

New York @ Night

from All About Jazz-New York, September 2007

Konceptions, the expansive Sunday night series hosted by pianist James Carney, has made Brooklyn's Bar 4 a destination for creative music. The early set Aug. 12th featured collaborators guitarist **Terrence McManus** and bassist **Kermit Driscoll**, joined by drummer **Ches Smith** for ambitious explorations of taut rhythmic structures and compositionally informed improvisations.

Haunting bowed electric guitar and acoustic bass introduced the set, as Driscoll's halting, spare line elicited a clipped, repeated guitar phrase—a recurring strategy—that formed the first movement of an episodic piece. The tune ebbed, leaving only McManus' metallic sound, which he transitioned to a finger-picked phrase. After Driscoll's burbling turn, a tight unison passage surfaced, urged by Smith's clever barehanded rolling momentum.

McManus used extended techniques—playing on the pickups, bending the neck and using the volume controls for blasts of sound—to vary the textures and extend the trio's sonic range. Likewise, Driscoll effectively used his bow for contrast and a thick wooded baton to rap the strings for percussive flair. He even opened a song slapping the bass' (and his own) body, creating a rhythmic dialogue with Smith that underpinned the piece. So tense were the trio's sinewy lines, the music almost begged for the release of a fourth voice to soar over or counter the dense formations. **-Sean Fitzell**