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25 february 2008

Hayes Greenfield's Jazz-A-Ma-Tazz Live

OWTK has been fortunate enough to be in the audience for dozens of kid's shows over the past couple years and while that does not crown me the definitive authority on what makes a great children's musical performance I feel pretty comfortable saying I can spot a good show when I see and hear one. With that said, let me tell you all that Hayes Greenfield's **Jazz-a-Ma-Tazz** traveling jazz show for kids is one of the finest examples of live kid's entertainment I've ever seen.



Blending a toe-tapping medley of energetic bebop jazz and call and response scat singing, climaxing with Hayes jumping down into the crowd to let kids scat, scream and (sort of) sing into the mic, Greenfield and his upbeat band (Sunny Jain behind "pots and pans" and Adam Roberts on double bass) delighted a crowd of youngsters who, in all likelihood, have never seen a

sax or an upright bass played professionally in-person before. The band is tight musically, yet loose enough personality-wise to clearly see that each member of the trio is enjoying himself on stage. In short, Jazz-a-Ma-Tazz is as kid-friendly as Dan Zanes and as fun as They Might Be Giants - just in a radically different way. Additionally, where some adult-music veterans struggle with the transition to playing in front of and interacting with a pint-size fanbase, Greenfield and his band excel in speaking with (not down to) the kids who have come to listen to jazz for an hour.

Greenfield is not just an ax-man though, far from it. With his Jazz-a-Ma-Tazz show, he also serves as a sort of guide through the musical language and history of jazz

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music - albeit in an extremely truncated and light manner. He squeezes in several legendary jazz references, including Charlie Parker, Coltrane and Philly's own Rashied Ali, along with the musician's lingo for everything on stage (drums, for example can be called the already mentioned pots and pans or rims along with dozens of other monikers). Sunny then play each piece of the kit as he called out it's name (high hat, cymbal, etc).

Considering the story of early jazz was often passed down verbally from generation to generation, the inclusion of such references into a performance for toddlers that may comprise the next generation of players was not only fitting, but necessary. You and your kids will come away impressed, joyous and a little more knowledgeable at the end of a Jazz-a-Ma-Tazz show.

OWTK is a strong supporter of exposing kids to jazz music through great books (like Charlie Parker Played Be Bop and Hip Cat) and great music (I recommend anything Bird has ever recorded) but never before has there been such a cool way to take an infant, toddler or even a tween to see a jazz show. Jazz-a-Ma-Tazz is the type of show that could easily convert kids and their parents to jazz music and should serve to prove that jazz is as engaging as rock and roll and certainly was never designed to be background music (despite the presence of nauseating "soft jazz" radio stations).

I should mention that Greenfield has a new CD entitled "[Music for a Green Planet](#)" due to drop in April, on Earth Day. It's a collection of environmentally inspired jazz tunes that is quite good and clever. You can guarantee on seeing a review of the disc in April and hopefully a nice giveaway for your chance to score some cool jazz yourself.

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posted by jeff - owtk at 9:35 pm 

3 comments:

 [bryan sargent](#) said...

He referenced Rashied Ali? See, what did I tell you, avant garde jazz is completely acceptable to teach to really young kids ;)

To continue your thought of exposing children to jazz music, you have to look no further than Vince Guaraldi's music for the Charlie Brown TV shows, especially the Christmas album. Really nice, simple and solid performances. Plus you get the added bonus of listening to one of the best Christmas albums ever.

11:08 AM

 [jeff - owtk](#) said...

Yeah, he actually recorded an album with Ali. He also has jazz singer Joe Lee Wilson sing on 5 tracks on his upcoming CD for kids.

You're right, Charlie Brown's Christmas is a great record and a perfect intro to jazz for kids.

11:58 AM



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 **bbcpx** said...

Hayes' efforts to introduce kids to jazz are nothing short of brilliant. Thanks for the insightful review, Jeff. I too can't get enough of "A Charlie Brown Christmas" each year. It defines my holiday season every time. Great comparison!

If any of your readers know of environmental education groups who should get copies of Hayes' forthcoming CD, please shoot me an email bethpr (at) msn (dot) com

3:08 PM

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about me



Jeff - OWTK
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32 years old, married to a lovely redhead (The Mrs). 2 Kids, both gals - the Bear (age 3.75) and the Mouse (8 months)

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