

# Annual jazz festival celebrates true American music

## Weeklong event unites wide range of musicians, enthusiasts

Lindsay Kimble  
Senior Reporter

The smooth, upbeat and often unique sounds of jazz could be heard streaming from the Center for the Arts most of last week. Multiple generations of jazz musicians, ranging from middle school students to world-class artists, gathered on Elon's campus for the 16th annual Elon University Jazz Festival.

The festival was expanded this year from three to six days, beginning Feb. 13 and ending with a final concert Feb. 18. It featured guest artists like John Brown, director of the jazz program and associate professor of the practice of music at Duke University, and LeRoy Barley, lecturer and director of Jazz Combos at Duke University.

Jon Metzger, festival host and director of the Elon University Jazz Ensemble, said the festival was started and continues as a celebration of jazz, America's original improvised music.

"It affords our Elon students, and our visiting middle and high school jazz ensembles, the opportunity to take classes, be critiqued and perform side-by-side with professional touring jazz artists," Metzger said.

This year's festival, which was sponsored by the jazz studies program, featured numerous workshops, lectures and performances by guest artists as well as performances by middle school and high school jazz ensembles visiting Elon for adjudication. Brown and Barley served as this year's clinicians, who worked directly with students to critique their performances.

Also present were three musicians and lecturers from the conservatory in Graz, Austria, where Metzger said cultural exchange opportunities for Elon music students are being developed.

When selecting lecturers and performers for events throughout the festival, Metzger said he looks for several qualities.

"My main criteria is that they be outstanding performers with

established track records of performing this music in the finest, best-known venues worldwide and that they also be superior teachers who are able to articulate the finer nuances of the genre to students in a positive, encouraging and productive manner," Metzger said.

Metzger attributes the festival's continual success to student inquisitiveness and desire to learn more about the art form, coupled with the guest clinicians' willingness to teach the next generation of artists.

Junior Alicia Varcoe is a jazz studies minor and participated in her third Elon Jazz Festival this year. Varcoe, who provides vocals and plays piano for the Elon Jazz Ensemble, attended lectures and workshops with clinicians throughout the week and watched performances by visiting high school and middle school ensembles.

"As a musician, I have the opportunity to work with outstanding professional jazz musicians who I can learn a lot from," Varcoe said.

Varcoe said she enjoys being surrounded by music, especially jazz. "I learned so much in only a week from professional musicians who are making a living performing and teaching, which is what I'm studying to do," she said.

Both Metzger and Varcoe noted the direct ties between American culture



(Left to right) Kevin Dollar, Wayne Reich and Chip Newton of the Swing Triade Trio kicked off the final jazz concert Feb. 18.

and the origins of jazz music.

"Jazz music is one of our few indigenous art forms," Metzger said. "It has been declared a national treasure in (nonprofit music organization) House Resolution 57. In many ways, it defines our culture and who we are as Americans."

Varcoe said most people don't realize jazz is innately American.

"The United States utilizes jazz musicians as tools of international diplomacy, because the music is so free and creative," Varcoe said. "Everyone can learn something from jazz music."

According to Metzger, more than 300 middle school and high school students attended the clinics throughout the week. From a program count, he estimated about 327 people came to the final concert Feb. 18.

The Jazz Festival has something for everyone, as the presence of jazz can be found in numerous genres of

music, according to Varcoe.

"Esperanza Spalding won the Grammy for Best New Artist in 2011, and she is a jazz musician," Varcoe said. "A lot of music we listen to today is influenced by jazz riffs in pop, and music theatre music is influenced by jazz scales and harmonies. R&B vocal techniques have a lot of similarities to scat singing, and more. Music is universal."

### MORE ONLINE

See clips from Saturday's concert and hear from Jon Metzger.

<http://bit.ly/EPjazz>

SHERYL DAVIS | Multimedia Editor

## Elon students don't always create Facebook pages...

Cassie Grimm  
Reporter

...but when they do, it's Elon Memes.

The new Facebook page, which follows in the footsteps of other universities' pages across the country, has gained a noticeable following during the last few weeks.

Two weeks after its creation Feb. 8, Elon Memes now has more than 1,200 likes from Elon students. The page, which is dedicated to making Elon-themed memes — jokes that spread through the Internet in the form of pictures and text — allows students to post their own memes and view those of other students.

Junior Thomas Rickabaugh, creator of Elon Memes, made several memes before deciding to create a Facebook page.

"My brother and I discovered memes through Reddit, and I have always liked

showing ones that I found funny to my friends," Rickabaugh said. "I thought about weird things on campus and kind of related them to memes and ironies they always presented. I posted memes that I created to my friends' walls about professors and classes, then decided that a page would be such a good way for other students to share them."

Junior Bert Brokaw, who has contributed to the Elon Memes page frequently, said the memes are appealing because Elon students can relate to them.

"Users of the page seem to enjoy it because each meme is essentially a large-scale inside joke," Brokaw said. "For the most part, only Elon students are able to relate to the humor, and that's what I think people find so entertaining about it."

Rickabaugh said he thinks it is the Facebook format that makes the page so appealing.

"There is honestly nothing that can compare to a Facebook page," Rickabaugh said. "You will find that almost everyone here at school has a Facebook and when one person posts a meme, you can instantly check it out."

But some students have complained about the page, saying some of the memes go too far. One meme in particular, featuring Acorn employee Eddie Talley, Jr., offended senior Katie O'Brien.

"It went too far, so I decided to report it," O'Brien said.

Others said the memes are not intended to hurt people, but simply to be funny.

"I do think when you bring a person into it, a meme could be very offensive," said freshman Aly Yarwood. "At the same time, however, I know that people are doing this just for fun. I do not think they mean it to be offensive."

A number of memes fans have complained about the misuse of memes on

the page, which may occur if the text on the meme does not match the corresponding photo being used to illustrate it.

"Some people have made comments about the 'misuse' of memes and while it's not a big deal, they find it a bit annoying," Rickabaugh said. "I suppose they have become so used to people using memes the right way that when someone messes one up, they want to correct them."

But users like Brokaw do not see the point in calling attention to the supposed misuse.

"I honestly don't understand why some of the users care so much about people misusing memes," Brokaw said. "As a person who looks at memes every day, it

doesn't really bother me that some Elon students are misusing them. If a meme is funny, it's funny, regardless of whether or not it's being used correctly."

### MORE ONLINE

Read the opinions editor's take on memes.

<http://bit.ly/EPmemes>

DAN QUACKENBUSH | Opinions Editor

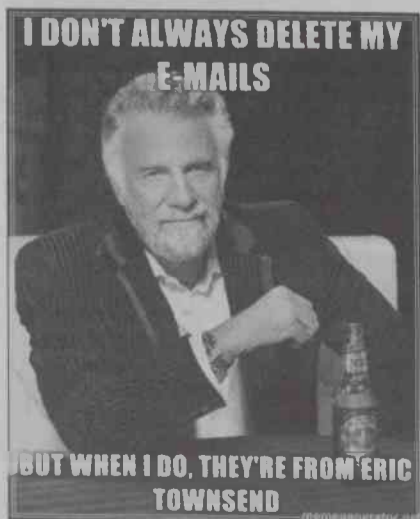


PHOTO COURTESY OF FACEBOOK  
This meme, based on the Dos Equis beer commercials, is just one of many on the site.

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