

Features

ViperHouse brings funk to mountains

By Amanda Osteen
Staff Writer

Vermont's viperHouse, a nine-piece jazz, funk orchestra ensemble, will be making its way to North Carolina in late September.

The band is basically a funky jazz, swing, hip-hop dance party, said front-man and saxophonist Michael Chorney.

"It's a very updated version of jazz...with roots in funk, and we sort of joined the two together," said Chorney.

The group's popularity has reached beyond the state lines of Vermont. They have just recently branched off to tour in such big locations as Atlanta and New York.

"It's been since last year that we've been touring really hard and getting out of Vermont," said Chorney.

According to their press release, the concept of viperHouse is based on street bands from New Orleans in the late 1800s called "spasm bands" named for how the band danced when they played.

"They were the very first roots of jazz music, and I really love that image," said Chorney. "They were playing this really interesting, sophisticated music that people would dance to."

But Chorney is not quick to label the group a jazz band. "(The word jazz) can really scare people away. We are sort of evoking the bands of that era, but we're not a retro band," said Chorney.

ViperHouse has a nine-piece line up featuring a violin, a Hammond 3-D organ, Latin percussion, and a three-piece horn section, according to the press release.

Chorney said the idea for this band was conceived in 1995, while he was traveling through Europe.

That spring, Chorney assembled a group of musicians whom he had met through the many musical groups he had worked with over the years.

The band got the "viper" part of their name from an old jazz term from the swing era. "It sort of means low-life," said Chorney.

With the number of shows and fans expanding, viperHouse has been presented with a lot of different offers for record deals.

"About eight or nine months into (touring), we started getting approached by record companies, but none of the offers sounded very appealing,"

said Chorney.

Chorney still remains a bit skeptical when it comes to signing a record deal.

"I've read enough of these stories lately like, 'we got approached by a record company, we signed with them, and we got hosed.' We thought we'd cut out the 'we got hosed by the record company' part of that."

said Chorney.

But when the band got approached with the idea of doing a live disc, it sounded like something they could be interested in.

"The offer sounded pretty good, so we went ahead and made plans," said Chorney.

Then the band decided to go ahead and do it themselves.

actually signing the dotted line, viperHouse band members had second thoughts.

"There were issues that came up with them that had been glossed over before, like ownership of their music, said Chorney.

Then the band decided to go ahead and do it themselves.

"We kind of rallied some support, and went ahead with it," said Chorney.

The band plans to release the new live CD on Oct. 10, during their four-month fall tour.

According to their press release, they also plan to record a studio album in early 2000.

Their music is also on the

current season of MTV's "The Real World."

"I guess the director of that program heard our CD somewhere and called our manager up," said Chorney.

The band's growing popularity certainly hasn't suffered from their affiliation with the band Phish.

The group's singer, Heloise Williams, sings on Phish's latest album, said Chorney. She and viperHouse keyboardist Ray Backowski are working on another project with Phish guitarist Trey Anastasio called "8 Foot Fluorescent Tubes."

Chorney said Phish attended one of viperHouse's shows last year. Anastasio sat in and played with the band for a few sets.

Chorney said he is really looking forward to touring in the South for a change.

"The whole attitude toward live shows down south is really cool. The audiences seem genuinely excited, and the crowds are really diverse," said Chorney.

As part of their four month tour, the band will be playing at the Cottonwood Brewery in Boone on Sept. 26, and the following night at the Black Mountain Music Hall, Sept. 27.

Both shows start at 10 p.m.

"Music that is just fun and enjoyable, that's kind of what we're after," said Chorney.



PHOTO COURTESY OF NICOLE SALTUS

ViperHouse, a band from Vermont, will visit Western North Carolina in late September. The nine-piece band plays a mixture of funk, jazz, swing, and hip-hop. They will play in Boone and Black Mountain.

Profile

Humanities shows film series on the Vietnam War

By Megan Wood
Staff Writer

The humanities program will feature a movie each night about the Vietnam War from Sept. 27 until Sept. 30.

"We wanted to do something a little bit different to help educate the students about that era," said Mark Gibney, helms professor in the humanities program.

The screening of the films is scheduled to coincide with the Sept. 24 humanities 414 lecture on the Vietnam War.

"This is a nice way to learn about the war," said Gibney. "The insanity of the war is captured on film."

"Most of the students weren't alive during this time, so it is a good way for them to see what was going on," said Gibney.

This is the second year that the

movie screenings have been offered.

"The last time we did this the turnout wasn't as good as I would have hoped," said Gibney. "Hopefully, this time we will be able to get more students out."

On Sept. 27, the film "Heart and Mind" will be shown. "Heart and Mind" is a documentary that is set during the time period.

The movies scheduled to be shown the rest of the week are, "Apocalypse Now" on Sept. 28, "Platoon" on Sept. 29 and "Full Metal Jacket" on Sept. 30. These movies, although they are works of fiction, realistically portray the era, according to Gibney.

The films will be shown in the Karpen Hall screening room at 7:30 p.m. The movies are free and open to the public. It is up to each professor to determine if the films will count as a humanities cultural event.

Gee Haw Whimmy at craft guild

By Martha Ball
Staff Writer

The Southern Highland Craft Guild's Celebrate Folk Art event held Sept. 17-19 at the Folk Art Center showcased the World Gee Haw Whimmy Diddle competition, the highlight of a weekend of mountain heritage exhibits.

"The Gee Haw Whimmy Diddle competition was a way to get people involved in crafts at a very simple level," said Katherine Caldwell, public relations director for the Southern Highland Craft Guild.

The Whimmy Diddle, a mountain folk toy, is simply a stick with notches cut in it, with a shorter stick nailed on the end of it acting as a propeller. Another stick, about the length of the toy, is used to rub up and down the notches, causing the propeller to spin.

"It's a nice introduction to making something out of wood. It gives you immediate gratification," Caldwell said.

"It's something everyone could

do, and have fun, while publicizing the Folk Art Center," said Caldwell.

The competition was entertaining to watch as grown men and women got very serious about their small wooden toys.

The trick is being able to get the propeller to spin to the right, or Gee position, or to the left, the Haw, on command. Children seem to be able to grasp the concept much faster than adults.

The Celebrate Folk Art event, has been combined with the Gee Haw Whimmy Diddle competition for about eight years, according to Caldwell.

The 1999 adult amateur champion, Lyle Wheeler of Miller's Creek, said he started to prepare for the competition in April.

"I knew it was coming, so I practiced every day," said Wheeler.

Wheeler also contributed to the Celebrate Folk Art event by dem-

onstrating chair-making.

Other arts and crafts demonstrations included woodcarving, reedle wood-lathe, weaving, spinning, baskets and quilting as well as other activities.

In the case of the quilting, the finished product was exquisite, but the process was difficult to watch. It is a tedious chore with little action.

Sheep shearing, on the other hand, is full of action, and great for those who enjoy watching small animals being held against their will and shaved bald.

Actually, the shearing is necessary to keep the animals from becoming absolutely miserable, according to Janice Sims of South Carolina.

"My uncle raised sheep," said Sims. "The extra wool gets to be too heavy and warm."

After the wool is sheared from the sheep, it is spun into yarn and can be used in weaving. These demonstrations were also enjoyable to watch. It makes it more interesting

to watch if there is a transformation before the eyes.

Spilt Rail, a four-man band, performed what they called consumable bluegrass.

The group had incredible harmony. It takes the ability to appreciate the talent, not just the music style, to enjoy Spilt Rail.

Celebrate Folk Art was not geared specifically for UNCA students. However, a trip to the Folk Art Center alone is worthwhile.

Currently, in the upstairs gallery, there is an exhibit of different types of hand-made chairs.

The whole experience is, by far, the least painful way to earn a humanities cultural event credit. Dressing up is frowned upon, and admission is free.

The Folk Art Center is easily accessible from downtown Asheville, according to Caldwell.

"People don't realize how close we are," said Caldwell. "They hear milepost 382 on the (Blue Ridge) Parkway and they think they have to go all the way down."

The UNCA department of music and the Asheville Jazz Society present jazz pianist and composer Loonis McGlohon and his band with singer Maddy Winer in concert on Sept. 26 at 4p.m. in the Lipinsky Auditorium. The event is free for UNCA students. For more information call 251-6432.

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