



Jazz quintet's original approach stands out

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FOR THE RECORD

WATERLOO

Friday night at Perimeter Institute delivered the kind of top drawer jazz performance audiences have come to expect from the monthly Black Hole Bistro series.

While the group's name Braid Murley Davidson Quintet has a slightly awkward feel to it, the music was tight, expressive, passionate, and at times virtuosic.

The stand-out characteristic of this band was superlative writing and arranging.

Some jazz groups are lucky enough to have one composer, or maybe even two, from which they can draw originals to sprinkle in and around their staple of jazz standards.

This group presented a full evening of original compositions, showcasing the equally impressive capabilities of all three headliners (Mike Murley and Terry Davidson on saxophones, and David Braid piano).

The closest the group came to a standard was Murley's composition Things, cleverly written over the chord changes from All the Things You Are.

The evening started with Davidson's Reasoned Seasoned Lifetime, a bright, bluesy shuffle with extensive harmonic saxophone lines, and a grooving piano vamp over bass pedal for solos.

Murley's muscular, guttural tenor solo contrasted nicely to Davidson's fluttering, snake-charmer soprano.

Next up, Braid's Interior Castles created an entirely different esthetic. Rolling piano arpeggios cast a flowing, dreamy spell on this impressionistic mood piece.

This delicate, swirling landscape allowed the bass to shine on its own terms, and Jim Vivian's solo was thoughtful, melodic, and well-articulated.

Braid then brought the band to a whisper taking good time to set up his inspired piano phrasings.

Each successive turn added a new layer of complexity -- subtle chromatic shifts minor-major, rhythmic syncopation, and creative harmonic structures.

This brilliant improvisation burst into climax at the bridge when the saxophones joined in with a punchy wall of sustained chords, finally laying the piece to rest.

And so the evening went.

Each piece created a tightly conceived concept with carefully-crafted orchestral segments; then opening up to broad swaths of improvisational space.

Davidson's Code Breaking was a groovy '70s secret agent man of mystery, in contrast to Braid's gospel-blues Say a Silent Prayer, vacillating between achingly dark melancholy and bright, secure optimism.

A particular highlight was Braid's Wash Away which took directly from Chopin as a foundation and then stylistically to Ray Charles with bluesy two-hands unison riffs.

Braid's classical influences also came through at other times, his solo in Things sounding almost like a Bach partita with a strong fugal statement and counterpoint.

This kind of eclecticism was another hallmark of the band, showing facility with a wide palate of styles and colours.

Part I of Murley's Mo for Fro (a piece written specifically for the band's drummer Ian Froman) had a sustained, hypnotic trans-like flavour reminiscent of Indian Raga, while Part II charged through a fast-bop derivation finishing with a crashing drum smash-fest. Murley's Things started as a fast, jaunty sprite, turning on a dime to traditional swing.

The pleasures of this evening were many and the audience went away satiated with the only regret being the long stretch before the next Bistro Jazz offering.



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