



Winter Solstice Concert

By Skip Allsopp
Staff Writer

Never before has the Porter Center seen a show like what the Young Professionals of Brevard College, with the collaboration of a jam-packed stage full of BC's most talented musicians, were able to give this Thursday night.

Even before entering the doors a little bit late, I was greeted with the smooth, rhythmic sounds of the Zach Douglas Trio grooving away on one of their numbers. Complete with drink and refreshments and a collection bin for the food items being raised for the Bread of Life, it was a rather nice scene to start the night.

After a few more impressive numbers featuring organist Carter Stevens and Douglas of course on trumpet, those gathered in the lobby were asked to move to the main auditorium for the remaining acts, Opus and XO.

Opus revealed in their brief bio in the program that they had a fondness of jazz-rock jams, and having heard their set, that's a bit of an understatement! Of the six songs Opus performed, four were musically open and adventurous jams that went long, and still left me sad to hear them go.

Between the snappy and spacious tone of Johnson's guitar busting out licks reminiscent of Derek Trucks, the full low-end thump of bassist Sam White, the icy fills and solos of

keyboardist and surprise trombonist Derrick Gardner and the versatile beat of Jeff Lott's drums, boredom was not an option. My personal favorite from their set was "Funky Mama," a song that started funky, got crazy, and ended softly on a fading dissonance that garnered much applause.

When Opus said goodnight, a quick set-up change rang in the time for XO production team Jerard "J. Sweezy" Sloan and Reggie "Reg. J." Jackson to take the stage with their plethora of talented musicians from BC. They broke right into things with the stomp of Adele's "Rolling in the Deep," sang beautifully by Taylor Bearden.

From there the night was just great song, after dance song, after funk song. Classics like George Benson's "Give Me the Night" and Eddie Floyd's "Knock on Wood" were belted out flawlessly by singer and showman Blake Ellege, while slow ballads and the sultry swings of "Crown Royal" were rightfully trusted to Ki'era Gash. Verntasia Finley had all of the passion and feeling needed to bring songs like Amerie's "One Thing" the justice they deserve.

Without a doubt though, the one that took the night was their finale "Higher Ground" by the man, Stevie Wonder. Driven by Sloan's miraculous drumming and the combined funky might of Jamison Adams on guitar and Jackson's keys, Ellege and the gang roared it home with full up-to-eleven force and left the audience on their very ecstatic feet.

Jerard Sloans hopes for the evening were that "this performance would show these people exactly what Brevard's finest are capable of." In no uncertain terms, that is exactly what it did.



Thea Dunn

Taylor Bearden, Ki'era Gash, Blake Ellege, and Verntasia Finley performing on stage.