

Press Reviews

Virtuosos Of Soul-Jazz Visit Dgbg –Buffalo News

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NEWS POP MUSIC CRITIC

Duke's Bohemian Grove Bar on Allen Street — commonly referred to as DBGB by the jam-band, DJ music and jazz fans and musicians who loyally gather there — has slowly evolved from a dark corner bar into an inviting music club and restaurant over the past few years.

Part of this growth has involved the addition of happy hour shows Fridays and Saturdays, where casual, seated pub-style dining is offered as bands perform warm-up sets for the later evening's attractions.

The happy hour performers can vary, from the Grateful Dead-based songfests of Workingman's Dead, to the serious sets of jazz from renowned drummer Carmen Intorre and friends.

On Friday, soul-jazz was the order of the early evening, as Rochester based trio Paradigm Shift offered up twin sets of supple, groove-centered instrumental music. The vibe was mellow, but inspired — Paradigm Shift is composed of killer players with strong resumes, men who know how to grab a crowd's attention with subtlety.

Led by guitarist Melvin Henderson, Paradigm Shift also includes cofounder and organist Gerry Youngman and the band's youngest member, drummer Sean Jefferson, who has been on board for five years. All three are virtuosos, men well-schooled in the hybrid of jazz, soul, R&B, gospel and funk that is souljazz. More significant than their individual prowess as players is the manner in which the Paradigm Shift musicians interact — yes, there were solos aplenty on Friday, but all bowed before the supremacy of the groove.

This, of course, is wholly in keeping with the soul-jazz tradition. The music is, more often than not, based on the organ-playing—a soul-jazz organist such as Youngman is responsible for handling bass player duties with his left hand while affording funky harmonic accompaniment with his right. Youngman proved himself more than familiar with the stylistic breakthroughs of soul-jazz forebears Jimmy Smith and Jack McDuff, players who forged the blueprint for the form,

along with the Cannonball Adderly Quartet, Jimmy McGriff, Grant Green and others, during the '60s.

All of the aforementioned bands and artists centered their music on the groove, which was not always rooted to the triplet-swing feel of Be Bop. Jefferson is clearly a drummer with serious jazz chops, but Friday, he also knew when a funky R&B groove was the appropriate coal to shovel into the engine room's fire.

Mel Henderson sat atop all of this, providing sultry accompaniment, playing chordal melodies during the heads of each tune and then blending blues and jazz in his attention-grabbing solos. Clearly a musician who has studied jazz giants like Wes Montgomery and George Benson, Henderson tore it up during a souljazz take on Miles Davis' timeless post-Bop masterpiece "So What." His solo moved gracefully between Montgomery-like double-octaves and melodic, Bop-based lines.

A later take on Benson's mid-70s hit "Breezin' " offered another highlight, and all three musicians soloed eloquently.

The intimate, inviting atmosphere at Duke's was deepened by the funky sophistication of Henderson and Paradigm Shift. The whole night felt like a cool and cozy hang with friends, with a smoking soul-jazz trio providing the personalized soundtrack.

Concert Review

Paradigm Shift

Duke's Bohemian Grove Bar Friday

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