



Stanley Clarke Trio at The Blue Note

By [Ernest Barteldes](#)

Stanley Clarke Trio
[Blue Note Jazz Club](#)
New York
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Playing before a sold-out crowd on the first of their two-night engagement at New York's Blue Note Jazz Club, the Stanley Clarke Trio got things going with "Three Wrong Notes," a straight-ahead ragtime-inspired tune. The tune at first featured [Hiromi Uehara](#), who attacked the keys of her piano with gusto, often leaping from her bench while smiling with her eyes closed, as she went through tunes from her first collaboration with longtime rhythm masters Clarke and [Lenny White](#). For their part, Clarke and White seemed completely taken by what the young Japanese pianist was doing. And throughout the song, Clarke smiled approvingly as he added simple but effective grooves to the tune until he took his first solo, which blew everyone away with his unmeasurable creativity and great technique.

That was quickly followed with "Sakura Sakura," a traditional Japanese song that began with Clarke doing what was supposed to be the koto introductory bars, while Uehara added a harp-like chord sequence, running her nails against the piano's strings. Moments later, the group shifted into a more of a contemporary mode, and once again the young pianist stole the spotlight.

With two [Return to Forever](#) members on stage, it was inevitable to include one of their most memorable moments. Though this writer would have preferred "So Long Mickey Mouse," the choice turned out to be Chick Corea's "Spain," in which Clarke turned his bass into a percussive instrument, slapping freely while doing improvised interactions with Uehara and White in between.

Another highlight was Clarke's "Paradigm Shift," a syncopated tune written in response to Barack Obama's election in November 2008. The tune's structure turned out to be the perfect vehicle for the song's centerpiece, an extended solo from White, who is celebrating 40 years of collaboration with the evening's bandleader.

The set closed with "Under The Bridge," a tune originally recorded by California-based Red Hot Chili Peppers. Instead of the standup bass, Clarke played with an acoustic bass guitar (ABG), which gave him the opportunity to take a more electric approach.

One had the impression that Clarke and White were somehow passing the responsibility of keeping the flame of jazz to a younger generation. Though the bassist was the bandleader, he seemed to defer to Uehara for most of the set, allowing her to stretch and get out of her tightly-rehearsed Hiromi's Sonicbloom comfort zone with very welcome results.

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