

# THE SCENE

## PAUL WEITZ & DONNA DEUSSEN

### At Vitello's, Studio City

I was a little late getting to my seat at Vitello's. The room was filled with beautiful sounds. "Poinciana" was sheer loveliness. Guitarist Paul Weitz has complete control of his guitar and as fine as the other musicians with him were, he never gets overshadowed. Light drumming from Gus Duffy, bassist Matt VanBenschoten, Wayne Wayne on alto sax and just a whisper from Geoff Nudell's clarinet cast a beautiful spell in the dark, cool room upstairs. The group was introducing their new CD with a live performance.

Vocalist Donna Deussen came to the microphone to much applause. The attractive blond has a very warm voice. She added a lot of drama to "California Dreaming" by varying her tone and emphasis on the lyrics. A husky alto solo from Wayne pierced through the room. Weitz was comping with lots of interesting effects. Deussen sang with emotion, vocalizing with ease. She upped the drama before bringing the tune to an end to much applause. Deussen took a saucy route with the lyrics of the next tune, "Tonight I'm breakin' in my do wrong shoes." Weitz set up the tune perfectly for her. Wayne wailed on his alto as an easy going Weitz was as calm as could be. Duffy, VanBenschoten and Nudell were excellent, rhythmic, in sync, relaxed and oh yes, very jazzy. After the tune Deussen complained that her shoes were so pretty but they did hurt. A beautiful clarinet intro by Nudell set up Deussen's lovely "In Other Words."

Deussen's voice is unfussy, straight-forward. She avoids any "showboating" yet every tune has a distinctive style and tone, a personality that fits her voice. "The very Thought Of You," the bluesy "I've Got A Right To Sing the Blues" are different and equally well performed. Singers can perform well, with a lot of confidence when they have strong backing and Deussen certainly had that all evening. The musicians are attentive to each other and what is being created. Weitz provides a fine base, with a loose, rhythmic style and the rest of the team add shading, emphasis and a little surprise here and there, I was impressed with the group's cohesive work.



**Guitarist Paul Weitz and vocalist Donna Deussen captivate the audience at their CD release event**

"If I Only Had a Brain" was beautifully paced by Deussen. Her sultry version was a pleasant surprise. "Love You Madly" and "Sister Sadie" were upbeat, jaunty. The audience erupted in cheers, demanding an encore. Jobim's "No More Blues" was another winner for Deussen. Weitz added a glorious guitar that was so fine. By this time I'm totally convinced that this group was perfect for Deussen's voice, her style. She did mention that she and Weitz had worked together on the arrangements and that showed the cooperation that goes into producing a good CD, a good live performance. This was a memorable night for this "new" group. They are top notch! Keep an eye on this terrific group! For more info see [paulweitz.com](http://paulweitz.com).

**- Myrna Daniels ed. LA Jazz Scene**



**Paul Weitz and Donna Deussen relax after the first set**

For more info see:  
[paulweitz.com](http://paulweitz.com), [donnadeussen.com](http://donnadeussen.com), [cdbaby.com](http://cdbaby.com)