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By Mark Winkler

The Latin Connection The Young Artists Series at Catalina's Bar and Grill

One of the great things about going to Barbara Brighton's **Young Artist Jazz Series** at **Catalina's** is discovering the up and coming jazz talent, before any of the other jazzbos in this town. Over the years I've seen so many musicians come on stage looking like babies in their slightly too large suits and cocktail dresses and then blow me away. People like a twenty year old Anthony Wilson, a teenage Dan Lutz, and an off to college Gretchen Parlato come to mind. I saw all of them at the **YAJs** first, and for a \$5.00 cover (students get in for free). It's the best kept secret in town. This month was no exception. I took my seat, had my customary delicious Catalina's beet salad with chicken and then the band came on. It was a five member Latin jazz group who call themselves "**The Latin Connection**". They were dressed to the nines and not looking old enough to know what a typewriter was. **Chase Morrin**, the leader of the group, looked the youngest and as it turns out, he is actually 15. He promptly seated himself behind the very large black grand piano and the quintet launched into "**Nardis**" by Miles Davis. That tune set the tone for the rest of the evening. The familiar jazz standard was given a whole new Latin arrangement by **Chase Morrin** and it was tasty, surprisingly sophisticated and it totally cooked. Each member of the band excelled on their instrument and had plenty of chances to showcase their chops, but **Chase Morrin** on acoustic and synthesizer keyboards was just amazing. He had great technique and his solos were full of interesting ideas and rock solid rhythmic underpinnings. He had plenty to say and lots of soul and humor to say with... He was matched by his obvious partner in crime **Chris Burgess** on tenor sax who blew soulfully throughout—playing off **Chase's** every musical thought. Also in the set were some **Chase originals** with mostly Latin rhythms. I especially liked the tango "**Kona Kai**" and "**Fazed**" which **Chase** mentioned was radically different every time they played it. The head of the tune was quite stellar melodically and it only got richer with the explorations each musician took with it. **Michael Valentini** on bass really shined on this one. Throughout the set, Chase did his arranging magic with "**So What**", "**Night in Tunisia**" and the closer "**Watermelon Man**"—and each were consistently fresh and exciting. Much kudos must be paid to **Daniel Feldman** and **Fernando Gomez** on timbales, congas, and percussion. They kept the whole thing groovin' and when it's Latin Jazz if it ain't got the ritmo it's nada baby. When I closed my eyes I could have heard these young cats on any stage anywhere in the world slaying the house... If this is what the future of jazz looks like, I'm there...