

Living Arts

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The passion of saxophonist Ivo Perelman

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Brazilian saxophonist Ivo Perelman set the tone early. He opened his first set Sunday night with a fast, growling version of "Lambada," the song that started a much hyped and short lived fad three years ago. There was no irony. There were no knowing glances or cute asides. He just pushed hard, as if trying to redeem the melody by the force of his talent and passion.

He didn't quite succeed, but hearing him try was at times a reward in itself.

Perelman favors simple, folk-based material - short, direct melodies, open harmonies, basic forms -

IVO PERELMAN

At: *Nightstage, Sunday, First set.*

that are launching pads for pointed explorations. Sunday, the program included three of his compositions that draw from the chants of candomble, an Afro-Brazilian religion.

His solos developed with clear logic - even the wide leaps, the honks, the cries, seemed to grow organically out of the main ideas. But Perelman is not a great melodist. Rather, he seemed to rely on his sound - a broad, coarse tone that evokes players like Gato Barbieri and Pharoah Sanders - and his energy to break through and reshape the material. But over time, his un-

changing intensity became wearying.

JoAnne Brackeen, piano; Fred Hopkins, bass; Barry Altschul, drums and percussion; and Mor Thiam, percussion, offered Perelman little more than a loud, blurry backdrop. There was little ensemble playing and, among the players, listening was at a premium. Brackeen and Thiam tried. But Altschul, in particular, seemed unable, or unwilling, to define and maintain a groove for more than a few bars or subordinate his ideas to the needs of the music.

Perelman is a player with a distinctive sound, talent, passion and ideas. For now, the total is at times fascinating - but still less than the sum of the parts.