

***DownBeat* Magazine recognizes UNLV Jazz Ensemble I as one of the nation's best for Graduate College Large Ensemble Outstanding Performance**, sharing the honor with the University of Miami Frost School of Music Concert Jazz Band. This award demonstrates the comprehensive excellence of our UNLV Jazz Program.

The awards, officially known as the “Student Music Awards,” were announced in *DownBeat*'s June edition, released April 27 and presented in fifteen categories in five separate divisions (junior high, high school, performing high school, college and graduate college). The *DownBeat* awards are considered among the most prestigious music honors nationally in the field of jazz education. This year's *DownBeat* competition drew a total of 856 ensemble and individual entries for all categories in all five divisions. “Winning a *DownBeat* SMA Award is a milestone achievement for our program,” said Dave Loeb, Director of Jazz Studies and Jazz Ensembles at The University of Nevada Las Vegas. “It is one of the highest possible awards a college jazz program can receive and we are extremely proud of our talented students.”

DownBeat magazine established the new graduate college division this year to differentiate between universities offering only undergraduate degrees and institutions that bestow masters and doctoral degrees. “I am particularly excited that fifteen out of the seventeen members in our current UNLV award-winning jazz ensemble are undergraduates. Our gifted students never cease to amaze me with their dedication and commitment to musical excellence and I am honored to have the opportunity to work with them.” The selection method for the *DownBeat* magazine SMA awards is impartial with CDs identified only with an encoded number to insure complete fairness in the “blind” judging process. As a result, the judges do not know what school they are reviewing. “I am thrilled that we won this honor without bias competing against exceptional jazz programs worldwide. This should make prospective students aware of the quality musical education that is available through the UNLV Department of Music.”

“Rebuilding this program to national prominence was one of my original goals when I first took this position as UNLV Director of Jazz Studies.” Many years ago, the UNLV Jazz Ensemble under the direction of its creator, Frank Gagliardi, won best college big band and a five-star award from *DownBeat* magazine for a critically acclaimed recording with guest jazz tenor saxophonist Don Menza. “While leading the Program since 2002, I've witnessed a steady increase in the accolades our students have garnered. In the past few years we've seen our students win an abundance of individual and ensemble honors at prestigious festivals including the Reno Jazz Festival and the Monterey Next Generation Jazz Festival. I believe these recent distinguished accomplishments place UNLV in the top echelon of university jazz programs. It is a pleasure working with my new colleague, Nathan Tanouye, Assistant Director of UNLV Jazz Ensembles and arranger of the submitted recorded material, whose contribution was absolutely essential to our success. In addition, I am grateful for the steadfast support that makes this possible from the UNLV President, the Dean of the UNLV College of Fine Arts, the Chair of the UNLV Department of Music, The Joe Williams Foundation, The Liberace Foundation, our generous donors and the Las Vegas community.

For more information about the program please contact Dave Loeb, UNLV Director of Jazz Studies, at 702-895-3739 or by email at dave.loeb@unlv.edu.