

The Celebrity

The Celebrity, in downtown Moline, IL, was on River Drive in what was formerly a bank building, near what is now the John Deere Commons. In the 1960s, locals called it “the very definition of cool.”

The club was owned & operated by the Sotos Brothers, who were also the foundation of the house band. Tony sang and played sax (sometimes two at once) and Jim played bass. They were backed by many local jazz performers, and brought in major well-known jazz performers from out of town to perform at their club: Buddy Rich, Count Basie, Gene Harris and the Three Sounds, and more.

I heard legendary jazz vocalist Johnny Hartman when he performed at The Celebrity around 1966. Hartman was the only singer to have ever recorded with sax giant John Coltrane.

In the early 1960s, a University of Iowa student originally from the Milwaukee area was studying for his MA in the School of Social Work. He sat in at jazz clubs in Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, Waterloo, & at The Celebrity in Moline. His name was Al Jarreau. In 1964 he earned his master's degree in vocational rehabilitation from the University of Iowa. The young vocalist went on to super-star status in jazz & pop music, not long after the Sotos Brothers produced his first album at their Studio Four recording studio in Rock Island, IL.

Studio Four was said to have been located in the basement of the home of one of the Sotos Brothers on 22nd Street near 8th Ave., in Rock Island, IL. The vinyl LP/album entitled “1965 - Al Jarreau” is a valued collector’s item among jazz aficionados.

-- Michael “Hawkeye” Herman (was born in Davenport, IA)

