

Fort Collins Jazz Experience - News and Bios

Downtown Sessions - SATURDAY JULY 10th

Old Town Square Stage

Mango fan Django ~ 11:00-11:45am

spirited gypsy jazz in the style of Django Reinhardt

Mango fan Django is a string swing group combining Gypsy jazz, swing, waltzes, and traditional French music to create a great musical experience. With Brian Hofflander on bass, Stefan Doucette on guitar, Archtop Eddy and Don Doucette on guitar and vocals, they have been playing Gypsy Jazz in Colorado since 1998 and are known for a unique style of acoustic guitar swing that delights audiences of all ages.

This year celebrates the 100 anniversary of Django Reinhardt's birthday – the true king of gypsy jazz.

Mandy Harvey & Mark Sloniker ~ 12-12:45pm

local legends perform vocals & standards

Mandy Harvey is originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, but moved to Northern Colorado as a young girl. Though only 22, her love for music and singing has been years in the making. She was selected as the top female vocalist of her high school and entered the Music Education program at Colorado State University in 2006, but during her freshman year she lost her hearing and left the university. She released her first album in 2009 and has another in the works. She is a regular performer at Jay's Bistro. Mark Sloniker is an internationally known jazz pianist with six of his own albums and contributions on many others. Originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, Mark has a degree in Music Therapy from Colorado State University and has worked extensively using music to achieve and maintain wellness. He has toured and played throughout the U.S. and the world and now lives in Fort Collins with his wife and two children. You can see him four nights a week playing his jazz at Jay's Bistro on Oak Street.

Max Wagner Quartet ~ 1-1:45pm

classic jazz & vocals

Diverse multi-instrumentalist and jazz vocalist Max Wagner has developed a individual sound and approach to modern jazz. He has toured and played throughout the U.S. and has appeared as a side-man on nearly 50 albums as well as releasing two of his own. Max led the house band at Denver's El Chapultepec jazz club for three years and now produces and directs the Estes Park Jazz Festival.

Greg Harris Vibe Quintet ~ 2-3:00pm

original modern jazz

Dazzle Records recording artist Greg Tanner Harris leads the "Greg Harris Vibe Quintet" and is a member of a diverse group of area bands, including bluegrass legends Flexigrass, hip-hop/jazz/soul group Future Jazz Project, 9th & Lincoln Orchestra, and SuperCollider. He has released five albums, holds a masters in Music Performance at the University of Colorado, and has traveled and studied in Ghana, West Africa. He also teaches and performs all along the Front Range.

Wil Swindler's Elevenet ~ 3:30-4:30pm

jazz on the original side

The Elevenet is a unique 11-piece jazz ensemble lead by composer/saxophonist Wil Swindler who are popular on the Denver jazz scene for both their original music as well as repertory shows. The Elevenet features traditional jazz instruments (Alto and Tenor Saxophones, Trumpets, and a Trombone) as well as less traditional sounds including Bass Clarinet, Alto Flute, and French horn. Paired with a traditional jazz rhythm section, this unique ensemble allows for the power of a big band and the intimacy of a jazz quartet or even a classical chamber ensemble.

Ken Walker Sextet ~ 5:00-6:00pm

best selling artists playing originals & classics

The Rocky Mountain regions' first-call bassist, Ken Walker, has been involved with a venerable Who's Who of jazz artist through his career in Arkansas and since 1985, Colorado. Ken had a 12-year tenure as the house bassist at Denver's legendary jazz club El Chapultepec and has performed at many jazz festivals throughout the Western states, including Telluride and Aspen. He teaches jazz bass, has release one album of his own, and has been featured on numerous others.

Conjunto Colores Latin Jazz ~6:30-7:30pm

Hot Salsa Latin Jazz

When Denver thinks of Latin Jazz, they think of Conjunto Colores. The renowned band has opened for such bands as Tito Puente and Ruben Blades as well as being featured at The Taste of Colorado, Cherry Creek arts festival, Cinco de Mayo Celebrations, Telluride jazz festival, and Denver City Park Jazz Festival. They had the honor of playing for the inaugural Mayor Wellington Webb's Red Rocks Jazz Festival. Under direction of Francisco Mejias they have released three popular albums.

Darren Kramer Organization ~ 8-10:00pm

8 piece jazz, funk, & Latin horn band

Former Matchbox Twenty band member Darren Kramer performs a modern mix of original Funk, Jazz & Latin music while synthesizing a vast variety of grooves and textures with his 10-piece horn band, creating the next generation of high-energy, cross-over jazz. Darren Kramer is a jazz faculty member of the University of Denver Lamont School of Music and the DKO performs clinics, master classes, and workshops around the globe. They have released four studio albums and continuing the legacy of popular horn bands such as Chicago, Earth Wind & Fire, and Tower of Power

Oak Street Plaza Stage

Subterranean Jazz Trio ~ 11:00-11:45am

piano jazz standards

The Subterranean Jazz Trio is comprised of Grammy nominated and Down Beat award-winning jazz musicians, including drummer John Olson, pianist Ben Haugland, and bassist Matt Smiley. The stronghold of this group is its musical versatility, including the American Songbook, 50s and 60s Blue Note Recordings, Hard Bop, and Funk. Our mission is to present jazz and music at the highest level and to present new music and signature pieces every week. This group is currently featured as the house band at Ace Gillette's.

Square Peg ~ 12-12:45pm

adventure jazz

A contemporary jazz conglomeration, Square Peg was formed in 2008 and includes Shilo Stroman on drums, Matt Smiley on bass, Kevin Whalen on trumpet, and Ryan Fourt on guitar. The group performs energetic originals and re-worked Jazz standards with a nod to the past and a clear vision of the future. Square Peg has performed throughout the Northern Colorado area, most recently at FoCoMX and soon Bohemian Nights at New West Fest.

Big Swing Trio ~ 1-2:00pm

lively jazz, swing, & standards

Celebrating their 27th year together, Mark Diamond, Paul Romaine, and Andy Weyl consistently inspire audiences of all kinds with their spirited arrangements of swing, Latin, hard-bop, blues, and jazz standards. Mark's jazz career includes playing bass internationally and appearing on over 100 albums, including performing with Grammy winner Tim O'Brien, Kenny Loggins, and Buddy Tate. Drummer Paul Romaine started performing professionally at the age of 14. He studied at the Lamont School of Music and founded the Colorado Conservatory for the Jazz Arts, which offers programs for middle school and high school students from all over Denver. Danish pianist Andy Weyl received a degree in piano performance from the University of Colorado and toured the far east with the vocal group Rare Silk. He has played and recorded with the region's best jazz musicians, and performs at clubs and festivals across the nation and Europe.

Heidi and the Rhythm Rollers ~ 2:30-3:30pm

jump blues & retro jazz

Heidi Hamill on lead vocals, Rodney James on lead guitar & vocals, Bobby Kay on drums & vocals, and Gene Libbea on stand up bass. Front-lady Heidi Hamill is a proud Colorado native and fell in love with jazz and blues at an early age. Heidi has recorded with Colorado favorites such as Rodney James & The Blue Flames and Easy Bill & The Big Beat, as well as performing live with both. Rodney James plays a wide variety of guitars, including 12 string and double neck versions and has been a staple of the Colorado rockabilly scene. Bobby Kay is driving this bus with his steady groove after many years of playing Chicago Blues with greats such as Lonnie Brooks, Magic Slim, and Steve Harris. Since moving to Colorado in 2006 he has performed with locals including the Delta Sonics, Eric Boa, Andy Irvine, and the Robert Wilson Blues Band. Two time Grammy winner Gene Libbea's bass playing career began working for Walt Disney before moving to Nashville and joining the Nashville Bluegrass Band where played for 11 years. He also became a sought after Nashville session musician recording with Johnny Cash, Vince Gill, Earl Scruggs, Steve Earl, Ry Cooder and Clint Black. Today he makes his home along the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains and is in high demand as an acoustic bass player and record producer.

Poudre River Irregulars ~ 4-5:00pm

Exuberant New Orleans and Dixieland jazz

The Poudre River Irregulars are a colorful New Orleans and Dixieland jazz ensemble noted for their exuberant energy and sound musicianship. Drawing much of their inspiration from Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton, they play a wide variety of traditional jazz, from ragtime through the classics of the twenties and thirties up to early swing. Whatever they play, their music is always upbeat and joyful. The band has two popular albums and is lead by imaginative cornetist Bob Cooke, who helped found Denver's Queen City Jazz Band in 1958 and formed the Platte River Jazz Band in 1974 before moving to Fort Collins where he started the Poudre River Irregulars in 1995.

Colorado Swing Big Band ~ 5:30-7:00pm

19 piece swingin' dance band

Directed by Mark Manges, the Colorado Swing Big Band performs an exciting variety of great music, including classic Big Band Era standards as well as popular Broadway and Las Vegas show style arrangements. This true Big Band brings together some of the region's best musicians in a style rarely seen since the 1940s.