

LIVE REVIEWS

Vitello's Jazz Club Studio City, CA

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The Players: Scott Healy, piano; Bill Wysaske, drums; Edwin Livingston, bass; Andrew Lippman, trombone; George Thatcher, bass trombone; Andrew Lippman, trombone; Brian Swartz, trumpet; Bill Churchill, trumpet; Tim McKay, bari/tenor/soprano saxes, bass clarinet; Alex Budman, tenor/soprano saxes, flutes, clarinet; Jeff Driscoll, alto/soprano saxes, flute.

Material: In the current world of electronic-driven pop music—a world that allows or even encourages artists to explore how much can be done with as few real people as possible—Scott Healy reminds us just how good live instruments can sound in a room with highly skilled crafts-men utilizing centuries-old technology. Not only is it hard to find a 10-13-piece band playing anywhere outside of a big-budget wedding or a music school, it's even more rare to find and hear this combination of instruments playing music that is fresh, new and innovative.

Healy manages to compose "jazz orchestra" music that moves forward. Two particular pieces that demonstrate his ingenuity are "#1" which toys with the concept of "free jazz" within a structured piece and impresses with its ability to take the listener in and out of order and chaos, all meticulously planned out and orchestrated. Another piece, one which was nominated for Grammy this year, "Koko On The Boulevard" resonates more with the groove-lover, as it takes one theme through a journey, sticking to a somewhat more



identifiable form and structure, but does not disappoint with the variations on the theme. As a great composition does, the music keeps the listener rooted in an idea, while constantly exploring new perspectives.

Musicianship: This caliber of musician is rare—especially in a small club. The years of study and talent required to perform this music usually means these players are paid well, or at least something, for their ability. As all professional musicians know, however, it doesn't take an economics professor to grasp that a small club gig isn't going to generate the big bucks when divided among 10 players, sound techs, the house, etc. Some pros are motivated by the art itself, however, and it's not a stretch to imagine this is the scenario with Healy's band.

Performance: A jazz supper club has the potential to be "stuffy" if that is the mood set by the performers. This was the complete opposite—we were all just in this 90-minute journey together. The players were all dressed casually, as if a bunch of friends just getting together to nonchalantly blow the minds of everyone in the house. Healy himself proved to be genuine and accessible in his moments of spoken communication with the audience. His personality went a long way toward attracting the listener to his music.

Summary: Scott Healy is a professional with a real resume and a real "career," for lack of a better term. That aside, he is a creative and original voice in a world that is largely hidden to the masses, and is more magical than most would ever imagine. — **Tim Reid, Jr.**

The High Watt Nashville, TN

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The Players: Zac Little, vocals, multi-instrumentalist; Maryn Jones, vocals, keys; Steve Ciolek, vocals, guitar; Jon Maedor, vocals, multi-instrumentalist.

Material: Quartet from Ohio Saintsenecca are far too individualistically stylized for the incomplete label of "folk revivalists," which the band is moving away from with their latest album, *Uppercutter*. Rather, they're folk artists, the operative word being "art," with beautifully crafted melodies, vocal harmonies, the twisting, tragic knife of frontman Zac Little's voice and a range of emotive strumming and plucking.

Musicianship: Small innovations and tweaks to their live performance have made a significant impact on their sound. They mic their instruments, which makes for greater clarity on stage and none of the usual muffled delivery. A sole kick drum, flipped skin side up, is the drummer's primary target. The vocal harmonies are beautiful, but there's something jarring, tactile, sometimes pain inflicting and other times deeply comforting in the vocals of Little, who is as poignant when he takes the stage alone as the band is dynamic as a group.

Performance: I swear, Little was hiding something beneath his regal and monstrous orange mustache, from under which he emitted



powerful vocals that captivated a decent crowd who respectfully sat and watched. Geographic isolation experienced while growing up in an Appalachian Ohio is repeatedly named in interviews as an integral part of the Saintsenecca influence. It is apparent both lyrically and in terms of instrumental aesthetic.

Delivery at this show was delicate, but the messages were heavy. One of the peaks of the evening was "Acid Rain," during which Little's nasal, over-pronounced vocals coupled with his bandmates' to sing, "I hope you're wrong/I feel connected/to something strange

and strong." Or Little's beautifully dejected lone performance of "Beasts" and his proclamation, "You could praise till your heart bends/and still not quite get it/Just some means to a dead end/Just some means as an average."

Summary: Crisp, exquisitely spun melodies. Textured but not heavy-handed strings. Full-bodied acoustic guitar. All of these join with resonating percussive stomps that punctuate pristine vocal harmonies and reinforce what is becoming my new favorite set of lead vocals in contemporary folk. — **Jessica Pace**