

Jazz: Charles McPherson

SIX years of living in California have brought out the brash side of Charles McPherson, the alto saxophonist who is working at Sweet Basil through Sunday. Mr. McPherson's attack has grown more aggressive, and his tone has gained so much depth that at times he can sound like he's playing a tenor saxophone.

With his wide-open sound, Mr. McPherson goes whizzing through his tunes — zig-zagging through be-bop filligrees, punching out blues lines and hooting warmly in the high register.

While Charlie Parker's be-bop was and is the basis of Mr. McPherson's style, he also knows his modal harmonies, as his composition "Mantra" showed. Occasionally, he will latch onto a single arpeggio and defy the changing chords below it. Early in Tuesday's set, Mr. McPherson's facility ran away with him, but he dug into "Dearly Beloved" and a blues.

Mr. McPherson's quintet includes the trombonist Robin Eubanks, the pianist Ron Matthews, the bassist Chin Suzuki and the assertive drummer Leroy Williams.

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