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There will be talent : After a childhood saturated in music and 30 years in the business, David Piltch has fine-tuned his own musical voice

By Adrienne van der Valk NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT
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IN CONCERT

David Piltch

When: 8 p.m. Monday

Where: SOhO Restaurant and
Music Club, 1221 State St. (upstairs)

Cost: \$10

Information: 962-7776, www.sohosb.com



COURTESY PHOTO

David Piltch was born to play. The youngest of three, his early years were spent surrounded by any instrument a kid could dream of playing. He accompanied his father at some of Toronto's premier jazz clubs, taking the stage with his bass at the age of 16, and he never looked back. Piltch appears Monday at the SOhO Restaurant and Music Club to showcase a solo career that grew from the most ideal artistic soil.

"When I was young I thought everyone's dad was a musician," he remembers. "I thought it was normal. It was part of the environment. I was encouraged to play whatever I wanted to play, and I did."

Piltch's unusual upbringing has only worked to his advantage. He notes that while his development as a bass player has lacked significant formal training, years of wandering various paths throughout the music scene allowed him to evolve naturally as an artist. Along the way he played with the likes of Chet Baker, Art Pepper, Mose Allison, George Coleman, Chuck Mangione, k.d. lang and Blood, Sweat, and Tears, touring, recording, and soaking up sounds from every corner of the music world. The pieces of Piltch's studio and backing career are all evident in his first solo release, "Minister of the Interior."

"I was very lucky," he says. "As a player one of the most important things is to find a voice. As a young player you're always trying to do what you hear around you; that's how you build your musical vocabulary. You hope you sound like the people you are imitating because they have a voice. To find your own voice is a combination of basic opportunities put in front of you and where you put your energy."

A long-term collaboration with singer Holly Cole gave Piltch what he calls a large dose of musical risk-taking.

"She sang songs in a way that was so interpretive and dedicated to the lyric," he recalls. "She really taught me to connect lyrics to music. How I ended up writing lyrics I never thought that was something I could or would want to do. But because I was playing with songwriters, I began paying attention to it. Same with rhythm; I began paying attention to drums because I was playing with so many great drummers."

Piltch says his style has actually become less complex throughout his career, and likens this process to discovering that all colors are made from three primary colors.

"I could only get my shoes to fit right when I allowed myself to go simple, he explains. It took me a while to find my comfort as a player and as a writer. I find things getting rootsier, darker, slower."

Over the last year, Piltch has done a standing weekly gig at the Largo in Los Angeles where his sets include tracks from "Minister of the Interior" as well covers ranging from Duke Ellington to Sly Stone. His upcoming show at SOhO will feature a similar assortment of original and familiar songs, arranged by Piltch and performed by singers Gaby Moreno, Brandi Shearer and Joe Henry, among others. Audiences who come expecting an evening of subdued adult contemporary, be warned: Piltch cut his teeth in jazz clubs and packs his sets with cross-genre interpretations of audience favorites as well as foreign language compositions with twinges of country and bluegrass thrown in. Acknowledging this, Piltch is both proud and grateful.

"I recently played with Mose Allison," he says. "He's a jazz singer-songwriter in the blues tradition, a white Southern guy. We had worked together 30 years ago and he remembered me. It was an incredible experience to play with him then and it was an incredible experience to play with him now."