



## REVIEW: The Leisure Kings at the Jazz Kitchen

Lou Harry December 24, 2013

Other performers may dip a (mistle)toe into outrageous waters around holiday time, but I've seen none offer as consistently outrageously entertaining an Xmas program as the Leisure Kings, which returned to the Jazz Kitchen Dec. 21.

The pleasures offered by Sean Baker (keyboard) and Mike Wiltrout (lead vocal/helium tank/slide whistle, etc.) were upgraded significantly by a 12-piece big band, plus a pair of background vocalists.

If you've seen the Kings before, there were few surprises. A series of explorations of non-Christian holiday traditions set to TV theme songs, "Grandma Got Run Over By a Reindeer" sung as a tearful ballad, a deification of "The Candy Man" into "The Savior Man" (where "you can even eat the dishes" becomes "unlimited loaves and fishes") and a helium-fueled cover of the Chipmunks' holiday classic.

With some song parodies and musical spoofs, familiarity can breed boredom. But the Leisure King trump card is that the tunes are performed with care to the music. It doesn't matter if you've heard the punchlines of these goofy treasures before.

There were musical grace notes throughout. Baker and Wiltrout fused the lyrics to "A Christmas Song" onto Bily Joel's "Just the Way You Are" music and it became a smile inducer not just because it's clever, but because the band delivered it with wedding band panache. And the band swung hard when the guys extended the oft-repeated children's parody "Jingle Bells/Batman smells..." into a hard-driving epic incorporating the "Batman" TV theme song.

The final epic tune, set to the tune of Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody," played as if every Christmas song has been sent through the Playdough Fun Factory. The result: A gift to Leisure King loyalists and newcomers alike.