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Side of Jazz

A Bethel pizzeria offers gourmet jazz along with gourmet food; and your library may be booking the hottest talent in town

By Dan Barry

It would seem Hartford's jazz influence is spreading. In Bethel, just past downtown Danbury, a gourmet pizzeria is bringing in some amazing jazz talents, many of whom have a connection to the Hartt School or the Hartford scene. Pizzeria Lauretano is already making waves in the restaurant scene, but if it keeps having shows like this past Sunday's with the **Jeff Feldstein Quartet**, it's soon to be on every jazz fan's map, too.

Feldstein made his name as a jazz guitarist playing in the San Francisco Bay Area, but recently relocated to Connecticut. He led an excellent group this past Sunday, featuring Rob Aries on keyboard, Mark Hagan on bass, and Gerry Fitzgerald behind the drums. It was the rare jazz gig where I'm unable to choose a favorite player, because they were all so damn good. Hagan's bass solos were wildly varied in technique, from straightforward plucking to passionate, resonant affairs using the bow. One solo was even an oily, skittish thing where he slid both his bow and his hand along the strings, creating abstract, indefinable sounds. And Fitzgerald both looks and plays like a math professor. Each strike on the drums was precise, methodical, and tempered. Unlike many drummers, he actually put some muscle behind his snare brushes, allowing them to evoke shades of gray.

If you plan on checking out the Sunday-night jazz at Pizzeria Lauretano, do yourself a favor and make reservations. The series is growing so popular you'll have trouble getting in otherwise. You can reach the Pizzeria at (203) 792-1500, and they're located at 291 Greenwood Ave., Bethel, in the plaza at the intersection of Routes 53 and 302.

Have you checked if your local library offers a concert program? You might be surprised to discover that not only do they have regular concerts, but that the quality is stellar. Sadly, local seniors seem to be the only ones clued in, but I've attended excellent library shows in Farmington (traditional folk), Middletown (raging sea shanties), and Hartford (superb bebop). What's more, these shows have always been free.

On Friday I went to the Cheshire Library, where the hard-touring **Russian Duo** had landed for the night. There's no getting around the fact that Oleg Kruglyakov and Terry Boyarsky have a wonderfully nerdy look. They wear traditional Russian

ARIELLE KUBIE PHOTO



Jeff Feldstein.

clothes, and Kruglyakov's haircut could be from the day after the Beatles' appearance on "The Ed Sullivan Show." But contemplating their nerditude left me completely defenseless against the Duo's explosive talent, which had roughly the same effect on me as written accounts of the Ramones's first concert.

You see, Oleg Kruglyakov is a master of the balalaika, the traditional Russian stringed instrument that looks something like a triangular-bodied guitar. Unlike the guitar, the balalaika is played with a constant tremolo-picking that would leave most shred guitarists spent after two songs. While Kruglyakov dances flamboyantly up and down the frets, Boyarsky matches him seamlessly on piano. This is no small feat, as the Russian folk songs they play come to screeching halts, change tempos with ruthless unpredictability, and regularly dip from shouts to whispers and back again. If you want to see these dazzling musicians in action, you can catch them at the Avon Free Public Library this Friday, Oct 23, at 7 p.m.

The Hot Rod Fall Out IV has been rescheduled because of this past weekend's bad weather. You can catch it this Saturday instead. The amazing bill features **Sean Kershaw & the New Jack Ramblers**, **the Gamma Rays**, **Johnny Carlevale & the All Stars**, **Angry Johnny & the Killbillies**, **Soul Reapin' III**, and **the Stumbleweeds**. (Elks Pavilion, 98 Woodland St., South Glasonbury; \$10 for day pass.)

E-mail editor@hartfordadvocate.com