

## JAZZ FOR LUNCH

By Evelyn Parker

Backed by the smooth swish of the drummer's brush, a gentle bass and the light twinkling of an electric piano, Shirley Smallwood crooned "Cry Me A River", last Friday noon at W.P. Express, a lunch spot in downtown Oakland.

W.P. Express hosts the Shirley Smallwood Quartet each Friday. It features indoor and outdoor seating.

Shirley Smallwood is the vocalist, Nancy Kennedy plays piano, Carol Dearment is on bass and Jim Shalala provides the drums.

The outdoor garden spot has a low fence that borders an A.C. Transit bus stop and it was pleasant eating lunch while strains of "Cry Me A River" and "Satin Doll" floated over the fence, past peeping children, over the heads of elders crouched along the bus stop bench for relief from the noon sun and young mothers swaying as their babies dozed.

The noon crowd, complete with joggers and strollers who had shed layers of clothing after leaving temperature controlled offices, all spread broad smiles as they passed the quartet.

Nancy and Carol, put down their instruments and joined Shireley for rhythmic handclapping. They then broke into an acapella "Sentimental Journey", with Carol providing a vocal bass (ba boom ba boom). Feet were tapping, people were chewing with grins and the bench at the bus top was bouncing.

Shirley Smallwood scatted through the numbers, while someone in the crowd shouted "Watch out Ella!" Although she may sound somewhat like Ella there is also a Betty Carter influence and maybe even a hint of Dee Dee Bridgewater in her voice, but Smallwood shines through them all. Smallwood, who has also done stints at Gordon's and Chez Jacques in S.F. with a group known as Kava Kava, said her secret desire is to play in Japan. "Jazz is received more warmly over there" Smallwood said.

W.P. Express has very pleasant counter service with older staff counter people working side by side with those much younger. In excellent spirits, sported genuine smiles even as the lunch line got longer and longer. It must have been the music so aptly provided by the Shirley Smallwood Quartet that kept their feet tapping as they continued to prepare our sandwiches.

Whether take out or leisure luncheon is your pleasure, W.P. Express and the Shirley Smallwood Quartet work conjunctly to make your Friday lunch a musically pleasurable and appetizing experience.