

# BEN VAN GELDER QUINTET

**Bimhuis Amsterdam 21/11**

*It is a pleasure to witness this elation and skill.*

A rare occurrence in the Amsterdam BIM-Huis: five young men are on stage. They play not only play with a good amount of joy and pride, but do so with a contagious nonchalance. "We are the new generation" is what their music conveys. This creates a sense of relief-liberation even- resulting in a wonderful atmosphere in the venue.

Some contest that bebop has come to its end. The 70-year-old jazz style, typical practice material for jazz students worldwide, is deemed cliché. Perhaps all that is left is an older generation squeezing the music dry or students producing their own forced renditions. And let's be honest, there are more interesting ways to play improvised music. The Ben van Gelder Quintet proves the contrary. Bebop is alive; it is rugged and can be one of the

purest forms of jazz.

It is almost frightening to hear how fresh and convincing the music sounds in the hands of these New York musicians. Alto saxophonist Van Gelder (1988) studied in New York and recently released his debut album together with his friends whom he met during his stay in the city. They're all approximately the same age and are bursting with talent. All of them possess a contagious stubbornness, a precondition for an authentic jazz musician. With much respect for the tradition, they bring a very personal twist to seemingly obvious tempos, rhythms and harmonies.

Drummer Craig Weinrib lays down unexpected accents or extends compositions with a fat beat. You can see the musicians looking at each other interestedly, broad smiles on their faces, enjoying each other's solos. They make things exciting for one another thanks to a wealth of ideas. It is a pleasure to witness this elation and skill.

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The compositions by Van Gelder sound just as alive as songs by icons such as Monk, Rollins and Coltrane. He thinks in harmonies. His playing is balanced and virtuosic without the use of unnecessary brawn. The themes, varying from whimsical bebop heads to dreamlike expansions, are captivating and recognizable from the very first moment. But the way the compositions are shaped in the moment is what counts most. His lines sound fluid, clear and controlled and are rife with beautiful nuance and enormous personality.

Enthusiasm from the audience translates in to "oh's", "ah's" and "yo's" often directed at vibraphonist Peter Schlamb. He looks a little unsure in a suit that seems somewhat too big but he ends up stealing the show. His unbelievably quick percussive handiwork works perfectly because of his well-spaced playing style in which he inserts tension building silences. Suddenly he'll decide that a solo is over and walks to the back of the stage with a self-effacing smile. It is this kind of intuitive decision making and modest virtuosity that represent the entire band.

**Tim Sprangers -Volkskrant**