

Ben Sidran at Rosalie and Alva's

Ben Sidran and his trio made a stop at **Rosalie and Alva's Performance Gallery** this past Saturday night, April 14th, where they wowed a crowd of old friends as well as new faces to the Sidran following. Dr. Sidran combined his singing with his remarkable piano styling to present a program of favorite compositions of his own and works by other music icons including Bob Dylan and Billy Joel.

Filling out the trio were Sidran's son Leo on drums and long-time band mate Ricky Peterson playing electric bass.

Dr. Sidran's performance had the pleasant feel of an informal gathering in someone's living room. After commenting how comfortable the performance gallery at Rosalie and Alva's felt, Ben began the evening by greeting old friends in the audience, then asking if anyone had a special song they'd like to hear. Requests came quickly, demonstrating that many in attendance were very familiar with Dr. Sidran and his music.

Sidran sang original songs from early in his career: "**Broad Daylight**," "**Have You Heard the News**," and his lengthy and humorous history of jazz music entitled, "**A Good Travel Agent**." Over the years, the "**Good Travel Agent**" story has grown in length and gone through some changes. In Saturday night's version the effects of Hurricane Katrina took their place in the tale as well. Between his own tunes, Sidran performed Billy Joel's New York State of Mind, explaining how Joel had written the song for Frank Sinatra, who rejected it. Sidran became the first to record "**New York State of Mind**" and over the years he has made the song his own.

The singer's piano work never once took a back seat to his vocals. In fact Sidran, who began playing boogie-woogie piano over 55- years ago at age 6, often kept both hands so busy rolling over the Steinway's eighty-eight keys that it sounded as though there were more than two hands playing! Sidran's composition, "**Piano Players**" paid homage to the greats of bebop keyboardists, but showcased his own facility and knowledge of the jazz's wide range of piano techniques and voices.

Billy Peterson, a fixture in the Ben Sidran band for over twenty years, is a musical treasure himself. Like Sidran, he is a skilled jazz performer, but often expands his music along other popular paths. Peterson is one of few who can handle the electric bass's fat

string as though he were playing a regular six-string guitar, and produce some interesting and progressive riff in the process.

Ben's son, Leo, rounded out this trio of "Masters." Being familiar with the music is always a help, and Leo has lived a life in music. As a child he often traveled with the Steve Miller Band, in which father Ben played keyboards, and later with the Ben Sidran's own combos. In 1993, Leo joined the Steve Miller Band as well, and by 1995 had taken over the drum chair in the Ben Sidran Trio. Another versatile musician, Leo plays across rock, pop and jazz, demonstrating skill in all genres.

Rounding out the evening, Ben, Billy and Leo played jazz standards like Charlie Rouse's "**Little Sherry**," a Bob Dylan medley than included "**Subterranean Homesick Blues**," something not often associated with improvised music, and selections from Sidran's salute to Spanish Poet **Garcia Lorca**.

All in all, Ben Sidran's Saturday performance was one of the most enjoyable evenings this writer has ever spent, in Rosalie and Alva's or anyplace else in the universe, with great music, interesting song lyrics and a large helping of happy humor and fun!