

# Winnipeg Free Press

## Jazz group dishes out excitement

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COMING off a recent Grammy Award for his work on Queen Latifah's new CD, bass player John Clayton and his brother Jeff Clayton (saxophone) brought their quintet to town this past weekend for three sold-out shows in the Izzy Asper Jazz Performance Series. The Quintet, rounded out by John's son Gerald Clayton (piano), Terrell Stafford (trumpet) and Willie Jones (drums) put on a jazz clinic Saturday night in what it means to swing hard, turn up the heat and still be cool at the same time. These guys are a class act.

With the stage set up tight to include Gerald and the piano in the thick of the action, the jam session got underway as the band roared into the first number, a Jeff Clayton original entitled Wild Man. From their new project entitled Brother to Brother, Wild Man was a workout that did more than just warm up the musicians; it set the pace for what was to be a muscular and exciting evening of jazz. Trumpeter Stafford staked his claim early with a blistering solo in this song and Jeff Clayton responded with some punchy alto saxophone work of his own. Presiding over the proceedings, the elder statesman on the bass, John Clayton, kept the pace and drove the rhythm section with a big grin on his face.

Gerald Clayton, only twenty-four years old and already an accomplished and superb young jazz pianist, got his first real chance to shine on Bass Face, a song written for the late, great Ray Brown. This was a slow, blues number that allowed him to show his chops as he dug deep for a soulful solo. He further showed his skills on what was perhaps the standout performance of the evening, a stunning version of the Dizzy Gillespie classic Con Alma. Backed by his father and Jones only, Gerald Clayton showed the poise, inventiveness, finesse and confidence that usually comes with years of playing.

Stafford also took centre stage with a version of the Frank Loesser standard I've Never Been In Love Before, which began as a soft, muted ballad and slowly built into a crescendo with the trumpet cooking and the rhythm section driving steadily behind him.

Although they were the undisputed leaders of the band, the two Clayton brothers were more like anchors and co-captains who allowed the younger members of the band to cruise freely. Jeff proved to be an incredibly skilled songwriter as well.

Clayton Brothers Quintet

Berney Theatre

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Attendance 200 (sold out)

4 stars out of 5

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