

Jazzing up Minneapolis Music [1]

Jerimiah Oetting [2] | November 14th, 2008

Jazz is one hell of a genre. A realm of music all its own, Jazz exists in a different dimension. One could get lost in its many subgenres and forget other music exists at all. Jazz can be as jarring as Metal or as smooth as the voice of Billy Holiday, as mathematical as Electronica or as chaotic as Noise.



[3]Improvisational Jazz embraces freedom and creativity as much as the common drug addled jam band. The genre that redefines genre – its instrumentalists range from the conservative to the insane.

Despite its madness and spontaneity, Jazz is embraced as an upscale art form, fooling the rich and classy into dressing up for what amounts to a mind blowing, face melting show. Indeed, if the volume was increased and the distortion switched on, the entire crowd would undoubtedly leave with scowls and shaking fists. The live Jazz experience is indispensable.

A new series put together by the Hennepin Theatre Trust and the Dakota Jazz Club is bringing three of the world's most renowned jazz musicians to Minneapolis. Over the course of the next two months, the Generations of Jazz series will allow music lovers to experience jazz music at its finest. Each of the three invited musicians is considered a child prodigy, and will bring their own brand of modern jazz to the Dakota.

Russian pianist Eldar Djangirov kicked off the series on Wednesday, October

29th. Eldar was trained classically by his mother, beginning at the age of three. After moving from Kyrgyzstan to Kansas City, he began to receive increasing attention as a musician. He has booked shows around the world, and is respected as one of the youngest and most proficient piano virtuosos today.

Candlelight flickered shadows across the walls and faces at the Dakota Jazz Club. The mellow ambience suited the crowd well – most of its members were in their forties and beyond. Had the stage not been present, the Dakota would have appeared to be an upscale restaurant. The drum kit, electric bass, and grand piano seemed somewhat out of place surrounded by hushed voices of quiet conversation.

Eldar approached the stage nonchalantly after a brief introduction. If it hadn't been for his formal attire, which he wore with a certain air of forced protocol, he would have been the last person I'd pick in a line-up of famous jazz musicians. It was then that I realized the only thing separating Eldar and myself was prodigious musical talent and a stage. At that moment, the three youngest people in the Dakota Jazz Club were myself, Wake photographer John Hooper, and, at 21 years old, the man sitting at the piano. The full weight of this fact rested in the back of my mind as I experienced an hour of perfectly executed jazz music from someone just a year older than myself.

It was one of those rare experiences in which, for once, my ears played tricks on my eyes. What I was seeing was one man behind a piano. What I was hearing was at least three. Crawling bass lines bounced below dancing melodies on a foundation of climbing chords. I was immediately convinced that Eldar must have at least two brains, and that each of his fingers must have its own set of hands.

Eldar's musical style gives away his age. It's extremely energetic but not unrefined. Like all jazz, his music is like an epic novel. Eldar creates tension and relief with constantly changing atmospheres. He is able to increase speed and intensity without ever sacrificing subtlety and accuracy. Where experimental jazz musicians would break into complete disorder, Eldar retains consistent structural perfection.

While jazz concert tickets can be a tad more costly than the average punk show, the series offers multiple performances at various times and prices. Usually, the

later a show runs, the cheaper the ticket, so it's possible to experience the madness while on a budget.

The next Generations of Jazz show, featuring jazz pianist Ahmad Jamal, will be at the Dakota on November 24th. For more information visit www.dakotacooks.com.

The Dakota Jazz Club



^[4]The Dakota Jazz Club has been around for 23 years.

Having moved from its original location in St. Paul five years ago, it's now located in Minneapolis and contributes to the thriving nightlife of the city's downtown.

The Dakota is open seven days a week with live music performances every night. The club has hosted numerous high-profile acts over the years, including jazz-fusion guitarist John McLaughlin, rock and roll hall-of-famers Booker T and the MG's, trumpeter Roy Hargrove, and singer Boz Scaggs. Local favorites The Bad Plus make an annual stop each November, dating back to 2000 when they were still dubbed the Dave King Trio.

The Dakota is primarily a jazz club, but has recently diversified its style to include world music, rock and roll, and even hip-hop (local B-Girl Desdamona) into their impressive roster. With praise from The New York Times, Esquire, Time, Downbeat, and The Wall Street Journal, the Dakota is a nationally-recognized venue where many top acts request to play. However the Dakota is known for more than just the music.

“Our calling card is we're the jazz club with the best food,” says Nick Lane, the

manager at the Dakota. He points out the impressive menu and wine list, which make the Dakota not only a great place to see a show but also a great place to dine.

“We have an outstanding chef, Jack Riebel,” says Lane. Winner of the Masters in the Marketplace Celebrity Chef Cook Off in 2005 and the national American Cheese Society’s “Iron Man Cook Off” in 2006, Riebel is a seasoned Twin Cities cook who is recognized as one of the best in the state. Riebel’s presence in the kitchen is “the kind of thing that sets [the Dakota] apart from a lot of other places,” Lane states.

1. <http://www.wakemag.org/sound-vision/jazzing-up-minneapolis-music/>
2. <http://www.wakemag.org/author/joetting/>
3. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/thewake/3024270614/>
4. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/thewake/3024308318/>