

# Hometown Music

## Big Blue House

by D.E. Bentley

There was an abundance of local music happening this past Saturday, and it was challenging deciding where to go. I was in the mood for a quiet gathering, with a bite to eat, and decided to stop in at Café Sol in Bristol, NY. The Saturday night band was Big Blue House, described in their online site as "a raucous trio of seasoned musicians with experience in a variety of genres, which now merge styles and voices into a unique gumbo of acoustic folk, rock, blues, jazz and reggae." An apt description of the band based on my initial viewing. We arrived at the venue as the band was belting out a lively rendition of Neil Young's Harvest Moon. The dining area and bar area were filled with diners and a trio of couples were out on the "dance floor," a small space cleared between tables.

Big Blue House is a small in size, large in sound trio of seasoned musicians - Brian



Burley, Bob DeRosa and Harvey Possemato - performing a tastefully chosen and skillfully rendered playlist of eclectic genres along with some original tunes. The band members' combined years of musical experience was evident as this band skillfully worked the crowds and elicited response from an enthusiastic audience.

Harvey Possemato, lead guitar and backup vocalist for Big Blue House, studied jazz guitar with Gene Bertocini and Sal Salvador and has a Masters in Music Theory and Composition from SUNY Fredonia. He spent ten years playing with the Rochester All Star Jazz Band (99-09) and has played with many other bands over the years. He currently also plays regularly with the Alysia Groth Band and with fellow Jazz guitarist Vinnie Ruggiero. Possemato has taught instrumental music for many years - including twenty-six years at Granada Central School - and performs, along with fellow teachers, with the Eastman Continuing Ed. Music Educators Jazz Ensemble. Possemato also leads the Harvey Band - which has released four CDS.

Brian Burley, the lead vocalist for Big Blue House, also contributes rhythm guitar and mandolin, adding to the wide range of tunes that the band offers its audiences. Burley bought his first guitar, a Norma Electric, using money from his newspaper route and has been strumming ever since. Burley plays regularly with Out of the Blue, and spent many years playing gospel bluegrass with Common Ground. He has "picked mandolin through Ireland" and "sung around many a campfire," in addition to his time with a host of area bands including folk and bluegrass with the Cheshire Cats and the Groundhaws.

Big Blue House's newest member, bassist Bob DeRosa, was out of town this past Saturday night but, according to his bio, first picked up a bass at forty-two, having played clarinet and guitar as a kid, and now never puts it down. DeRosa is a co-owner of Tritone Jazz Fantasy Camps-week long summer jazz camps for adult amateur players and singers and plays regularly with a host of local bands, including Four on the Floor Jazz Quartet, Ann Mitchell Jazz and the Jack Allen Big Band.

Keith Laurier played bass guitar on his Carvin six string for the Saturday night Sol performance - covering for Bob DeRosa, the band's regular stand up bass player. Laurier also does bass for the jazz-based Harvey Band and this jazzy influence emerged periodically, alternating with more bluesy tunes. Laurier fit right in and really shined, including during the band's rendition of the Allman Brothers "Jessica." Laurier's good fit was in part due to his significant playtime with Big Blue House lead guitarist Harvey Possemato.

Often with acoustic dinner hour performances there is a mumbled background of conversation heard between songs as the musicians transition, unnoticed, into the next number. Not so here. These guys had diners dancing and clapping after every song. They played this up with an eclectic mix of tunes, including a rousing rendition of Bob Troup's R and B standard Route 66, and with subtle lyric changes - like adding "playing at Café Sol on Saturday" with Aaron T. Walker's song Call It Stormy Monday. It was the bands little instrumental extras that most caught my attention as they transitioned from blues to rock to jazz, with a touch of gospel thrown in. Possemato's vibrato, as he slid his fingers about gracefully along the guitar strings, was particularly noticeable and melded seamlessly with Laurier's bass riffs. Big Blue House's standout strength is in their instrumentals, which were cohesive and light throughout the evening. The vocals were icing on the cake, selectively added on some songs while left out allowing the instrumental rhythms to dominate on others.

As the band was slowly wrapping of an evening of good tunes and good times, with the audience involved and tuned in right along with the musicians, we moved to the front porch of Café Sol to watch an incredible sunset radiating outward and gradually fading along with the music. Combined with the good tunes and good food, this ending to the day, made for a memorable evening. I am definitely looking forward to hearing more of Big Blue House in the future and hope to check out some of the other musical projects this trio of noteworthy musicians is involved in. I really enjoyed Laurier's contributions, but stand up bass is an instrumental sound I always enjoy and seek out. I look forward to giving a listen with Bob DeRosa on hand. Lucky for me and for anyone else who might want to get out to hear these musicians before the summer fades to grey, there are still a few more opportunities. Big Blue House will be playing at Tango Café in Rochester on July 31, 2016 at 7:30 pm. They will also be at Weatherhop Hop Fest in Palmyra on August 13, 2016 at noon and back at Café Sol that same evening for a 7 pm show.

For more information on Big Blue House Band or to see a complete listing of upcoming shows, you can check them out online at <http://www.bigbluehouseband.com>.