

Jazzfest blows its own horns

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THE saints came marching into Melbourne yesterday when a street parade loudly launched the Melbourne International Jazz Festival.

New Orleans-inspired Melbourne band Cycling Katrina blew up a Southbank storm with musicians from the Victorian College of the Arts and Monash University.

The group is among more than a dozen ensembles that will perform free at the 10-day festival, which kicked off with Academy and Grammy award-winning Herbie Hancock at Hamer Hall last night.

The festival, which had almost hit break-even point before it opened, has lured Chick Corea, the Pharoah Sanders Quartet and the Las Vegas Mass Choir, as well as local stars including James Morrison, Kate Ceberano, Paul Grabowsky and saxophonist Jamie Oehlers, who was this week hailed Jazz Artist of the Year.

"This festival is already the biggest we have ever seen," artistic director Albert Dadon said yesterday.

More than 200 musicians will perform in 10 venues, with highlights including pianist Kim Cheol Woong, who fled North Korea, "where people think jazz is evil".

Free performances will run from noon to 6pm daily until May 13 at Federation Square and the river promenade at Crown.

Net link: www.melbournejazz.com

