

The New York Times

March 16, 2015

THE Arts

Rhythmic Precision and Other Delights

A relaxed feeling of enjoyment along with a certainty of being in good hands warmed Café Carlyle on Friday evening as Herb Alpert and Lani Hall wafted a mood of

STEPHEN HOLDEN

MUSIC REVIEW

easygoing optimism into the room. Mr. Alpert, who mentioned that he will soon turn 80, still embodies the musical attitude nicknamed “laid-back” decades ago, when Southern California was America’s frontier of pleasure.

The good-time music Mr. Alpert helped to popularize is many things, but it isn’t as shallow as its envious East Coast detractors liked to claim. Mr. Alpert’s burbling amalgam of Brazilian samba, mariachi and cool jazz is sophisticated in its way and filled with a spirit of hope that has dwindled with the curdling of the California dream. Talking about his musical influences, Mr. Alpert named Harry James and Miles Davis; he cited the Les Paul-Mary Ford hit “How High the Moon,” with its multi-tracked guitars, as inspiration. “I like to play melody, because it sticks,” he said.

Mr. Alpert’s pop-jazz trumpet isn’t as jubilant and frisky as it was during the heyday of his group, the Tijuana Brass. But if you paid close attention to his terse, sputtering style, you could

Herb Alpert and Lani Hall perform Tuesday through Saturday at the Café Carlyle, 35 East 76th Street, Manhattan; 212-744-1600.



MICHELLE V. AGINS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Herb Alpert and Lani Hall *Mr. Alpert, who turns 80 this month, played pop-jazz trumpet and Ms. Hall sang in their show at Café Carlyle.*

discern echoes of Davis transplanted to a more hospitable climate. There were no axes to grind, no tortured introspection.

For all his low-key affability,

Tonal subtlety, laid-back expression and a hopeful spirit.

Mr. Alpert doesn’t phone it in. His trumpet solos were models of rhythmic precision, tonal subtlety and expressive understatement, executed without showboating.

At his side was Lani Hall, his wife of 41 years, an ebullient singer who delivered an energized rendition of “I’ve Got You Under My Skin” and ’60s hits like “The Fool on the Hill.” The excellent musicians behind them — Bill Cantos on piano, Hussain Jiffry on bass and Michael Shapiro on drums — gave standards like “Chattanooga Choo Choo” and “Moondance” distinctive rhythmic underpinnings.

The overriding feeling conveyed was one of tempered joy. No doubt, Mr. Alpert and Ms. Hall have weathered their share of personal storms. But the concert conveyed the gratitude of entertainers whose lives are fulfilled.