

Jersey Jazz

September 2018 Issue

“One swingin’, kickin’ aggregation”

By Joe Lang



CITY RHYTHM ORCHESTRA

The Music of Count Basie and Frank Sinatra

BIRDLAND, NEW YORK CITY, JUNE 17, 2018 – Back in the days of the original Birdland, one of the steady and most popular attractions was the Count Basie Orchestra. The Philadelphia-based City Rhythm Orchestra delivered a Father’s Day present on June 17th by appearing at the current Birdland to present a program of instrumentals from the Basie book, as well as tunes that Frank Sinatra recorded with the Basie band.

This is one swingin’, kickin’ aggregation, filled with fine soloists, and blessed with tight ensemble playing. Vocalist Steve Ritrovato is Sinatra-influenced, but is his own man with a deeper bass/baritone voice that gives a different feeling to his takes on the Sinatra catalog.

The band instrumentals were a compendium of the most memorable numbers from the 1950s Basie “New Testament” crew. Among them were “April in Paris,” “Splanky,” “The Kid From Red Bank,” “Shiny Stockings” and “Whirlybird.” Of course, they also addressed the Basie theme, “One O’Clock Jump.”

Ritrovato gave voice to 14 tunes that Sinatra recorded on the three albums that he did with Basie, *Sinatra-Basie: An Historical Musical First*, *It Might As Well Be Swing* and *Sinatra at the Sands*. The tunes were “Where or When,” “Fly Me to the Moon,” “Don’t Worry ‘Bout Me,” “Please Be Kind,” “Street of Dreams,” “I Only Have Eyes for

You,” “I Believe in You,” “The Good Life,” “I Won’t Dance,” “One for My Baby,” “I’ve Got You Under My Skin,” “The Best Is Yet to Come,” “Pennies From Heaven” and “You Make Me Feel So Young.”



This was a program that was a combination of nostalgia and excitement. Music like this never gets stale. Hearing it live, and performed by musicians who understand how to play it with an authentic feeling, is a terrific way to spend some time. It made the current Birdland feel a bit like the original Birdland for the wonderful set from the City Rhythm Orchestra.

Saxophones: Pete Spina (Co-leader), Nick Valliero (Co-leader), Andrew Neu, John Guida, Ed Golsziewski; Trumpets: Bob Gravener, Tony DeSantis, Bill Hicks, Stan Slotter; Trombones: Joe Ziegenfus, Dave Cianci, Don Collins, Barry McCommon; Piano: Bob Valeno; Guitar: Rich Cox; Bass: Jack Hegyi; Drums: Mike Nigro; Vocals: Steve Ritrovato