

# Winnipeg Free Press

## McBride closes jazz series with energetic, exciting show

Tue May 27 2008  
Page: D2  
Section: Music - Reviews  
Byline: Michael Wolch

Bassist Christian McBride and his all-star band closed out the Izzy Asper Jazz Performances with the most exciting and energetic jazz show the series has ever produced.

Joined by his most current working band - Geoff Keezer (piano and keyboards), Ron Blake (saxophones and flute) and Terreon Gully (drums) -- McBride, who is considered the premiere young bassist on the jazz scene today, strode onto the Berney Theatre stage Sunday for the first of two days of concerts all smiles and kicked right into the first number, barely checking to see if his band members were ready. But they definitely were, matching him every step of the way through The Wizard of Montara, an original piece from his CD Vertical Vision. While Gully and McBride laid down the swinging foundation of the song, Blake and Keezer built solos on top and gave a glimpse of the acrobatic and muscular sound that was to follow.

Steely Dan's Aja was next and while the first piece was rhythmically straightforward, this one was full of time changes and complex structures that would have tripped up most players but these musicians never missed a beat. They stayed with each other, and while the original melody of Steely Dan's song was left intact, they took it to a new level, led by Blake's burning solo on the soprano saxophone.

Another McBride original, Lullaby for a Ladybug, came next, and it began peacefully, with Keezer playing some melodic piano over McBride's bowed bass. The calm opening slowly faded as the song gradually built up into a heated exchange between Keezer and Blake, as the two traded riffs that became faster and more impressive. Keezer pounded out percussive solos while Blake's became stronger, louder and more abstract.

The first set came to a rousing close with a cover of Weather Report's Havona, and it had to be the single best jazz performance ever to take place in the small theatre. The band created a jazz fusion romp, led by McBride on the electric bass (Jaco Pastorius would have been proud), Gully at his absolute and rocking best on the drums, Blake laying out wicked saxophone lines, and Keezer flying over the keys of all four of his keyboards. It is not an easy feat to match the intensity of the seminal fusion band of the 1970s, but McBride and his band were simply amazing.

The second set was again one highlight after another. Egad, another original, featured some cool bass pedal effects and a drum solo that would have been right at home on stage at the MTS Centre the other night with Rush. Wynton Marsalis's Our Oasis was a spacey,

ethereal number that was awash in Keezer's modern keyboards, and the final piece, I'm Coming Home, was a funky New Orleans tune that had McBride using his bow and more pedal effects to make the bass talk.

One encore followed -- a loose jam led by Blake on the flute. It showcased just how talented this band is at playing all styles of music.

Attendance: 200 (sold out)

5 out of 5 stars

© 2008 The Winnipeg Free Press. All rights reserved.

Reproduced with permission from the Winnipeg Free Press  
<http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/>