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Music

Of a Certain Maturity

"Kids in the clubs are shaking their assets to prerecorded music. I believe they call that progress."

By Michael Hemmingson

Published March 3, 2005

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One thing about jazz musicians: They love to hang out. A friend who works at the Jazz Bakery in Los Angeles told me about all these musicians who, for years, just sit around, smoke cigars, and drink and chat about better, brighter days -- that is, when they're not playing.

When asked about his own hanging time, La Mesa's Chris Klich of the Chris Klich Jazz Quintet says, "Since I'm a married man with two kids, my hang-out days are mostly behind me. When I do go out by myself, I usually head for Dizzy's. Nowadays, my studio is my favorite hang, since I can close the door and practice my horns without hearing the kids tearing up the rest of the house.

"In my long-ago bachelor days, my favorites were Croce's and Croce's Top Hat or any of the live music clubs in P.B. or the Gaslamp, because I'd usually sit in with whichever band was playing. I guess there must be some ordinance about live music in P.B. these days since those kids in the clubs are shaking their assets to prerecorded music. I believe they call that progress. I call it sad."

On dreams and music? Klich responds, "I still have dreams of dressing up like Paul McCartney and pretending to play bass while lip synching to Beatles tunes."

Trickiest Musical Problem Playing Live?

"Well, that would probably be related to the fact that I play a bunch of instruments that all use reeds and that I often play in very dry conditions. Santa Ana days are the worst, especially if it's an outdoor gig. Gigs in Palm Springs or Borrego are also bad. The problem is,



Chris Klich

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while I'm playing one of my horns, the other ones are just sitting there with the reeds [pieces of cane that vibrate to produce the initial sound that is manipulated by the fingers and shape of the sax or clarinet] drying out. When the reed is dampened again, the edge of it gets all rippled for a few minutes and the air across it is turbulent and difficult to control. The only solution is to get it wet and hold it against a flat surface for about a minute, which doesn't work real well when the rest of the band is already playing the next song."

Instruments/Equipment Used?

"Selmer Mark VI alto, tenor, and baritone saxophone, a Yamaha Custom soprano sax, a Selmer Centertone clarinet, and a Pearl flute. All of them are old horns except the flute -- the alto was made the year I was born, 1960, and the clarinet is as old as my mother, but obviously I can't tell you how old. Let's just say it's 'a clarinet of a certain maturity.' I also use a Mackie mixer, Shure SM57 mikes, American Audio speakers, and a bunch of cables that I like to call black spaghetti, since that's what they look like when you're trying to find out which one isn't plugged in. Oh, and my nice, but cheap, lighting rig that I've modified with specialized musician supplies from an obscure company called Home Depot."

Top 5 End-of-the-World CDs?

"That's a tough one, since my own CD collection is somewhere over a thousand. But my 2500 favorite tunes are all on my iPod, and looking at those, I'd have to say some of the great classic jazz of the '60s would be in there, along with some albums by my favorite local musicians, like Danielle LoPresti, Lisa Sanders, Dave Howard, and Dino Soldo. Some great modern rock and pop music, too, so if I couldn't have the iPod on the island, I guess I'd have to choose:

1. *Speak Like a Child*, Herbie Hancock
2. *The Joshua Tree*, U2
3. *Dear Mr. Penis Head*, Danielle LoPresti
4. *Strange and Beautiful*, Dino Soldo
5. *The Grand Wazoo*, Frank Zappa

Weirdest Gig?

"No question about it, the weirdest I ever played was a Mar Dels gig in Macau [a part of China that, like Hong Kong, was leased to a foreign government, in this case Portugal, then recently became a part of China again]. We were playing at Jimmy Love's downtown when this Australian chain-smoker, Ted, came up and said he wanted us to do this gig in Macau. We gave him a card and thought we'd never hear from him again. Turned out, he was this lawyer by day, party planner by night, who put together 'fabulous events' in exotic locations for the rich and bored. We played a bunch of gigs for Ted in Macau and China, and they were all like Fellini movies with beautiful, wasted people in various stages of undress dancing to 'Wooly Bully' and 'Walking on Sunshine.' On my website there's a photo of me with a bunch of these party guests. I'm the one squinting, since my glasses fell off as I exited a Macau taxicab, which sped off despite my pleas to stop."

Music Feature from [previous weeks](#)