

# Spyro Gyra bringing Jazz act to Asheville

Spyro Gyra brings its fusion of jazz, rock, Latin, rhythm and blues and funk to the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium Sunday night for a performance that promises to be one of the best concerts of the year.

Since the release of the album "Spyro Gyra" in 1977, the New York-based jazz combo bearing the same name has enjoyed success at its finest, according to group leader Jay Beckenstein.

"As far as instrumental jazz bands go, I would have to say we consider ourselves one of the most popular in the country," said Beckenstein.

"Stories Without Words," released in August, introduces Roberto Vally, the newest member and bassist for the group. The new album further expands the band's sound toward more Latin and rhythm and blues influence.

"The new album is particularly Latin with a lot of percussion," said Beckenstein.

Vally replaces Kim Stone, who left the band to pursue private interests and a solo career. Stone is credited with writing the song, "Bob Goes to the Store" on the 1986 LP, "Breakout."

This album produced numerous awards for the band, including recognition in

the 1987 Jazziz Reader's Poll, which recognized Beckenstein as one of the "most under-rated" jazz musicians, Dave Samuels in the "vibes" category and Manolo Badrena for "best percussion."

"Some critics want to remove jazz from its roots and make it an art form, something to be studied instead of enjoyed," Beckenstein said. "I'm not out to just probe the reaches of the universe. I'm in it to move my body and to get into the groove of the thing."

Beckenstein and long-time friend Jeremy Wall started Spyro Gyra in 1975 in Buffalo, New York as an outlet for their creative endeavors. After Beckenstein and the late Rich Calandra leased a 16-track studio, the band released its first album on its own label. This album produced enough interest for Amherst Records to pick it up and distribute the album nationally.

The second album, "Morning Dance," was distributed by MCA Records and went platinum on the popularity of the title cut. Since that time, Spyro Gyra has continued to produce gold-status works, including "Catching the Sun" and "Carnaval." The group released its double live album, "Access All Areas," in 1984. "Breakout" followed up on the success of "Alternating Currents," an album released in 1985.

Beckenstein said the new album employs a new relationship between the studio and the live show. "This was the first record, with very few exceptions, in which we took the vast majority of the material out on the road for a substantial number of performances before we went into the studio," he said. This allowed the band to change the material, adjusting it to a live performance before putting the music to vinyl.

One highlight of the new album is a song entitled, "Pyramid." "There were very few musical guidelines in the compositional stage, and the band came up with a really amazingly adventurous performance on the song," he said. "It's utterly non-commercial. You will never hear this song on the radio, but, from a performance standpoint, it's something I'm very proud of."

The group played in the Raleigh-Durham area last year but has never performed in Asheville before.

"We're looking forward to the beauty of your mountains," said Beckenstein.

Spyro Gyra is playing in Dayton, Ohio until Friday. The band will then perform in New York City and Philadelphia before coming to Asheville on Sunday. The band is planning a European tour in November, according to Beckenstein.



**Pumpkin Art**

Staff Photo--Rudi Schwab

Halloween is only a few weeks away and Jack o' Lanterns such as these are popping up everywhere.

## SPYRO GYRA "hot jazz"



In Concert Sunday, October 11, 7:30 p.m.  
Thomas Wolfe Auditorium  
Tickets On Sale Now  
At Highsmith Center 27  
UNCA Students - \$3.00  
(Must Show Valid UNCA ID)  
UNCA Faculty/Staff - \$8.00  
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