

KSFR presents the Straight Up Quintet

Turns out almost any day of the week is busy busy for Jazz lovers in Santa Fe. Between the weekly gigs and showcases, there is something going on many nights during the week. Throw in the occasional excellent Tribute Trio series or John Rangel Duet show, and the richness continues to grow. Then, on top of that, add a special KSFR concert with an all-star cast, well, it never stops!

At issue is the recent KSFR benefit show featuring John Trentacosta Straight Up Quintet (not trio!) held two weeks ago at the Lodge's Maria Benitez Room. While not known as a hotbed of jazz, the room proved itself a good nightclub-like setting, with good sound and sightlines. The turnout was respectable, and the DJs from the station, including myself, loved both the opportunity to "meet the listeners" and to enjoy these kinds of events together....and with our very own DJs as part of the show! That would be the afore mentioned John Trentacosta on drums and Alren Asher on, let's see, alto, tenor, bari saxes and flute. He had the soprano never got to it..... The rest of Straight Up consisted of Brian Bennett on piano, Paul Gonzales on trumpet, flugelhorn and vocals, and Michael Olivola on bass.

The evening started with Dexter Gordon's "Fried Bananas", an up-tempo be bop classic with a nice long exchange of "fours" at the end. Next up was a very pretty Carlos Jobim tune that Helga Ancona told me was called "Useless Landscape" in English. It was one of my favorites of the evening because it featured Arlen on flute—and his famous tone—and a beautiful flugelhorn solo by Paul Gonzales. (I don't want to appear selfish, but I can always hear more flute, and soprano playing for that matter, from Arlen...). The next song, also Brazilian in origin, featured very nice singing by Paul, in Portuguese no less, on a tune called "Mambembe". This might have been the song that Paul also debuted his use of the triangle, which added a good effect to the music. Not to go as far as saying "More cowbell!!", I liked Paul's use of percussion during the various tunes in the show. (If some of you need an explanation of the "More cowbell!" comment, come see me after class....) In fact, I had not seen Paul as much as the other players, and it was great to hear him play his axe but also sing an original tune for Louis Armstrong later in the set, "Louise's Inferno". He added a nice element to the quintet.

Getting back to the songs of the night, the group continued with the Horace Silver classic "Silver's Serenade", which Mr. Trentacosta first heard in a high school assembly and changed his musical life forever.....but come on, John....no Beatles, no Stones?? Back to be-bop, the quintet burned through Wayne Shorter's "Black Nile" before ending the first set. It was nice to see that very few people left during the break, but there were a few Chief Sanchez fans to set out for the last set at Tiny's! The second set started with an underplayed Coltrane tune "Mr. Kenyatta", with Alren on a very versatile bari sax. Then it was on to another Paul Gonzales original Latin song "Mr. Mellow, and yes, a few couples did make their way to the dance floor....(hey, some of us can't help ourselves and it was a great tune!). Later, Paul scatted on a song that brought down the house. The next song, made famous by Frank Sinatra and by default, his daughter Nancy, was wonderfully played by Arlen, this time on alto (what a tone). What most people did not know about this composition, as John reminded us, was that it was written as a gift to Frank's daughter by actor Phil Silvers from the Sgt. Bilko TV show. Yes, that black

and white comedy show from the 50's.... (The tune? "Nancy with the Laughing Face".....) The evening ended with GiGi Grice's "Social Call", with Paul on flugelhorn and Allen again on also. Sometimes sung as a vocal, this was more of a combo tune and a nice way to close things out.

In summary, it was a good night for KSFR and the listeners who made it out. The quintet provided an excellent combination of straight-ahead, Latin/Brazilian and vocals to keep everyone happy. Next up, some of these same players will be at the Vespa scooter giveaway drawing December 7th at the deVargas mall....see you there!

Review by Michael Handler