

sitting in

It was one of those twenty dollar a night gigs where they give you all the beer you can drink (usually bud or Coors on tap, never the imported stuff). These kinds of jobs are very common in Santa Cruz, the musician's union being all but invisible and everyone undercutting everyone else to the point where all the owners have to do is cough up a few bones and water down the drinks.

Another thing is that there're too many damn musicians in this town. Not only are you playing for next to nothing, but then everybody and their mama wanders in and tries to steal your gig. If it's not somebody who has his own group that'll play for less, then it's some guy who wants to sit in. Then, after he's done his thing, he slips around and secretly passes out his number saying, "if you ever need another bass player, don't hesitate to get in touch."

The first guy to sit in with the band that night was a trumpet player named Juarez -- just Juarez, not Julio Juarez or Bobby Juarez, just Juarez. He looked like he could play -- a light-skinned black guy, with short brown dreadlocks. He wore a red beret and Ben Franklin type spectacles. He looked a lot like Anthony Braxton. His playing, however, betrayed all this.

He played an entire chorus of blats and blurts on his pawnshop horn. Complete disharmony. I guess he thought he

was good though. And with that jazzman-like appearance, I guess the novices in the crowd thought he was good too.

They laud his playing, so he takes another chorus. An earth-mama type with her unshaven legs squeals and he takes yet another chorus -- the great impresario. Dave, our trombone player, rolls his eyes, walks outside and has a smoke -- Juarez takes another chorus. Blatting and blurting out half-statements on his pawnshop horn.