

JAZZ SPOTLIGHT: Milwaukee's Biggest Secret - Dave Bayles Trio

'The BEST WEEKLY JAZZ is in RIVERWEST on TUESDAYS at the UPTOWNER'

by George Martin

Back in the day, while living in the NYC area, I enjoyed the jazz clubs in Greenwich Village; Smalls, the Vanguard, the Blue Note, Birdland, the Cookery and on the way home in Rye, a little basement club where Miles Davis would hang out at times. Never in my wildest dreams would I imagine enjoying world-class jazz in Milwaukee, in Riverwest at the Uptowner.

The Dave Bayles Trio performs on Tuesday nights from 7 to about 9:20 pm. Drummer / percussionist Bayles leads the trio with trumpeter Russ Johnson and bassist Clay Schaub in their weekly gig at the Uptowner, 1032 E. Center Street.

Dave Bayles muses, "I love playing here with Russ and Clay and the support of the owner, Steve Johnson. I played here twenty years ago with the Bill Martin Trio. The Uptowner is very special because I met my wife here."

Additionally, Dave plays with the Paul Silbergleit Quartet and the Briana Greer Quartet. Dave teaches at UWM, UW-Parkside, the Milwaukee Jazz Institute, and the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music.

Trumpeter Russ Johnson states, "I absolutely love playing this gig. The Uptowner is one of the best bars in the world. The patrons here are respectful with some exceptions and that's OK too because the bar staff is here to quiet them down.

"It's a very special vibe here. It feels historic in a way (the oldest operating bar in Wisconsin), and it sounds good in here. As a trumpet player, I can really hear myself. I don't know if it's the wood floors or the high tin ceilings. Just acoustically, it's great! I really love the people who come out. It's amazing to have a weekly gig like this."

Russ Johnson, an original Wisconsinite, has returned after spending 23 years as an important member of New York City's jazz community. Russ has worked alongside many of the legendary figures in jazz and has recorded and/or performed with a long list of the most prominent musicians currently on the international jazz scene and in more than 40 countries across the globe. He currently serves as Director of Jazz Studies at the University of Wisconsin Parkside.

Clay Schaub is the trio's talented bass player whose scats we listeners enjoy and last week busted out with some deep-toned power strokes that blew audience members away. Clay says, "As a performer, I feel very grateful to play during these difficult times and the audience here is friendly and supportive. Our original music can be very adventuresome and everybody's into it which is so awesome. Getting to play with Russ and Dave is wonderful with their high caliber music."

In addition to the Dave Bayles Trio, Clay plays with the Paul Silbergleit Trio and the Eric Jacobson Trio. He worked for years in the New York City jazz scene as a skilled sideman.

The fans weigh in

Brian Rothgery, a former student of jazz at UW and a Tuesday night regular, stated emphatically, "We are very fortunate to have such talented musicians performing in our neighborhood, live and for free. It's a real treat. These guys are great!"

Julie Enslow jumps into the conversation, "If it's Tuesday night, I will definitely



be at the Uptowner for top-of-the-line jazz. I wouldn't miss it. This music stretches my understanding of and appreciation of great jazz. It feels like I'm in a funky little jazz club in New York City. It's a treat to have this high-quality music night here in Riverwest. Much thanks to owner, Steve Johnson, for hosting this every Tuesday with no cover charge and a tip glass for the band."

Richard Hayes, another Tuesday night regular chimed in, "It's an amazing scene here with a fantastic trio, one of my favorite bands to come see."

Hindel Majumdar is a tabla player from India and founder of the Hindel Majumdar School of Music and Dance here in Milwaukee. He said, "I'm so happy to be listening to my friend and student, Russ Johnson, the trio's excellent trumpet player ... The specialty of (the trio's) music is that they play very softly, very melancholy, and very touching, not harsh. Improvisation of jazz music, I've heard a lot. But this is a soft band that touches my heart with original compositions."

Paul Silbergliet, a dean of Milwaukee-based jazz, as well as guitarist,

composer, educator, recording artist, and author, feels great about Tuesday night jazz at the Uptowner. "These guys are all friends and colleagues of mine and ... I know that they have been working on some original music which is challenging and takes time to jell. So, I'm coming in after these compositions have jelled in trio performance ... they are playing things that require more than just keeping a groove and playing the changes nicely, things that require dynamics and tempo, maybe out-of-tempo timing, pretty much all the time. For thinking of the flow of the whole piece, moment-to-moment; these guys are good for it."

Daniel Steinly and Shannon Kelsay recently moved to Riverwest and were at the Uptowner for the first time. Daniel commented, "... (it's) nice to have a shorter set of high caliber music that hits very hard, that fluctuates. It's not just a loud sound the whole time and has different tonality." Shannon joined in, "Tuesday night jazz is a great way to get together with friends and enjoy great musicians in a cozy environment, in a great bar with cheap drinks. There's nothing more that you could ask for."

Holiday Shop at cultivate.



by Austin Greenberg

Milwaukee native Joell Poole brings her years of experience as a purchaser for Elements East to her latest venture, a pop-up shop called cultivate., located at 825 E. Center Street.

Poole told Riverwest Currents that she started cultivate. pre-pandemic out of her home. The pop-up shop, which will be open for three weekends: November 26-28; December 3-5, and December 10-12, is the business' first physical location. She stated that the pop-up will return in the spring.

Elements East, which had a location in the Third Ward, and was a home décor (primarily furniture) store that strictly sold products from Asia and Indonesia, according to Poole, closed pre-Covid. After that, she started a wholesale business, called Objects of Stone, in which she would source stone products such as vases in Asia in order to wholesale them here. "But then the world had other plans," said Poole, referring to the pandemic.

Poole stated that she then found a domestic source of stone, pottery and statuary that can be used for plants and gardens, indoors or out.

Objects such as those are available at the pop-up shop, along with an assortment of internationally-sourced items

that fit under the beauty-nature-art theme: handmade artisanal soap from upstate New York, pottery from Chicago and India, vases and art from England, herbal tea from Latvia, incense from Japan, and a range of products from the south of France, including artisanal soap, tea, olive oil, bowls made of olive wood, honey, art, scarves and more.

Poole frequently travels internationally to source her products, as she did for Elements East.

Most of the products that Poole sells at the shop will not be found in other places in Milwaukee, she stated. She added that the shop has a range of prices.

"Not all things are artisan-sourced," she said. "Some things are not but I think they're beautiful and work quite well."

There have been challenges to opening a pop-up shop this season; the main one of course being unpredictable shipping times. Poole stated that she is managing this challenge, but in the meantime has also learned some good news about her market. She stated that at least two artisans that she works with told her recently that they can't keep up with their demand.

"People, I think, are eager to get out and buy. It's good to hear stories like that, that the demand is sort of percolating."

You heard it, friends. The pop-up shop won't last forever, and neither will the inventory. Time's a wasting.

