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What Has 32 Strings and Grooves?

WholeNote Blog

Written by Cathy Riches

Monday, 01 June 2009 13:28

The [Sultans of String](#) brought their "atomic world jazz flamenco" to the warm, intimate confines of Trinity St. Paul Centre Friday night and the audience couldn't have been happier about it. The affection for this group was palpable as the band alternated between sincere tributes to whales, [Sable Island horses](#) and [Mayan ruins](#), meditative rumba flamenco and smokin' East Coast kitchen parties. Head Sultan Chris McKhool plays 6-string violin and is the main musical voice for the band. Other core players are Kevin Laliberté (who co-writes the songs with McKhool) and Eddie Paton on guitars, the two contrasting beautifully as Paton provided the fiery solos and Laliberté turned in precise and melodic phrases. Drew Birsten bowed, slapped and strummed his way through the bass parts. Master percussionist Chendy Leon sat amongst a small forest of drums and toys, but favoured the versatile cajon for most of the night alternating between hands, brushes and feet as the mood demanded.

The event was in celebration of the release of their second CD "Yalla Yalla!" (Arabic for "Come on! Let's go!") and celebrate they did as one guest musician after another was trotted out, resulting in a Who's Who of Toronto "world" musicians gracing the stage. Bassam Bishara on oud, David Woodhead on bass, three hot Cuban trumpet players (underutilized and under amplified, regrettably) Jordan Klapman on stride piano, Ernie Toller and Amanda Martinez all lent their support to the evening.

The same infectious energy that colours their live shows comes across on the CD as it opens with a bang with the title track then moves to an homage to a Toronto jazz Mecca on Stompin' at the Rex, complete with mandolin solo. The band continues its exuberant journey through Canada, Spain, Latin America, the Middle East and even manages a nod to The Who with a cover of Pinball Wizard.

Check www.sultansofstring.com for CD availability and upcoming shows.