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I'm Your Puppet

Eric Alterman on April 23, 2015 - 4:38 PM ET

John Pizzarelli and Daniel Jobim at the Café Carlye

The Café Carlye has brought back John Pizzarelli, following his recent run with his at-least-as-talented wife, Jessica Molaskey, this time as a team with the Brazilian singer-songwriter and pianist Daniel Jobim, grandson of the seminal Antonio Carlos Jobim for a show called “Strictly Bossa Nova II,” which I guess is a sequel to a previous show of which I was unaware. Which is too bad, because this show was terrific. Though so, apparently was the last one. Will Friedwald wrote of it: “Mr. Pizzarelli and his rhythm section . . . renew our faith in the Jobim classics as well as the idea of sambaing up the likes of George Gershwin and Cole Porter.” At one point, Pizzarelli termed an album off of which they did three songs, João Gilberto’s “Amoroso” to be the “musical equivalent of Viagra.” Well, okay, but I thought it was a great deal more romantic than just that. Jobim sang softly, in a near whisper and the band, Helio Alves on piano; Duduka DaFonseca on drums; and younger brother Martin Pizzarelli on upright bass demonstrated how much newness can be found in music you thought you knew—whether it was “Great American Songbook” style songs converted to bossa nova style (“S Wonderful,” “Change Partners,” or songs that began that way but received their reinterpretations and revisions from this gorgeous and sensitive ensemble. (The drumming was particularly revelatory.) And as weird as this is to say, I actually preferred their versions of the songs to those performed on the album *Francis Albert Sinatra & Antonio Carlos Jobim* against all apparent popular opinion, I find to be one of Frank’s least successful albums—especially his famous albums. Ticket prices are just as high as ever, but Pizzarelli is just as charming and talented as ever and this beautiful bossa nova show cannot help but leave a smile on your face. And if all you know about it is “The Girl from Ipanema,” you’ll come out knowing a lot more than when you went in.