

# Experimental jazz at Birdland

BY MIKE CATANO

Talking about Jerry Granelli's history in jazz music with such groups as the Vince Guaraldi trio almost serves as a discredit when talking about his new quartet, U.F.B.

Suffice it to say, Granelli has a rich history in jazz and blues music, and has repeatedly proved himself to be one of the most talented percussionists playing today.

In U.F.B., Granelli and three very young Germans perform a musical hybrid of jazz, funk, blues, rock, and a myriad of other styles, and they do it with their eyes firmly fixed toward the future.

U.F.B. are clearly free of any sort of traditionalist pretence in the music they make, borrowing heavily from modern rock and blues influences, more so than from the canon of jazz standards. They do not fall into the trap of losing the melody of a song for the sake of improvisation like many modern jazz artists, and they also manage to steer clear of the bland rock/jazz "fusion" that haunts us all in elevators and dentists' offices.

It is this group that took the stage at the Birdland on Thursday, September 14th, playing two sets for the large crowd. The band (which consists of Granelli on drums, Kai Brückner and Christian Kögel on guitars, and Andreas Walter on bass) began their first set with a Gatemouth Brown song and then launched into almost two hours worth

of material by Thelonius Monk, Ry Cooder, and Anthony Cox, to name but a few.

The set was highlighted by the guest appearance of Halifax hip-hop artist Stinkin' Rich for two songs, one an improvisation, the other Rich's interpretation of the title track of U.F.B.'s debut recording, "News From The Street". Rich's appearance drew clear lines between the two musical styles, with U.F.B.'s challenging rhythms highlighting Rich's off-centre rhyme style.

U.F.B. blur the lines of traditional jazz instrumentation, where melody instruments (like the guitar) play melody, and rhythm instruments (like bass and drums) play rhythm. At U.F.B.'s performance, the whole band switched roles depending on the needs of the song.

At points, Brückner and Kögel held down the rhythm while Walter and Granelli stretched out for extended solos and melodic interplay, and sometimes they reverted to their traditional roles in the group. Through all of this, however, you never got the feeling that what was happening on stage was experimentation for pure experimentation's sake. The group plays good music.

After two sets, U.F.B. were called out for an encore, and chose to do "...the first song [they] ever played together," a cover of Jimi Hendrix's "Little Wing". This was a fitting choice for a finale — a rock song played by a jazz band in a rock club with a jazz club's name.

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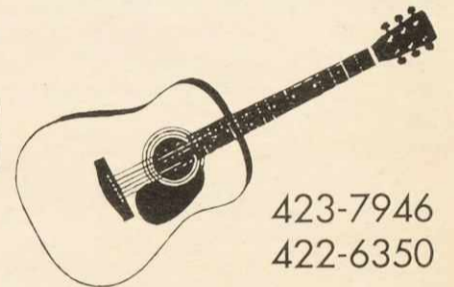
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