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Holly Hofmann/Mike Wofford Quartet with Houston Person at Mt. Vernon Country Club, Denver

The flute is typically a classical instrument; pure tone, high register, not at all gruff; like a mother talking to her new-born. Holly Hofmann can do that and a whole lot more. In fact the contrast between the stereotypical flute sound and the strong-arm tactics she sometimes employed on the slender instrument last night at the Mount Vernon Country Club intensified the swing, bebop and blues the band delivered throughout its 100 minute set. Hofmann spent years studying classical music and it shows in her playing. But she is also steeped in classic bebop and can play greasy blues licks on demand as well. Last night she mixed it all together in a set consisting of only a few jazz standards, but which also included many lesser known, but top drawer jazz tunes.

She's currently on tour with her husband/pianist Mike Wofford. They were joined last night by local rhythm section Ken Walker and Todd Reid on bass and drums. Special guest, turning the quartet into a quintet, was Houston Person on tenor sax. Houston is a big guy and, although he's getting on in years, can really belt out a bebop tenor solo even at altitude. He was the epitome of a classy guy with his pinstripe suit and Stanley Turrentine like delivery. Nevertheless, he maintained a mischievous look in his eyes throughout the evening and kept up a steady stream of wisecracks between tunes (mostly off mic). Houston plays with Holly and Mike sometimes, and the addition of the local rhythm section had the band in classic jazz make-it-up-as-you-go-along mode. His big, fat tenor sound was a cool contrast to Holly's flute, but the two were comrades in constructing swinging solos.

Although Hofmann is no stranger to Colorado altitude, she earned a masters degree at the music school at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, she was winded after her lengthy solos. Of course, you never knew she was out of breath while she was playing, it was only afterward that you could see her panting. At one point, she singled out one of her UNC music professors and thanked him for coming to the show. She stuck to the standard flute for most of the concert, but broke out the alto flute, with its distinctive 180 degree curve, for the sensual More Than You Know. That tune is on her latest album, Live at Athenaeum, a set of piano/flute duets with husband Mike.

Wofford is a top flight jazz pianist. His playing conveyed strong hints of classical training, but he stayed mainly in the straight-ahead bebop mode with, of course, the blues never far from the surface. Ken Walker and Todd Reid, being two of the finest jazz guys in the area, were solid and gave the band a sound that is more commonly heard with a veteran group, rather than a crew just put together for this show. But, that's the mark of real jazz professionals.

The blues elbowed their way in to the set list with authority toward the end of the show. Please Send Me Someone to Love was a showcase for Person pleading, searching tenor sax. And the closer, Sweet Sucker was another vehicle for Person to drive home the point

that the blues is the root of jazz. Holly played Bud Powell's *Tempus Fugit*, in between, providing another contrast for the evening with its classical, almost sonatina-like runs executed by the front line and Wofford. The evening had its contrasts, but one thing was consistent: the high, swinging musical quality.

Geoff Anderson, Tuesday Evening Jazz Host KUVU Radio