



JAZZ IN JAPAN

staying with the beat

MASUO YOSHIAKI WITH BOB WARD TRIO

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増尾好秋 with Bob Ward Trio

Someday, Shinjuku

December 2, 2016

Masuo Yoshiaki 増尾好秋—guitar

Bob Ward ボブ・ワード—guitar

Yosuke Inoue 井上陽介—bass

Masahiro Tajika 田鹿雅裕—drum



When two killer guitarists square off, the results are not always predictable. But when they know each other for years, like Masuo and Ward, brandish like-minded guitar chops and are propelled by great bass and drums, the evening's destiny is great music. This evening was that and then some.

Kicking off with Ward's tribute to Jack McDuff (who he played with), "Duff's Stuff" was the perfect icebreaker. It bounced and jolted all the stiffness out, and no ice formed the rest of the evening. Even the ballads were scorching. "I Should Care" was gorgeous, with offset guitar sounds from Masuo and Ward that complemented—and complimented—each other.



Miles Davis' "Four" let Inoue on bass and Tajika on drums get in on more of the action. The full-on bright ringing guitars and deep, full rhythm were matched perfectly. Taking on a standard with all the sense of the original, and all the sense of other famous versions rolled into one made their take even more special.

Both guitarists manage to pack in so much awareness of the full range of jazz guitar into their playing, it felt like there were more than two guitarists playing every moment.

On every song, Ward and Masuo delivered not just great solos, but marvelous intros, the kind that make you sit up and lean in to hear better. "Autumn Leaves" and "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To," oft-played standards, were delivered fresh by the guitarists with intriguing intros and complexly-fingered solos.



The second set kicked off with a nimble version of “The Jitterbug Waltz” followed by Ward’s “Get,” both with a deep sense of fun and funkiness. The standouts of the second set were a delicate, sensitive version of Jobim’s “How Insensitive” and a robust version of Coltrane’s “Impressions.” Both songs brought in the feeling of Jim Hall and Wes Montgomery, even while both Ward and Masuo stayed locked onto their own unique guitar voicings and chording.



Masuo now makes his home in the States, but travels back often to play in Japan, while Ward has just moved to Tokyo. Let’s hope the two of them, together and/or solo, will be playing more often in Tokyo. Their sound, so simpatico with such refreshingly distinct guitar approaches, was a delight.

Review by Michael Pronko

