

## SUNDAY JAZZ BRUNCH AT LA VECCHIA CUCINA

By Jim Carlton; LA JAZZ SCENE, NOV. 2005

A very pleasant way to spend late Sunday morning to early afternoon is at the Jazz Brunch offered at La Vecchia Cucina, in Santa Monica. The restaurant is comfortable, food good, service wonderful, and the music, superb. The expected music was to have been a guitar duo; however, one of the guitarists was delayed returning from a gig in Italy. The now solo guitarist was Barry Zweig, so the expectation for hearing good guitar was deservedly high. He was seated on a stool in the front window, with the early Sunday hustle and bustle of Santa Monica visibly passing by outside. Zweig's mellow solo style enhanced standards you thought you knew, making you aware there was more substance and lyrical beauty to them than realized, before! Moving between plectrum and finger styles, the tunes melodically flowed well with feeling, and everything felt musically groomed and well-fitted, without relying on charts. His solo guitar work was just remarkable!

Responding to requests, he played tunes including "Snowflake;" "Misty;" "The Girl Next Door;" "My Funny Valentine;" "Besame Mucho;" "Lil Darling" "The More I See You;" seldom heard "Daydream;" an especially nice "Satin Doll," and a spectacular, "Nuages." I made a request that probably was more of a challenge. One of my favorite 1930's era tunes on guitar is "Liza," as played by the late gentle genius of jazz guitar, George van Eps. I heard van Eps and Zweig play it as a duo, years ago, and I can still hear in my memory van Eps' uniquely beautiful progression of chords moving up the neck at the beginning of the tune. I asked not only for the tune but for him to play it with another's interpretation, realizing it was a lot to ask! Zweig recalled the van Eps chording. and not only did it, he did it well, and I was impressed!

In the audience was a young jazz guitarist, Andy Alt, a recent arrival from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. During the second set, Zweig graciously asked Alt if he would like to join him playing on stage. The love of jazz guitar had brought Alt to LA., the home base of a close brotherhood of excellent jazz guitarists, and now one of them had asked Alt to join him!

Excited at the prospect but without a guitar with him, he remembered meeting a prominent guitarist that lived just blocks away. Within a few minutes, the determined Alt returned with a borrowed guitar and amp that were purchased just days ago but lent by the generous owner to fulfill a young player's dream of playing with a master guitarist like Zweig. The shared duo playing resulted in very nice improvisational renditions of "Autumn Leaves," "Blue Bossa". "All The Things You Are," and "Have You Met Miss Jones," a tune Zweig felt had almost endless potential for invention that they capitalized upon.

What a positive way to conclude a performance, with a young jazz guitar comer that just demonstrated impressive playing skills, learning a few fine points from a giving, established top-level artist with a knack for teaching. There was a wonderful feeling of optimism for the future of jazz guitar, and a special appreciation for the dedicated musicians that play it and encourage the art.

For Jazz Brunch information at La Vecchia Cucina,  
please call (310) 399-7979.

- Harvey Barkan