

Winnipeg Free Press

Jazz family burns on stage

Mon Oct 17 2011
Page: D5
Byline: Chris Smith / Jazz

The Clayton Brothers Quintet plays with a fire that threatens to burn down the house, whatever the musicians happen to be performing.

Brothers John on bass and Jeff on alto saxophone, John's son Gerald on piano, Terrell Stafford on trumpet and flugelhorn and Winnipeg's Quincy Davis on drums were a formidable musical force Sunday afternoon in the middle of three weekend shows they played in the Izzy Asper Jazz Performances series.

Jeff Clayton and Stafford are a tight front line, sounding almost as one in their ensemble play and tossing off terrific solos as if there is nothing easier in the world. Their interplay is a joy.

John Clayton is an exceptional bassist whose ensemble playing is intricate and interesting, yet unobtrusive. At one point in the show, he played unaccompanied, ranging from a Bach fugue (don't hold me to that) and easily slipping into the wonderful How Insensitive. It was the kind of performance that can transport an audience.

Gerald Clayton, who has a career leading his own trio, has performed here before with this band and it's always a treat to hear the bright, young pianist who is a sensitive accompanist and top-level soloist.

Quincy Davis, who teaches in the jazz studies department of the University of Manitoba music faculty, has some history with John Clayton, who said he has followed the drummer's career from college. Davis was a great fit in the band and he and Clayton obviously enjoyed the chance to perform together.

The band opened with the aptly titled Wild Man, a Jeff Clayton composition that gave everyone a chance to show off their chops. Clayton burned his way through the first solo, setting the tone for the tune and the afternoon.

Big Daddy Adderleys, another Jeff Clayton tune, dedicated to the Adderley brothers, Nate and Cannonball, had blistering horn solos, but it also included an unusual and engaging bass and drums duct.

The band's repertoire runs to bop and swing, but I Love You was played slightly out there and was a highlight of the show -- a real treat with each musician playing at the top of his game.

As good as the brothers are, son/nephew Gerald Clayton is a real force here. He's a great player, has good ideas in his solos and is young jazz musician to keep an eye on, with two CDs under his name being nominated for Grammy Awards.

chris.smith@freepress.mb.ca

ConcertReview

Clayton Brothers Quintet

Izzy Asper Jazz Performances

Berney Theatre

Oct. 16

4.5 out of five

© 2011 The Winnipeg Free Press. All rights reserved.