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The sweet sounds of a Summer Night

Jazz / Chris Smith

OK, for a mere 10 bucks a head, several hundred jazz fans got a triple treat last Thursday as trombonist Steve Turre, alto saxophonist Miguel Zenon and pianist Luis Perdomo shared a stage at the U of M.

And, they got the full treatment from Turre when he played a fabulous solo on conch shells on the last tune of the night.

The musicians capped a week of teaching at the University of Manitoba Jazz Camp with the second annual Smartpark Summer Night Jazz Fest in the Max Bell Centre.

Zenon was back for his second year, and it seems the saxophonist, in his late 20s, has improved from his already great performances here last year at the jazz camp concert and at the weekly jam session at the Osborne Freehouse.

It was Turre's first visit here, but his music should be familiar from a host of recordings. He wields a big trombone, which gives a warm, rich tone, but through all that he is still able to project beautifully.

He has played shells for years and if you think it's a gimmick, don't. Turre coaxes great sounds from the shells, sometimes playing two at once.

Perdomo was the wild card this year. He is not as well known in these parts as the other two, but he is such a good player it was treat to hear him perform live for the first time.

And a good sign of the talent onstage is the number of local musicians in the crowd who are in awe of the playing.

The Smartpark show, as well as presenting great musicians, draws a mixed crowd other than the usual suspects who typically show up for jazz shows. There were people of all ages, and a few kids running around, in a broader audience that bodes well for jazz.

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In a welcome twist, pianist Michelle Grgoire has booked her own national tour instead of just helping other Canadian jazz musicians get travelling grants to hit the road and promote their music.

Grgoire, artistic director for the Canadian Jazz Concerts series, has spent the last few years giving jazz bands a place to perform in Winnipeg and backing up their applications for a Canada Council touring grant.

This time, she applied for her own grant while still supporting the applications of other musicians.

The pianist and composer starts her tour in Calgary on Feb. 7 and will perform in Victoria, Vancouver, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Toronto (Montreal Bistro and the Rex), Antigonish, N.S. (her old stomping grounds as a student at St. Francis Xavier University), Ottawa and she expects to finish off at the Upstairs club in Montreal on the 18th, but that date is still not finalized.

"I'm going everywhere except Winnipeg," she said with a laugh.

Grgoire is touring to promote her debut CD, *Reaching*, and will travel with the Toronto-based musicians she recorded with: saxophonist Kirk MacDonald, trumpeter Kevin Turcotte, bassist Jim Vivian and drummer Ted Warren.

That band is also booked to play in London, Ont., Oct. 1, and at the Rex, Oct. 6 and 7, Grgoire said.

And Canadian jazz magazine CODA will feature Grgoire on the cover of its September/October issue, out near the end of August.

Grgoire knows how competitive the grant process is with so many musicians vying for a limited number of grants, so she is pleased to get funding to cover travel costs, hotels and per diems. She lined up some good performance contracts before applying and credits that, plus the quality of music on her CD and its critical success, for landing the grant.

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Miles Davis's work has been the subject of more reissues and boxed sets than anyone else and, yes, there is another: *'Round About Midnight*, Legacy Edition.

Along with the usual "bonus tracks not on the original LP," this two-disc set includes the gem of Miles' performance of 'Round Midnight recorded at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1955 in a band featuring the tune's composer, Thelonious Monk.

It also includes a previously unissued live set from a 1956 concert in Pasadena with the same band as the original recording, Miles' first great quintet: saxophonist John Coltrane, pianist Red Garland, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones.

The original studio recording has been issued and reissued, and pales somewhat next to this band's Prestige albums of the same period -- Relaxin', Workin', Steamin' and Cookin' -- which were recorded in a hurry to meet contractual obligations but proved to be great recordings.

What makes the new Columbia/Legacy set worthwhile for Milesophiles is the second disc with the live material.

PHOTO

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