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Performance Paper 1

The Felipe Salles Group at the Regattabar

On the night of September 24th, 2003 at the Regattabar in Cambridge, Massachusetts, The Felipe Salles Group organized a record releasing event promoting their new CD Mind Motions in which they played two sets approximating two hours of music. This group consists of Felipe Salles, a saxophonist and composer, and 6 other musicians including Tony D'Aveni, Nando Michelin, Rick McLaughlin, Bertram Lehmann and Pedro Ito playing the trumpet, piano, bass, drums, percussion and trombone. Felipe Salles is the composer and leader of the group, composing music that blends the rhythms and sounds from native country, Brazil, with modern jazz.

The two sets played contained an array of ensembles, sometimes playing with 4, 5 or 6 musicians instead of all 7 members of the group leading to a variety of textures for different songs. The group played compositions from their new CD as well as older arrangements from previous recordings. The music seemed well rehearsed with only some improvisation during solo parts and very little collective improvisation. The songs were complex and fast, with odd time signatures, syncopation and fast “flying” notes. The structure of most of the songs was solo/ensemble, used to provide enough room for all of the musicians to show-off their fast note playing and excellent musicianship. The compositions were on average 10 minutes long; long enough to contain a diversity of ensemble sections and solo variational sections. Furthermore, the conjunction of drums and Latin percussion created a highly polyrhythmic texture characteristic of various genres of Latin music.

The musicians projected effort and concentration in their performance due to the high complexity of the songs, in comparison to a more relaxed “grooved” playing more stereotypical of jazz groups. The musicians seemed to be battling the notes instead of enjoying playing the music for the audience and themselves. However, this delight of performing and this grooved ambience was expressed in the piano, bass, drums and percussion sections of the songs. Nevertheless, the fast notes of the brass instruments and the saxophone kept the audience riveted and enthusiastic, cheering after every solo to show their appreciation of witnessing the dedication of these talented musicians. A special moment during the performance was when Felipe Salles’ wife joined the group to play the violin part in a song written for her, “Laura’s Nightmare”.

The performance of The Felipe Salles Group at the Regattabar in The Charles Hotel in Cambridge, Massachusetts was exhilarating. The musicians showed off their skill while playing music that contained the polyrhythmic elements of Latin music within up-tempo jazz compositions. Felipe Salles proves an avid composer that engages both the audience and the musicians by writing complex songs meant to entertain and dazzle.