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## Jazz heats up Main Street coffeeshop

By Sarah Griego Guz 22 hrs ago

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Maikel Garcia, right, and his fellow musicians play a distinct style of jazz that is influenced by Brazilian and Cuban sounds. One night, heavy rain kept the usual crowds down. John Green / Review

The Friday night drizzle didn't stop M Project from jazzing up Café Society in Half Moon Bay.

The group's collective sound is so energetic everyone was bobbing in time with the beat. While the wet weather led to a slow start to the evening, by the time the band slid into its third number, all the seats in the Main Street coffeehouse were filled. The conversations faded, the

crescendo rose as all eyes fell on the talented trio.

For many, M Project is considered the house band at Café Society. Its upbeat fusion of jazz mingled with Cuban, Brazilian and American accents has developed quite a following among patrons sipping espresso or red wine.

“The band is called M Project,” explained leader Maikel Garcia. “‘M’ is because of my name. ‘Project’ is because I didn’t want to specify how many people are in the band. It could be a duet, a trio or a quartet, so it’s just a project.”

On this night, the project consisted of Carrie Jahde on drums and Yanill Nario on bass guitar. Garcia alternated between pounding out a tune on the keyboard or infusing a song with the silky sound of the saxophone.

Umbrella-toting pedestrians slogging through the rain paused to take in the sounds as Nario plucked a solo on his bass, his mouth moving along with each note his fingers made.

The journey of M Project is a story in itself. The group’s personal and collective journeys are as compelling as the music they play.

Garcia and Nario hail from Cuba and have been playing together since living in that country. Jahde, on the other hand, grew up in the United States and doesn’t really recall the exact moment she and Garcia met.

“I’ve played a bunch of other instruments, piano and trombone and vocals, and just eventually gravitated to the drums. I knew it was my instrument,” said Jahde. “I met Maikel quite some time ago through gigs I think, just through the musical world we met.

“We were performing in San Francisco a bit and just started performing together,” she said.

The fact that Jahde didn’t pick up a drumstick until she was in her 20s is surprising.

“I got a late start to drumming,” she said. “I was living in Oregon and took a community college class and decided to buy a drum. Didn’t think I’d ever use it, but then I started with the class and was really, really into it.

“I decided to buy a drum set, on my own, and started playing and started gigging, and then went to school to study and just kind of got really, really serious about it,” she said. “And here I am.”

Garcia, on the other hand, landed in Half Moon Bay because of, well, a girl.

“My wife and I used to live in Belize. We met in Belize. After a trip to South America she decided to come here, so I said, ‘Yes, let’s go try it,’” said Garcia.