

Memorable year for this lover of jazz

By Rob Vanstone January 2, 2009

The year 2008 was memorable from the perspective of this jazz listener. I was able to attend concerts by the likes of **Dave Brubeck**, **Monty Alexander**, The Headhunters, **Chick Corea**, **Jack DeJohnette** and **Bobby McFerrin**.

The latter three musicians, who performed April 23 at Carnegie Hall, were horrid. Aside from that assault upon the eardrums, it was a very good year.

I reflected upon the McFerrin mess on Saturday night, while attending the Regina Jazz Society's annual Homecoming Concert at the Regina Inn. My sentiment, expressed to some fellow patrons, was this: "How is it that I spent nearly \$100 for the worst concert of the year -- at Carnegie Hall! -- yet it cost a mere \$15 to hear a gem of a show in Regina?"

The Homecoming group, led by pianist **Jeff McLeod**, was extraordinary. The quintet served up some smokin' jazz for two sets. I sat in the first row, leaned back, and enjoyed every note.

I did not want the concert to end -- although, given the fury with which I was tapping my right foot, I don't think my right ankle could have withstood another song.

The biggest challenge was to select the song-of-the-night. After much deliberation, the winner was "Paper Cut," an original composition by guitarist **Greg Duncan**.

The 24-year-old Duncan, who is a regular on the Boston jazz scene, was a revelation to this first-time listener. He demonstrated remarkable dexterity during a series of searing solos. As McLeod phrased it between sets: "He didn't come here to relax."

Neither did McLeod (now of Rochester, N.Y.), saxophonist **Donny Kennedy** (Montreal), drummer **Jon McCaslin** (Toronto/Calgary) or bassist **Graham Purse** (Edmonton). Everything they played was a post-Christmas present to members of the audience.

McLeod and his cohorts returned home to Regina for the holidays. Here's hoping they have comparable travel plans for, say, Family Day.

Encore, please!

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