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Jim Ferguson

An impressive guitarist who keeps company with the likes of the Maria Schneider Orchestra, Dave Liebman, Randy Brecker and Kenny Wheeler, McCann is fluent with several musical vocabularies-something he aptly demonstrates during this set, which also features saxophonist Peter Epstein, bassist John Hebert and drummer Mike Sarin.

McCann has an appealing sound and formidable technique-elements that never hurt. But he's also an accomplished composer and manages to play from his heart, aspects that are evident on the opener, "Knew Blues," which he fluidly endows with a bit of dissonance and generally cliché-free playing. Effortlessly switching vibes, McCann's program provides a variety of contrasts. He salutes one of modern art's icons with "Pollock" an appropriately moody, dripping paean. And "Ornery" is cast in an Ornette mold that combines free playing with certain barriers that allows the music to unfold like a careening, misaimed bowling ball. Other highlights include an acoustic-guitar reading of Steve Swallow's "Falling Grace" and a bipolar "I Love You" with an asymmetrical bass line and plenty of electric virtuosity.

Along with fine playing and breadth, McCann has an underlying artistry, something that immediately places him a cut above players who tend to be one-trick ponies.