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Rising star Eigsti lives up to hype

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THE Izzy **Asper Jazz** Performance Series continued this past weekend with three sold-out shows by the Taylor Eigsti Quartet -- and the group's star lived up to his billing.

Performing at the Berney Theatre, Pianist Eigsti, 23 -- one of the most hyped new stars on the international jazz scene -- put on one of the most dynamic and entertaining jazz shows to hit the city in the last several years.

Eigsti (piano & organ) was joined by Larry Koonse (guitar), Ben Williams (bass) and drummer Aaron McClendon, and the kinetic energy between them was a sheer joy to behold. What made the performance even more incredible is that the New York-based musicians are acquaintances, but had never performed together as a group.

The quartet wasted no time establishing the level of energy and synergy as the show began with a Pat Metheny piece entitled Timeline from Eigsti's forthcoming CD, due to be released next April. An Eigsti original composition, Get Your Hopes Up, followed.

The set slowed down in pace, but not intensity, for the next two pieces -- a quiet and beautiful Larry Koonse number, Candle, and a cover of Leonard Bernstein's Lucky To Be Me, which Taylor performed solo.

The second set started out innocently enough with Cole Porter's I Love You and a funky Wayne Shorter song entitled Deluge, but their version of Fever was another highlight. Led by a bass solo as soulful and bluesy as they come, Williams introduced the song which became a full romp in the hands of Eigsti and drummer McClendon.

Watching Eigsti play so marvelously and confidently at such a young age, it was evident why he is referred to as the next big thing in jazz. He is not only a top musician, but a formidable composer who's not afraid to push the envelope.

Concert Review

Taylor Eigsti Quartet

Berbet Tgeatre

Nov. 17

Attendance: 200 (sold out)

5 out of five

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