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# Jazz trio hit all the right notes

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Sonya Knox

Arthur Satyan, Nikoghayos Vardanyan and Aleksandr Aghamyan talk the way they play: smooth, quick, full of interjections and digressions and, ultimately, enrapturing.

They haven't played together in seven years, but you wouldn't know it from Saturday night's sold-out performance at The Blue Note Cafe.

"Of course we play well together," Satyan says, "we come from the same culture, the same city ..." "We drank the same water, from the same place," finishes Vardanyan.

That place is Yerevan, 15 years ago in the height of Armenia's jazz age. "We all knew each other, knew who was working on what," Satyan continues. "But he (pointing to Vardanyan) was older."

"He was the star, one of the guys we listened to," explains Aghamyan. "When we first asked (Vardanyan) if we could play with him, and he said yes, we were like ..." he trails off in disbelief. "Ecstatic."

Vardanyan has played the acoustic bass since he was 19 years old. "When I first heard jazz," he remembers, "my heart stopped."

"The first jazz spoke" to drummer Aghamyan was when he was studying with Satyan, who is from a composing family.

"My dad taught me the blues scale on the piano," Satyan says, "and I mostly play jazz, but I still compose classically sometimes."

In Lebanon, that is. Satyan has been playing the piano at The Blue Note Cafe regularly since 1998. He came to Beirut in 1996, first playing at the Bristol Hotel, then at the Casino du Liban, eventually deciding to marry and stay in Lebanon. "Beirut changed my life," he says.

Though the Beirut jazz scene can't compare to Yerevan's, "you can see how strong the audience is," Satyan says.

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"You have to catch the audience, and carry them. Then they'll carry you," Vardanyan adds. "Saturday night was quite good."

The Blue Note was packed well before the trio took the stage. Between their impressive impromptu solos and their finished renditions of standard jazz classics, the audience was glued through the whole night.

"When we're playing a melody, and we start improvising, we're all talking about the same subject," Satyan explains, "deciding on the solos as we go along."

"It's important for everyone to trust each other," Vardanyan adds.

Adds Aghamyan: "We're a lucky trio."

*The Jazz Trio plays Nov. 1-3 at 10.30pm at The Blue Note Cafe on Makhoul Street in Hamra. For more information, call: 01/746 857*

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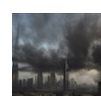

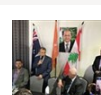


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