

## Introducing local steel drum virtuoso

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If I were to say “steel drums” to you, the first thing that would likely come to your mind is Calypso music from the Caribbean. In our own backyard of Western North Carolina, however, there is a musician who is changing the way people view the instrument.

After hearing Jonathan Scales, Asheville’s own steel drum virtuoso perform at the Grey Eagle on August 29, I found myself accepting the steel drum as a musical instrument capable of application in any style of music. Scales put on a show that night that proved the steel drums (also called “pans”) aren’t

relegated to the sounds and genres of Trinidad, where the instrument originated.

Scales, and his band (The Fourchestra), seamlessly weaved in and out of a plethora of musical genres, ranging from jazz fusion to bluegrass...yes, that’s right, bluegrass. This came as a shock to many people in the audience, as bluegrass performers tend to play stringed instruments. However, Scales provided a reasonable explanation for his composition of the aptly titled “Pan Grass;” one of his biggest influences is banjo extraordinaire Bela Fleck.

Scales’ musical maturity

could be seen as he utilized a variety of scales and harmonic structures in his solos that are frequently used by jazz musicians. His compositions were also intricate and displayed his high degree of technical facility on the instrument, while maintaining



infectious grooves and catchy melodies. This was evident as much of the audience couldn’t help but get up and dance to rhythms of Scales’ music. Scales Fourchestra did a superb job of complementing his music. The band consisted of guitarist Michael Libramento (a left handed guitarist who sounds like a cross between Wes Montgomery and John McLaughlin), bassist Jeremy Downing (whose jet speed technique was jaw-dropping), and a very young but extremely proficient and expressive drummer by the name of Ryan Lassiter.

In many ways, Scales has

already become something of an overnight sensation in many musical circles. He has released two albums, “One Track Mind,” and “Plot/Scheme,” the latter of which features Brevard local and jam band drummer virtuoso Jeff Sipe and the popular saxophonist Jeff

confined the steel drum to the literature of the Caribbean. There is no doubt that Scales will continue to take the instrument in new directions with his abilities as a composer, musician, and dedicated artist. So if you turn on the radio one day and hear steel drums, don’t be surprised when you hear it is none other than the truly unique and talented Jonathan Scales.

**Just 14 months ago Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin was the mayor of Wasilla, Alaska, population 6,700. Seeing as to how Brevard also has a population of 6,700, we at *The Clarion* feel that our own local mayor is more than qualified to make a run at the White House, and would like to be the first to stump for him.**



**Jimmy Harris  
for VP 2012**

Coffin, who, incidentally, collaborates frequently with Scale’s idol Bela Fleck. The Wooten brothers, and the magazines *Up and Coming*, *Bold Life*, and *Jazz Times*, have all praised Jonathan Scales for his innovative contributions as a steel drummer and a composer.

Scales’ accolades were validated when he received a standing ovation from the entire audience at the Grey Eagle. Even though Scales chose to perform a traditional Calypso tune from Trinidad for his encore, it was clear that Scales had every intention of breaking the barriers that have