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Studio Jazz Band earns honors at Ellington Festival

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Several Poplar Bluff High School Studio Jazz Band students received outstanding musicianship awards during the Essentially Ellington Jazz Festival last month at the University of Missouri in St. Louis.

Students honored included Brileigh Cates – alto sax; Logan Hale – trumpet; Ja’Lonnie Johnson-Spann – drumset; and Brileigh Cates, Connar Jones, Diamond Weaver and Jonathan Moreno – saxophone section.

Band Director Stephen Winters, who learned of the awards last week, commented that the festival clinicians judging are always top-notch. “... They are all a part of the New York jazz scene and are at the highest level of jazz teaching and performance. Some of them perform with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra led by Wynton Marsalis.”

Other participating schools this year included Eureka, Lindbergh, Fort Zumwalt West in Missouri, and Mascoutah and Williamsville High School out of Illinois. “This is a festival that... usually attracts some very good bands,” Winters continued.

PBHS has participated in the Essentially Ellington Jazz Festival multiple times at the University of Missouri prior to a temporary hiatus because of the pandemic, and was also a part of the original festival at Webster Groves High School. The festival typically requires bands to play arrangements by Duke Ellington, but this year arrangements by Count Basie were also permitted.

Pictured: Studio Jazz Band members (left to right) Connar Jones, Logan Hale, Diamond Weaver, Ja’Lonnie Johnson-Spann and Brileigh Cates recently received outstanding musicianship awards. Not pictured is Jonathan Moreno.

Photo and article by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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