

Chase Ceglie and His Jazz Quartet: Every Sunday, Firehouse Theater, Newport



Chase Ceglie group at Firehouse Theater, Newport, RI, in Feb 2022. (Photo: Ben Shaw)

Ice blanketed the sidewalk on a cold February night as I navigated the treacherous path to the **Firehouse Theater** in Newport. Water fell and dotted my glasses as I opened the door and stepped inside the classic building that in 1999 was repurposed as a blackbox-style theater and has been home to performances of comedy and music ever since. I heard strains of the jazz standard “On Green Dolphin Street” as I walked the hall to the rear. This led me inside the space, where I found an intimate crowd gathered to revel in the spectacular music that has become a weekly tradition for most in attendance. The room was dark, lit only by strings of lights strewn around the walls and a couple of spotlights shining on the five-piece band on stage in the front of the room.

Playing with an ease gained from consecutive weeks performing together the ensemble was casual but dialed in, focused on the groove they were locked into. Leading them was the saxophonist and composer **Chase Ceglie**, a Newport native and Berklee College of Music graduate who has spearheaded this event from its inception before the pandemic to its recent return from hiatus. Once they finished the tune, he spoke in a disarming tone, going over the particulars of the evening and introducing the quartet of musicians by his side: **Michael Sabin** on trombone, **Andrew Wynsen** on piano, **Johnny Santini** on bass and **Nick Motroni** on drums.

After a few pleasantries, Ceglie counted off the next tune and began playing its melody with his signature subtle tone. His playing is both soft but not weak and understated but capable of room-filling density. The whole band followed him in this way: They are quiet and controlled in their approach, never letting the music get ahead of them. Though they were proficient playing standards like “Yesterdays” or “Night and Day,” the group really shone when playing one of Ceglie’s originals or an infrequently covered gem like the song “More” from the movie *Mondo Cane*. One of my favorite

moments came from their performance of Ceglie's song "Somehow Somewhere" which appears on his brilliant 2021 Pop album *Fear and Love, Together...*!

After they closed out the first set with original "Coming Down," the band took a quick break and came back for the second set which turned into an open invitation to any jazz musicians in attendance to come up and sit in on a tune or two. As I left a few minutes into the second set I stopped for a moment at the front door to enjoy a little bit more of the music and to be thankful for the return of this special night in Newport.

Catch the Chase Ceglie and His Jazz Quartet every Sunday at 4 Equality Park Place, Newport. Doors at 5pm; music at 5:30. Feel free to bring your own drink, food, and instrument if you'd like to join in on the second set. Cover fee is \$10 at the door. Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/592357251912681> See firehousetheater.org or chaseceglie.com for more information.

Ben Shaw is a composer, performer, and writer. Find his work at benjaminshawmusic.com