

Review: Volcanic music-making from Chico Freeman at Jazz Showcase



Chico Freeman produced galvanic sounds Thursday night at the Jazz Showcase. (Chris Sweda / Chicago Tribune)



By **Howard Reich** · Contact Reporter
Chicago Tribune

MAY 25, 2018, 8:30 AM

It's good to be back home," saxophonist Chico Freeman told the audience Thursday night at the Jazz Showcase, and he obviously meant it.

For once the former Chicagoan picked up his horn, he produced not only an avalanche of notes but a warm, deep tone worthy of a homecoming.

The son of the late Chicago saxophone master Von Freeman and nephew of 91-year-old Chicago guitarist George Freeman, Chico Freeman brings to the stage a familial legacy inextricably bound up with this city. So even though the saxophonist long was based in Europe and in recent years moved to New York, he always speaks expansively of his Chicago roots, as he did on this occasion.

Between songs, Freeman reminisced on hearing life-altering sessions at earlier outposts of the Jazz Showcase and being transformed by many of them, particularly the galvanic pianism of McCoy Tyner and, of course, the tenor saxophone soliloquies of his father. Combine those two influences – a larger-than-life pianist and a ceaselessly experimental saxophonist – and you have a sense of the volcanic music-making Freeman offered on this night.