COURTESY UW ARTS INSTITUTE

Resume Builders

He's a pianist, singer, composer, music producer, author, and radio and television commentator — and now he can add university instructor to his resume. **Ben Sidran '67** may be the most versatile person working in music today, and in 2003 he's the artist-in-residence for the Arts Institute.

There he's teaching a course that displays a little versatility of its own.

Cross-listed as Music 469 and Jewish Studies 490: Jewish Popular Music in America: Irving Berlin to Lenny Kravitz, the class examines the contributions of Jewish composers and musicians from the Tin Pan Alley era, through Hollywood musicals and early rock 'n' roll, to their dominance of the recording industry in recent decades.

One theme of the course is following the historical relationship of the black and Jewish experience in America. "I hope students get a sense of how America was formed by these different cultural streams, which are so apparent in song and performance styles," says Sidran.

A longtime Madison resident, Sidran has played keyboards with or produced such artists as **Steve Miller x'67,** Van Morrison, Diana Ross, and **Boz Scaggs x'66.** He composed the musical score for the award-winning documentary *Hoop Dreams* (1994), and his most recent CD, *Concert for Garcia Lorca,* was nominated for a Grammy.

Just as accomplished, but less well known, is Sidran's reputation as a scholar. After earning a degree in English literature from UW-Madison, he received a PhD in American studies from the University of Sussex in England. His books include *Black Talk: How the Music of Black America Created a Radical Alternative to the Values of Western Literary Tradition* and *Talking Jazz: An Illustrated Oral History*. His latest book, *Ben Sidran: A Life in the Music*, is a memoir scheduled for publication this month.

Sidran's residency, sponsored by the School of Music, the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies, and the Department of Communication Arts, brings him back to what he does best — blending musical expertise with scholarship. He plans to conclude his stay at UW-Madison with a special public concert, *Ben Sidran and Friends: A Jazz Tribute to Jewish Popular Music in America*, on April 12 at the Wisconsin Union Theater.

This, too, will be a homecoming. When Sidran was a student in the early sixties, he would practice piano in the Memorial Union — since he wasn't a music major, the music school's rehearsal halls weren't available to him. He convinced **Fan Taylor,** then the Union's manager, to have live jam sessions in the Rathskeller on Friday afternoons, and he played at frats in a band called The Ardelles with fellow students Scaggs and Miller.

"Anyone on campus in the sixties has a fond memory," says Sidran. "It was wild — great — I just loved it. The interaction between the worlds of academic intellectualism and jazz musicians was inspiring."

— *Candice Andrews*