

## Michael's Jazz Corner Osaka Blues

I don't really get the blues when visiting Osaka on the South Side of town.... (I just like that name-- it sounds like an old Dexter Gordon tune) - I go Friday nights and get jazzed. For the last four years or more, the sushi end of the Japanese restaurant has offered Jazz on Friday nights in their cozy, bistro-like atmosphere. What's more, there's what I call "dependable variety" each month, so you know who to expect each week. This week it was drummer Dick Hogle with Tom Rheam on trumpet and keys, and Jen Rund subbing for David Moir on bass. It was a tight little ensemble, with blues bass player Jen doing quite well with the jazz charts. Other weeks will see the dynamic Ben Martinez Project from Albuquerque, Lenny Tischler's Trio, and Don Lavato and Chris Abeyta, a wonderful and versatile guitar duo.

I wouldn't exactly call Osaka a *scene* as yet....it's a funny room, long and narrow, and the music listeners need to be up front to see and hear the band. And then you have the curse of the front door....not only is it temporarily freezing when it opens, but the little sound bell beeps (just in case you didn't know the damn door was open) and that annoying sound usually clashes with the music. The thing should be disabled during the music hours. But I will say the management there has stuck with the Jazz format for all these years, and they are now expanding to other types of music on Saturdays. The night manager told me that Mati Sato would be there soon. And if my blues duo gets booked there, I'll let you know.

The night I was there ex movie SFX guy Dick Hogle had his small group playing mostly standards, with Dick doing the occasional fun vocal. When I walked in, announced by that little door sound of course, the band was playing an upbeat version of the Horace Silver classic "Song for my Father", sans vocals. Guest percussionist Dag had the groove going on the congas, and it was nice how he fit into the tune without getting in the way. Then Dick sang "All of Me", a favorite amongst drummers (I've heard Brian Lewis sing it, too...also on Friday in another part of town). I had hoped Tom would play the trumpet for this tune, but he stuck to the piano for the entire time I was there (about ½ a set). Then a fast, almost funky version of "Black Orpheus" followed, with Jen doing a nice bass line throughout. She might be reading out of the book, but she had a nice flow for all the tunes I heard. Which was all of the above as the set ended....I had been in Madrid to see the Christmas lights and missed most of the set. It's good to see Dick back on the scene, and it's nice to see him incorporating other musicians into the mix (including yours truly when I remember to bring my harmonicas!) But I always like the informal atmosphere (and the hot sake) at Osaka, and hope more

people will take advantage of this free venue that has supported Jazz musicians all these years.