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Jazz camp teachers show students fans how it's done

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By Michael Wolch

AN all-star lineup of instructors from the Manitoba Jazz camp showed their young charges how it's done at the University of Manitoba Thursday.

While it is not your typical jazz club -- let alone a hall fit for music -- the Max Bell Centre was just fine for the loose, spirited show performed by world-class musicians/teachers Stefon Harris (vibraphones), Avishai Cohen (trumpet), Steve Wilson (alto sax) and Terreon Gully (drums).

Backed by a local trio -- Will Bonness (piano), Steve Kirby (bass) and Larry Roy (guitar) -- the front line of Harris, Cohen, Wilson and drummer Gully had a lot of fun weaving their way through a few standards and a number of original compositions at the Smartpark Summer Night Jazz Festival.

They opened with a unique arrangement of *Summertime* by Harris, that gave the members some room to heat up and find their groove. The main theme of the tune was faintly recognizable, but the overall mood laid out by Harris on the vibes hinted strongly of the slow Southern summer setting of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. Cohen picked up on the feeling and laid down a beautiful trumpet solo.

Vocalist, and U of M jazz vocal coach, Anna-Lisa Kirby came out for the next number, a funky-up version of the heart-breaking tune *Cold* by Annie Lennox. Kirby sounded in fine form, and the band was obviously having a good time, as they were relaxed, smiling and joking with each other.

The first original composition followed, a piece by Cohen that was very moody and groovy and featured superb trumpet and vibe solos. Alto saxophonist Wilson got his first solo -- a biting, edgy turn -- on this song as well, and he showed why he has been the player of choice for the likes of Chick Corea and Dave Holland.

The set closed with a stunning rendition of Joni Mitchell's *Both Sides Now*, featuring Anna-Lisa Kirby again, and some gorgeous nylon-string guitar playing by Roy, followed before the break by an original composition by Steve Kirby entitled *Telluride*.

The second set was shorter, but featured the highlight of the night, a Larry Roy composition entitled *Larry #2*. This song is from the forthcoming CD by Roy and Steve Kirby, which should be coming out soon, and if this song is any indication the material should be very strong and exciting.

The evening ended with another original by Kirby, *Wicked Grin*, which he and Gully anchored solidly with a heavy, thumping bass and drum beat. Here, Wilson had a powerful solo and Gully wrapped things up with a drum solo that could be felt all the way to the back of the hall. It looks effortless for him to pound out the beats, but he is really a master of many rhythms and he sent the crowd out with a bang.

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