

Mark Towns & Tribology

Tribology is an eclectic mix of jazz, funk, fusion, and Latin grooves.

March 4, 2011

Music

Latin Jazz Guitarist MARK TOWNS at the Oyster House in Studio City, California "It's all about the Beat!"

By Debra Graff



It could've been just another phenomenal night of music at the Oyster House Restaurant and Bar (OH), Studio City's best-kept secret jazz hideaway, with a roomful of aficionados listening to standards. Yet this particular evening, versatile guitarist Mark Towns, with his upbeat Latin style arrangements and his brilliant, hand-picked band of master musicians, raised the bar several notches. The laid-back, magical ambiance of the OH was the ideal place to soak up the high intensity rhythms and awe inspiring improvisational solos from the gifted artistry of Towns; Rene Camacho, bass; Richie Gajate-Garcia, drums, and special guests: Doug Webb, sax; Munyungo Jackson, percussion; Roland Gajate-Garcia, percussion; Djamel Laroussi, guitar; and Andrea Miller, vocals. Towns (Chaka Khan, Hubert Laws, Pharoah Sanders), told me these particular performers are great friends AND the best musicians in town. His favorite tunes were his original, "Vista" and his own arrangement of John Coltrane's "Naima." Towns loves appearing at the OH, crediting hosts Christopher and Jediah, for their contagious enthusiasm that spreads to the customers. "They're big supporters of jazz and it's obvious they care about the music."

Monster saxophonist Webb played his instrument with mind-blowing energy. His amazing solos were so staggering to watch that the crowd responded with hoots and hollers. You can't help but be attracted to the powerful force Webb exudes, knowing this is the finest sax improvisation you'll ever hear. Superb bassist Camacho, currently touring with Kevin Eubanks (ex musical director of the Tonight Show) says "It's always a treat to play Mark's originals, opening new musical roads for these incredibly talented musicians to navigate."

The Gajate-Garcia father-son team impressed the packed audience with their remarkable dynamics. Drummer Richie regularly plays with Towns when he's not on tour with Diana Ross. His son, Roland, performs in the house band on American Idol. Jackson (Miles Davis, Sting, Stevie Wonder), an expert percussionist, loves jamming with Mark who "grooves and is open to how folks play with him." He calls the OH a "great hang where we can play what we want with some bad-ass musicians. Christopher's cool and the food is terrific."

Left-handed guitarist Laroussi, playing upside down without reversing the strings, sat in during Dizzy Gillespie's "Night in Tunisia," Charlie Parker's "Little Suede Shoes," John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme," and Miles Davis' "Seven Steps to Heaven." He loves the way Towns rearranges the tunes, making the rhythm the most important thing in the music. "In this case with this band, it was PERFECT."

Sultry vocalist, Miller, honored to sing "Summertime" with the band, said "they're so skilled; it's always an effortless and enjoyable experience." Christopher calls Towns "exceptionally accomplished, bringing together an A Team of players and leading them to a successful conclusion." Jebediah feels privileged for the rare chance to get up close and personal to world class musicians. "When you stand, you're on their level. It's like you're onstage with them." Tommy Vicini, whose band, The Drinks, plays the OH, Saturdays, 3-6p, described Christopher and Jedediah as the "dynamic duo of mixology, hosting the topper most shelf in jazz entertainment." He continued, "Nowhere in LA will you find a better conglomeration of jazz legends and upper scale studio musicians in one room at no cover." And that's the truth!

Oyster House
12446 Moorpark St. (at Whitsett), Studio City
Dinner served nightly til 10p, Sat/Sun til 11p
Call (818) 761-8686 for lineup.