EXHIBITION CHRONICLES TOURS OF AMERICA’S JAZZ AMBASSADORS

MISSOULA –

An exhibition that chronicles American jazz legends as they traveled the globe on behalf of the U.S. State Department will open at the Montana Museum of Art & Culture at The University of Montana on Thursday, March 18.

“Jam Session: America’s Jazz Ambassadors Embrace the World” is an exceptional collection of photographs and documents drawn from important archives around the country. These materials range from the mid-1950s through the 1970s, when Dizzy Gillespie, Louis Armstrong, Dave Brubeck, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Sara Vaughn and others served as cultural ambassadors.

An opening reception featuring music by jazz pianist David Morgenroth will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. March 18 in the lobby of UM’s Performing Arts and Radio/Television Center.

“Jam Session” will be at MMAC through Saturday, April 24. The exhibition includes more than 80 compelling images of musicians visiting 35 countries across four continents, providing a unique insight into the successful diplomatic initiative that built international friendships through jazz. Millions of people experienced the concerts, which introduced many to the styles and variations of this uniquely American art form.

The successful cultural programs continued under the direction of the U.S. Department of State until 1978.
During the exhibition, the museum will unveil its new audio tour system, Guide by Cell, which will allow visitors to use cell phones, iPods or MP3 players to listen to the musicians play jazz standards.

“Jam Session” was organized by Meridian International Center and has traveled to countries throughout Europe, Asia and Africa, as well as major cities across the United States. The exhibition has been curated by Curtis Sandberg, Meridian’s vice president for the arts, with Penny M. Von Eschen, an expert in the history of jazz diplomacy and author of “Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War.”

Sandberg will present a lecture at 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 14, in the Masquer Theatre of the PAR/TV Center. The event is free and open to the public.

Three satellite exhibitions will be held in conjunction with “Jam Session.” “Selections from the Joseph S. Sample Collection” will be on view in the lobby of the PAR/TV Center at UM. “James Todd Jazz Portraits” will be displayed at UM’s Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, and “Henry Meloy Jazz Portraits” will be at First Interstate Bank, located at 101 E. Front St. in Missoula.

Exhibition sponsors are Joseph S. Sample, in memory of Miriam Sample, and the Gallagher Western Montana Charitable Foundation. Exhibition partners are First Interstate Bank, the Montana World Affairs Council, the Buddy DeFranco Jazz Festival, Montana Public Radio and the Mansfield Library.

More information about the exhibition can be found on MMAC’s Web site at http://www.umt.edu/montanamuseum.
MMAC is located in UM’s PAR/TV Center. Gallery hours are 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 4 to 8:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. A $5 donation is suggested, and free parking is available near the northeast corner of the PAR/TV Center.

For more information, call 406-243-2019.

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**NOTE TO MEDIA:** Digital images of selected artworks included in the exhibition are available by request. Call Becky Garner, MMAC coordinator of programs and publications, at 406-243-2019 or e-mail rebecca.garner@msu.umt.edu.

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