

A NIGHT AT THE KIBITZ ROOM

Where prog rock still thunders on

By CHRIS RUBIN
Special to *The Times*

ALTHOUGH many progressive rock bands — Genesis, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, etc. — have gone the way of the leveraged buyout, the scene apparently still has some life in it. Despite Johnny Rotten's best efforts to kill this music characterized by extended solos, complex time signatures and instrumental virtuosity for its own sake, prog lives on, at least in the Kibitz Room at Canter's Fairfax

deli on Monday nights. That's when Italian guitarist Alex Masi and his Trio of Doom hold court, playing cover versions of primarily instrumental songs by groups including the Mahavishnu Orchestra, King Crimson, Jeff Beck and Frank Zappa.

It's not your typical bar or cover band fare, and it's not likely to draw a large, trendy crowd. But the band likes it that way.

"We play just for ourselves," drummer Paul Marangoni says.

"We do it just for fun, but it's nice if people are here," adds Masi, who wears his long hair in a ponytail and plays a vintage Charvel guitar. "Then we know the bar is doing well."

A devoted crowd turns out each Monday night to hear Masi, Marangoni and bassist Jeff Alan bring such songs as Zappa's "Zoot Allures" and Mahavishnu's "Hope" to thunderous life. Most Mondays will find them at some point playing a fierce, note-perfect rendition of King Crimson's "Red," with blazing guitar, strummed bass and crashing drums.



LORI SHEPLER *Los Angeles Times*

JAZZING IT UP: "I call it jazz, because for the most part we're improvising," says Paul Marangoni, center, with fellow Trio of Doom members Alex Masi, left, and Jeff Alan. They play Monday nights.

For Carmen Maltez, a young Nicaraguan, the trio's music "is good to listen to with friends. It's masculine," she says of the frenetic, complex tunes, "but attractive."

"This music has a jazzy feel," adds Nicola Seixas, a young Jamaican who lists Bob Marley, Sarah McLachlan and Rusted Root among her favorites.

That eclectic approach fits in with the band's perception of

music. "I play from classical to metal to Indian," says Masi, whose most recent recording features transcriptions of Bach for the steel string guitar.

"I call it jazz, because for the most part we're improvising," Marangoni says. But it may not always be crowd-pleasing music. "Some people don't know what the heck we're doing," he admits.

Francine Robbins, who books Monday nights for the Kibitz

Room, discovered Masi and his music through his Web site, and they soon bonded over a discussion of pianist Keith Jarrett. She then invited Masi to fill the Monday-night slot, and he's been a regular since fall.

The band's moniker was first used by stellar musicians Jaco Pastorius, Tony Williams and John McLaughlin for one gig in Cuba. Says Masi, "I always liked the name."

Trio of Doom

Where: Kibitz Room at Canter's Deli, 419 N. Fairfax Ave., Los Angeles.

When: Mondays, 9 p.m.

Cost: No cover and no minimum.

Info: (323) 651-2030.