



Virtuoso power - Dual City Concert Band with Don Braden

Dutch Jazz Times- March 6, 2011

By: Hans Kerkhof



As I entered Enschede's jazz-club "De Tor" I had a feeling that I would need to be careful. The regulars had already taken up position in the seats at the back of the club. Most of the seats at the front were still empty except for a few of those fans more interested in who else was there (you can pick them a mile away by the way they keep looking over their shoulder or inspecting the state of the wiring hanging from the ceiling. I usually try to sit toward the back however this evening I had a guest with me that wanted to sit up front. Ok then, there are still seats up front behind the band leader, "we should be able to hear everything well here".

Well indeed, BANG!!, I can't remember all that much from the first eight bars, I felt like I had been hit with a ton of bricks. After regaining my composure I realized that the Dual City Concert Band can do a great deal more than just playing extremely loud. The band combines an extremely compact sound with a high level of technique. At no point in time did I have the feeling that the players had any difficulty at all negotiating the challenging charts in front of them. These musicians can play it all and play it all last Friday they did. Taste is a personal thing and personally I would have preferred to have heard more bass and piano in the balance particularly in the tutti passages. This is often a problem when the piano and bass are not amplified and in addition the acoustics of the De Tor don't help a great deal in this aspect.

Don Braden was announced as a New York tenor player as if this was a stamp of quality. As far as I am concerned this is rubbish, not everything that comes out of New York is good, however this is not the case with Don Braden. After the thundering opening from the big band, Braden in consultation with band leader Rini Swinkels decided to begin with Dave Brubeck's "In Your Own Sweet Way" performed with the band's rhythm section and as he stated in his introduction, in the style of Miles Davis. Most impressive was his beautiful tone that in spite of the breathy sound remained strong.

During the up tempo pieces Braden displayed enviable technique particularly in the super quick "Cherokee" navigating at least four tonal centers. This piece was counted in very quickly and slowed down somewhat however was a good opportunity for Braden to display his prowess. Braden showed himself to be a strong but humble showman, respectfully accepting the applause not only for himself but also for the rest of the musicians. Braden also had no problem in stepping out of the spotlight allowing room for the other soloists. A quality we have come to expect from American musicians and appreciated here in the Netherlands. Had he have been any more humble we could have expected to see him helping behind the bar in the break.