

Sultans of String flying high

by Bill MacLean

I don't know how you can have lived in this area for the last few years, and NOT have heard of the **Sultans of String**. They have been everywhere, playing their infectious brand of world/jazz/flamenco music, lighting up the stage at every turn. I first saw them at **Ten Feet Tall** last year, their CD launch was held at the popular **Hugh's Room**, and of course, they were at the **Beaches International Jazz Festival**.

Wherever they play, crowds can't help but tap their feet and groove along to their sound.

The Sultans of String are violinist **Chris McKhool**, guitarist **Kevin Laliberté**, and bassist **Drew Birston**.

All three have travelled extensively with various bands and have soaked up musical influences from far and wide. All three are excellent musicians and can switch from style to style – or mix and match within a song – and can compose material within a particular genre as if they were born there themselves.

The Sultans of String are flying high following the release of their most recent CD, **Luna**. Recorded earlier this year, **Luna** showcases the talents of this exceptional trio with a 10-song collection, supplemented by several musical guests. From the opening strains of 'Que Vida', the listener is pulled into another world... one of vibrant rhythms, exotic flashes of guitar and violin lines that dip and swell and dance all over the map.

The title song was written as a tribute to an Orca whale, named Luna in British Co-

lumbia's Nootka Sound, thought to be the reincarnation of the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nations' recently deceased chief. The atmosphere is as magical as the whale sounds feel almost real.

The CD ranges from the Moorish-influenced 'Alhambra', through 'Rumba Norte' with its Cuban roots; from the rollicking folk-tune inspired 'Kitchen Party' to the Django Reinhardt-Stephane Grapelli-flavoured 'My Squid Has a Rash'.

A couple of favourites for this listener are

'Rainflowers' – McKhool has written a beautiful piece of contemplative music reminiscent of Jay Ungar's 'Ashokan Farewell' (the theme song from Ken Burns' Civil War documentary) – and the CD's final cut, 'Dos Aguas', another sweet, sweet improvisational duet between guitar and violin that sends shivers down my spine each



time I hear it.

The Sultans of String will be the first act for the 2007-2008 season of **Acoustic Harvest**, and this would be an excellent opportunity to catch the group live (they are a joy to watch, and have some tricks up their many sleeves that will leave you scratching your head). They will be appearing Sept. 22 at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$15 and are available at the door, but it would be wise to come early – these guys will pack the place.

Acoustic Harvest is located in St. Nicholas Church, Kingston Road and Manderley (just east of Warden). For ticket information call Acoustic Harvest at 416-264-2235.

For more information on the Sultans of String visit www.sultansofstring.com. It would be a safe bet that you can pick up a copy of **Luna** at the gig. You should.