

Pulse Quartet to perform at Bop Stop October 29

by Barnaby Woods



“Nothing could have prepared me for this scenario” bassist Aidan Plank said over the phone. In March 2020, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic threw the livelihood of freelance musicians into question. Jazz professionals with flourishing careers suddenly found themselves without work and unable to safely collaborate with their colleagues. Since then, the world has found ways of adjusting to

the pandemic — Cleveland’s Bop Stop has installed state of the art streaming equipment to facilitate live performances for audiences to enjoy safely from their homes. On Thursday, October 29th at 7PM, Plank and his Pulse Quartet will be performing a set at The Bop Stop for a restricted live audience. You can also tune in via the jazz club’s [Facebook page](#).

In addition to Plank, the ensemble features Anthony Fuoco on piano, Dustin May on drums, and Brad Wagner on saxophone. Plank is a well known bassist in Northeast Ohio. Outside of Pulse, he performs in Cleveland Jazz Orchestra, Cleveland Jazzworks, and Dan Bruce’s Beta Collective and was featured on NPR’s “Jazz Night in America” in 2019. Having started on piano in elementary school, he was introduced to jazz at a young age by his grandfather. “As a kid I would go to his house and there would be jazz records playing all the time — I remember looking at the album covers and I simply liked the way the bass looked — it looked big and fun and I loved how it sounded.”

Speaking about his inspiration for forming the Pulse Quartet, Plank said “as a musician I’m used to being inserted into someone else’s music — there’s all this music that I love and wanted to play, that I realized I hadn’t played very much — that’s music by Charlie Haden and Michael Brecker for example, who tend to have fairly unique sounds in the

jazz world.” The Quartet performs a blend of standards and more obscure jazz tunes as well as original compositions — and they are by no means limited to just the four members. Plank said they often enjoy performing concerts that focus on one artist’s music and invite other musicians to play too. “Last fall for example, we did a concert performing the music of Brazilian composer Hermeto Pascoal. We dropped just being a quartet and expanded it, adding a guitarist, a percussionist, and another saxophonist. I really like that aspect of what we do.”

Like many jazz ensembles, The Pulse Quartet doesn’t necessarily know how they’re going to approach a gig until a day or two before. “Usually for any concert we play, we’ll get together and rehearse a couple of times to work out things and have a chance to play through new music,” Plank said. Jazz professionals tend to be adept improvisers and this quartet is no exception. “There’s a spontaneity to how we decide what we’re going to play. We’ll freely improvise and sometimes that leads to other things — it’s unpredictable in its nature!”

Plank described The Bop Stop as one of his favorite places to perform. “It’s one of the few venues around here where you show up and it’s just about making music.” In the era of COVID, the club has adapted to streaming concerts live. This is particularly important for freelance musicians. “It’s really hard when your livelihood is tied to performing to go from being quite busy to starting from scratch, trying to figure out creative ways to safely make music.”

The Pulse Quartet’s members are strong musicians, but what makes the ensemble shine is the bond between them. As Plank put it, “it’s really a special experience to make music with people that you not only respect professionally, but you really care about and cherish as friends.”

The Pulse Quartet will perform at 7PM this Thursday, October 29th and can be accessed via The Bop Stop’s [Facebook page](#).

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