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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

FRIDAY, AUGUST 25, 2006

Oscar Peterson -- Just Under The Wire

I saw Oscar Peterson at Birdland last night and I was worried he wouldn't even be able to make it to his piano. He stepped so gingerly and carefully towards the stage, Oscar got one of the longest standing ovations in memory: no one wanted to sit down before he did. The first song had me worried: Peterson was tentative and almost confused in his faint playing. But he picked up steam as the show went on, even though he was too tired to bring on the girl singer scheduled to warble a few numbers. Peterson is clearly at the point in his life when he is looking back more than he's looking ahead. In a soft voice, he mentioned several times how we had lost so many wonderful jazz artists in the last few years, mentioning his long-time musical partner Ron Brown and Duke Ellington. Duke Ellington? He died THIRTY years ago! At least Peterson ended with [the sad news that Maynard Ferguson \(of "Rocky" fame\) had died the day before](#), before launching into "Requiem." Happily, the old lion had some fire left in him, especially on Ellington's "Satin Doll." "Can you mention his name without playing this song?" asked Peterson playfully. I'm glad I saw him and that it wasn't merely a case of applauding the past instead of the present. But the past definitely dominated.

POSTED BY MICHAEL IN NEW YORK AT 7:40 PM



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