

Arts & Entertainment



INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE...Westfield jazz pianist, Gil Scott Chapman, has recently returned from Switzerland where he performed in the Parmigiani Montreux Jazz Piano Solo Competition.

Westfield Pianist Gil Scott Chapman Performs on International Stage

By MARYLOU MORANO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD—Westfield jazz pianist, Gil Scott Chapman, has recently returned from Switzerland where he performed in the Parmigiani Montreux Jazz Piano Solo Competition.

A 2013 graduate from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, with a B.F.A. in Jazz Studies, Mr. Chapman was the only semi-finalist chosen from the United States this year.

"It was an awesome trip, a great experience, and an amazing opportunity," Mr. Chapman told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*. "I applied [to perform at the Montreux competition] hoping I had a shot, but never thinking it would come to fruition."

Mr. Chapman explained that this year's contest was unique in that it was the first time in the history of the competition that the jury was unable to decide who to advance to the final round.

"Everyone of the pianists this year

was so good that the jury delayed their decision for 24 hours, and gave...us a chance to perform again. The suspense was truly remarkable!" he said.

Mr. Chapman has performed in many concerts and festivals around the country. Some of his most notable venues include Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. and the Detroit Jazz Festival. Montreux was Mr. Chapman's first experience playing on an international stage.

He began studying the piano when he was about six years old and at age nine, he debuted at Carnegie Hall, performing an original composition called "A Hike in the Woods."

A graduate of the Interlochen Arts Academy, Mr. Chapman has participated in a number of piano competitions and won a number of awards, such as the "Piano Teachers Society of America Five Year Carnegie Hall Student Award" and the "Music Educators Association of New Jersey Young Artist Piano Competition."

While Mr. Chapman enjoys the spontaneity of the jazz art form, he calls his music interests "eclectic" and listens to various types of music in his down time.

"My favorite pianists, range from Mulgrew Miller to Art Tatum, to Sonny Clark," Mr. Chapman said. "I've studied the whole history of jazz piano so I've been able to learn different things from thousands of jazz icons," he continued.

"My favorite instrument second to the piano would probably be the trumpet, which I do not play very well. But I learned how to play [it] briefly during my undergraduate years."

While Mr. Chapman's long-range career goals are still evolving, for now he hopes to continue performing on international stages.

This October, he will appear as a semi-finalist at the Nottingham International Jazz Piano Competition, which will take place in Nottingham, England.

Clips of Mr. Chapman's music can be heard on Youtube.com.

Paramount: The Best Studio Tour For Movie And TV Buffs

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for The Summer Travel Series

"Hooray for Hollywood!" And what better way to celebrate the corny but joyful lyrics from that 77-year old iconic song than by getting a very up-close look at the workings—past and present—of the TV and movie industries.

As much as I love watching movies and TV, what I lose myself in is what goes on behind the cameras and how films and shows are made. I was lucky enough to be an extra in a handful of movies in the 1990s, and despite the low or no pay for many, many hours of take after take and sitting around forever waiting to hear "Action!" I loved every second of it. I spent the better part of 10 hours in a hotel ballroom in Asbury Park filming a three-minute scene for 1997's "Chasing Amy" with then-unknowns Ben Affleck and Jason Lee and, a year later, a full day under rain machines and amidst special effects on Wall Street for a crucial scene in "Godzilla." Some of us extras were bored to tears, I could tell. As for me, I would have stayed all night if asked. And thanks to my inability to control my own laughter when someone else is laughing out of turn, I made the "Chasing Amy" DVD's blooper reel as I tried my best not to laugh or even crack a smile as Affleck and Lee

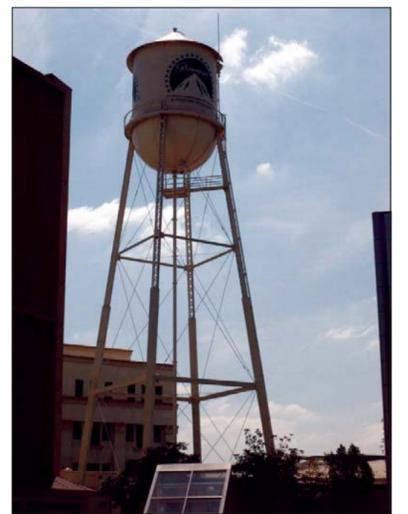
cracked up behind me and repeatedly ruined our scene.

This is why I love movies and why I wanted to be in a few of them myself—and why the tour at Paramount Pictures Studios in Hollywood is a great way for movie and TV aficionados to spend an afternoon. Just walking through the iconic gate facing Melrose Avenue is enough to give one the feeling that they are entering another era, when giants like Cecil B. DeMille, Alfred Hitchcock, Billy Wilder and Francis Ford Coppola were making classic movies that remain so today.

Unlike, say, the tour at Universal Studios, with its amusement park rides, the two-hour Paramount tour—led by very knowledgeable guides who ferry small groups around the sprawling lot on golf carts—is a look at the history and operations of the only working studio in Hollywood and will likely be a bore to most kids.

Once inside the gate, you will see interior sets being built on sound stages located inside massive warehouse-sized buildings. You will get to look through the costume shop and the props department, both of which look like a pack rat's dream with shelves and shelves of items used to furnish fake houses, offices, restaurants, bars, stores and any other setting from any era and the endless costumes for the actors and actresses appearing in those settings.

You will see the Branson Gate, which was featured in "The Godfather" and "Sunset Boulevard." You will see Hitchcock's office. You will see the dressing room doors used by Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz when they were TV superstars. Desi's door is unusable, cemented shut, we were told, at Lucy's orders decades ago after she had had enough of her husband's infidelities. Nearby is a

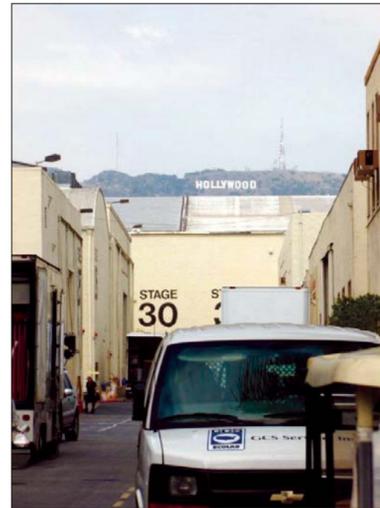


Fred T. Rossi for The Westfield Leader and The Times
HIGH ABOVE IT ALL...The iconic water tower at Paramount Pictures Studios towers above the massive lot.

small grassy park fronted by an office building whose exterior doubled as the front entrance to the high school in "Happy Days." Fans of "The Brady Bunch" will recognize the area as the place where bully Buddy Hinton met his fate. In the sidewalk, you can see the handprints of "Cheers" stars Ted Danson and Woody Harrelson. The story we were told is that they had gotten drunk while filming an episode, lost a bet and were forced to strip naked and streak around the entire studio lot. On their way back to the set, they spotted some wet cement and stopped, naked, to leave their handprints. The bench on which Tom Hanks sat and waited for the bus in "Forrest Gump" is here as well, and the story goes that Tom Hanks recently came to Paramount, sat on the bench and passed out chocolates to passing tourists.

Movies are about illusions and fooling the audience when needed. That is why the same exterior was used twice in "Top Gun," once to show the outside of Kelly McGillis's bungalow and the other to depict the outside of the offices used by Tom Cruise's character. The only differences were a few potted plants and a different color awning. Speaking of Mr. Cruise, he was noticeably shorter than his then-wife Nicole Kidman.

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Fred T. Rossi for The Westfield Leader and The Times
HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD...Paramount Pictures Studios is the only movie studio from which you can see the famed Hollywood sign.

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