

# Los Angeles CityBeat

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## *Jazz Critic's Choice*

### **Cookin'**

A good jazz band is like a stew or any other culinary delight: It needs to simmer and cook. True, music can be made on-the-spot, with little preparation. But that deep-down, aromatic taste takes preparation. All the components have to marinate, mix, and be locked in with heat. The music of the **CJS Quintet** - Thursday at Charlie O's - has that baked-in quality. It also has choice ingredients in co-leaders saxophonist Chuck Johnson and trumpeter James Smith. They've made the band a credibly modern extension of the Clifford Brown-Max Roach hard-bop aesthetic: delightful tunes (like Dexter's "Fried Bananas" or Mobley's "This I Dig of You"), cleanly played ensembles, crisp rhythm-section work, and consistent solos. Johnson is responsible for the arrangements, like the blues-injected version of "What Now, My Love?" Here's a group in which the soloists all rise to the level of the band, but none transcends it. A favorite facet, though, is trumpeter/flugelhornist Smith, who get around his instrument beautifully on a bright tempo. They have expert veteran Art Hillery on the piano bench, along with bassist Wendell Williams and drummer Gerryck King. Like Smith, Williams and King were part of Teddy Edward's last band. And these days, that kind of experience is about as precious as fine saffron. Any way you slice it, what this band serves up is just like Mother used to make.

-Kirk Silsbee