

John Rangel Duo Series: with bassist Chuck Metcalf

The duet series hosted by pianist John Rangel continued at El Meson last Thursday night (December 8th) with new Santa Fe resident Chuck Metcalf on bass. While Chuck might be new to Santa Fe, he is a veteran player of many years who blended his talents seemingly effortlessly with Mr. Rangel in a series of jazz standards and improvisations. Chucks' list of credits includes stints and recordings with Mark Murphy, Dexter Gordon and Ernestine Anderson to name a few. One this night -his first gig in Santa Fe- he started with some pretty good company in the person of John Rangel, who knows a good player when he hears one, and it was a joy to see them develop their rapport and even start tunes without so much as a word. Chuck strums a few notes on the bass and all of a sudden it's "Little Sunflower", or John starts a phrase on the piano and "Nardis" is born. Such is the magic of jazz.

Chuck plays with both an intellectual and emotional passion, so both right and left brain people can dig him. But it's his tone that's most apparent at first, and our Editor Irene Campos said that night, "I've never heard a bass so deep and resonant". So back to the tunes...the duo was deeply engaged in the be bop classic "Billie's Bounce" when I walked in, and they were trading fours by the end of the tune. Locked in from the start. Then on to "Little Sunflower", with Chuck holding down the bass and rhythm, an added musical burden in a duo situation. The tune was absolutely beautiful. John's playing can at times be very dense, but here he was light and free, letting the sounds of the bass fill the space between them. "There is no Greater Love" was also a great vehicle for both cats to solo, with John offering quick and concise phrases and matched Chuck's use of space. The set ended with a fun reading of Horace Silver's "Strollin' ", and by then two musicians were playing like old friends. I'm sure this will not be the last we will see of Mr. Metcalf in these parts.

As a side note to this review, I have known Chuck for over 25, maybe 30 years, going back to my early days in jazz clubs in San Francisco, such as the Keystone Korner. During the 80's and 90's, Chuck was an advisor to at least two non-profit, community based jazz organizations that I was a part of, and helped a great deal in planning and developing our agenda to keep jazz alive. We were always happy when he was able to play at our events, and now I get to see him in my new home town as well! I know my jazz friends here will share my enthusiasm in welcoming Chuck to the scene.

--Michael Handler