

JAZZ FINDS A PLACE IN THE HEARTS OF GUILFORD STUDENTS

After planting the seeds of a fruitful jazz culture in Greensboro, the Solid Gold jazz band is headed to Barcelona, Spain. Comprised of UNCG jazz program graduates, Solid Gold has set a standard for eccentric professional jazz in Greensboro.

For two and a half years, bandmates Gray Hackleman, Ben Jensen, and JP Smith have hosted a jazz party at their house every Monday night, rain or shine. The party centers on a professional jazz session that guests are free to join, as long as they know the standards.

Moving from the jazz scene in Greensboro to that of Barcelona will provide a huge change for Solid Gold.

"I want to surround myself with people who are interested in the same thing. I want to be immersed in it," said Hackleman.

Hackleman's prodigious saxophone techniques come through in his work, which reflects a heavy influence from Charlie Mingus, but I'm always trying to think

about Coltrane" he said.

"Improvising what you're going to play each time reflects how you're doing, so what you're playing hopefully is always going to be something different," said Hackleman. "It's a reflection of life, which is different every day."

Solid Gold began a tradition in Greensboro that will continue in their absence. The jazz house will still hold parties every Monday night hosted by UNCG jazz students.

"Mondays are sacred on campus," said Guilford fifth-year Charlie Giglia, "they hold the promise of a wonderful night."

Though the musicians at jazz night are UNCG students and graduates, Guilford students have integrated into the scene.

Around the time of the jazz party's inception, Hackleman started dating a Guilford student, and through her friends, the legacy of jazz night started to permeate the Guilford social scene. Before long, the Guilford crowd became

an indispensable part of the jazz night community.

"Jazz on Monday nights has become such a pinnacle aspect of Guilford, that students will design their academic schedules to best accommodate the festivities that take place just a few miles from campus," said Giglia.

The retention rate for regulars is striking. It's hard to find people who have gone only once.

"Everyone is welcome," said Giglia, "Everyone is greeted with a handshake or hug, and just about everyone knows your name."

In fact, jazz night has become a ritual for many. When the weekend has proven tiring, overindulgent, and unproductive, and the weight of the week is becoming apparent, jazz can provide a centering influence. Many see the music as an oracle of sorts, a communication of divine truth, or a reflection of the spirit of those engaged.

"It's refreshing to see people of all different musical tastes and influences come together in such an intimate environment," said first-year Erick Armbrust.

"It becomes less about a location; the people and the music are really what make this community possible."

Armbrust is a recent initiate in the Jazz night culture, and he hasn't missed one since.

"It's a gift just to be able to share it with people," said Hackleman. "When people are sitting there interested in what you're doing, it's really fun."

Hackleman suggests that part of the reason jazz night has become so popular is because there aren't any other options to experience jazz in Greensboro.

The wonder of jazz night makes the absence of comparable venues more apparent.

According to Giglia, "what truly fuels the relaxed and inviting atmosphere is the amazing music that brings an energy to the house that is indescribable, and only fully understood when experienced first-hand."

