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Jazz trio heats up Cool series

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Concert Review

Peter Leitch Trio

Berney Theatre, **Asper** Jewish Community Campus

Sunday, March 28, 2003

THE Berney Theatre proved to be a hot venue yesterday as the Cool Concerts series continued to attract great musicians to its **jazz** stage. For this session, the Peter Leitch Trio was in town for afternoon and evening performances.

Peter Leitch, an Ottawa native who makes his home in New York City, is the leader of this tight trio, and it is his guitar that is the central voice in the tunes. However, his bandmates are no less integral to the music: yesterday afternoon, bassist Steve Wallace and drummer Terry Clarke showed why they are amongst the most sought-after sidemen in Canada.

The first set began with Charles Davis' hard bop rarity, Super 80. This established the tone early: Leitch was harmonic and melodic in the head of the song, using unique chord voicings to underpin the tune, and he was fluid and adventurous in his improvisations.

There were a couple of smoking hard bop numbers to satisfy the purist: Leitch's own tune Up Front was exciting and full of pyrotechnics and Sonny Rollins' classic Oleo rounded off the afternoon dramatically.

But there were other flavours to enjoy as well. A Billy Strayhorn medley that included Lotus Blossom and Upper Manhattan Medical Group (UMMG) was lyrical and beautiful, and the choice of Thelonious Monk's Ruby, My Dear suited the group perfectly.

Albert Ayler's impressionistic Ghosts really allowed Clarke to open up a bit and play out. His amazing percussion colours added a lot to the tune. In fact, Clarke's contributions overall were subtle and understated.

On the bass side, Wallace's melodic solos never ceased to bring an ovation, and his groove in Book's Bossa made one sit up and take notice. When you added in a little Porter and Weill to complete the equation, the Peter Leitch Trio's performance was an intelligent and satisfying shot of music that reminded one exactly what a hot **jazz** group is supposed to sound like.

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