



## Hep Cats Jam in Davenport

When bold horn rhythms from Mississippi riverboat bands carried up the hill on the clear night air to his Davenport home, Leon Beiderbecke was hooked. The teenager abandoned the piano and taught himself the cornet. The rest is jazz history.

Beiderbecke played and recorded with numerous orchestras in the 1920s, developing an original style and sound. While “Bix” (a nickname likely derived from his middle name, Bismarck) played, composed, and published piano works, it was his distinctive brass that eventually became legendary.

Though he only lived to age 28 and only read music well enough to pass the union requirement, Bix gained the respect of jazz musicians everywhere. His contemporary, Louis Armstrong, offered high praise. “All the cats wanted to play like Bix; ain’t none of them play like him yet.”

The legend lives on at the Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Jazz Festival held annually in Davenport. This year’s celebration — July

24–27 — includes ten bands from the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, plus a band comprised of area youths, playing at four venues this year. “In 1971 a band from New Jersey came to Davenport to play a tribute at his gravesite,” says Raymond Voss, president of the Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Jazz Society. “The festival has drawn thousands of jazz lovers every year since.”

For more information on the Bix Festival schedule, visit [www.bixsociety.org](http://www.bixsociety.org) or call 1-888-BIX-LIVS.

