The workshops usually last about three hours. The musicians

discuss the role of each player in a jazz group, music theory and history and then break up into small groups. The students bring their instruments

Rothstein said he wants to get the program into several more schools.