

Steven-Byrne jazz sounds hot and cool

By RACHEL MARKOWITZ
Collegian Arts Writer

The red and blue lights illuminating the stage during the opening number at Steven-Byrne Fusion's free concert at Schwab Auditorium Thursday night were symbolic of the hot and cool sounds the band would unravel before the end of the night.

The two-month-old local band, brought on campus by the Penn State Jazz Club, performed a wide variety of cover tunes by artists such as Grover Washington, Jr., Weather Report, and Billy Cobham before an almost full-house crowd.

Fusion, dubbed "undefinable" by the band members, can often be identified by listeners as a cross between jazz, funk and rock. It incorporates the improvisation and chord progressions of jazz, the dancy beat and Latin influences of funk, and the electronically amplified instruments and strong, regular beat of rock.

Band members are Christopher Byrne (tenor and alto sax), Earl Johnson (keyboard), Gary Slobodnick (electric bass) and Steven Agahaian (drums). Byrne is a graduate student at the University; Johnson and Slobodnick are undergraduates.

The opening Grover Washington tunes, "Strawberry Moon" and "Let It Flow", spotlighted the ability of the band to play mellow, melodic nightclub music as well as upbeat, funky material. The latter tune featured good licks on keyboard and sax and innovative drumming.

The band's attempt at "playing a little jazz," featuring John Coltrane's famous "Naima," created a haunting ambience in contrast with the rest of the relatively straightforward repertoire. Agahaian experimented with cymbals and staccato-playing on drum rims to create breezy, exotic rhythms while Johnson vamped on an acoustic piano.

One of two original pieces in the show was Johnson's "Earlism," which had a bluesy feel and featured Johnson's appealing experimenting on keyboard.

Slobodnick's stirring bass improvisation on the Billy Cobham tune, "Stratus," furnished another of the concert's highlights. The 19-year-old player's "poppin' and slappin'" and spirited stage presence elicited en-

thusiastic applause from the audience.

Immediately following his solo, Slobodnick was forced to play with only three strings, as the fourth hanged from his instrument. "Playing this hardcore music takes its toll," Byrne said as Slobodnick changed the string. Slobodnick later broke another string.

After a few moments of indecision as to how to keep the show on the road, band members lunged into improvisations without Slobodnick. Agahaian supplied strong, consistent rhythm as Johnson displayed his light touch as well as imagination, as demonstrated his incorporation of the "Yankee Doodle Dandy" theme in his solo, a trick known as quoting.

"That's the real meaning of jazz right there — improvisation," Byrne said, following the tune.

The musicians' technical weaknesses in a few areas were revealed, as in occasional sharp playing by Byrne and Slobodnick, the latter's occurring most obviously during Weather Report's popular "Birdland." The band's biggest stylistic flaw was its tendency to play tunes in a predictable pattern — main theme on sax to open, keyboard solo, main theme on sax to close.

The audience, composed of jazz fans and novices alike, provided generally favorable reactions to the show.

"The overall performance was excellent," said Pam Baldwin (junior-biology).

Rick Skurla (senior-operations management), who just started listening to jazz this year, said he would have appreciated more variation in the music. "They followed the same type pattern of horns then keyboards. I like it more varied," he said.

"I liked the bass player because he played well and he was really cute," said Cara (undergrad-psychology). "He lost two strings but he didn't lose his cool."

Backstage after the concert, band leader Byrne said he hadn't expected such a good turnout. "We like playing for a young crowd. Once they're hot, they make us hot," he said.

Byrne said the band will perform Dec. 9 at Cafe 210 West. The band plays six to eight gigs a month at local nightspots such as Spats, Cafe 210 West, and Brickhouse.

Festival!

Mediterranean food and folk tunes fill Robeson Center

By RACHEL MARKOWITZ
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Colorful tables boasted traditional crafts and foods, a belly dancer undulated to the rhythms of Egyptian folk tunes, and Americans plunged into a melting pot of foreign cultures at a Mediterranean Festival held Sunday at the Paul Robeson Cultural Center.

The purpose of the International Student Council-sponsored event, which attracted between 700 and 800 people throughout the day, was to "promote cultural awareness and more understanding of Mediterranean cultures." Festival chairman and Council member Marios Lenas said. The 10 countries that participated were Egypt, Cyprus, France, Lebanon, Greece, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and Spain.

The bustling, aromatic assembly room resembled both a Middle Eastern bazaar and a European thoroughfare, as people chose either to explore the booths sampling delicacies and chatting with cheerful hosts or to mingle on foot and at tables.

The Palestinian booth, sponsored by the 50-member Association of Palestinian Students, featured a particularly colorful array of delicacies and handicrafts. Visitors could sample *baklava* — a rich pastry containing honey and crushed nuts between layers of buttery paper-thin dough — and *jalafel* — the Middle Eastern equivalent of a taco, with fried chickpea patties, tomatoes, onions and sauce enveloped in pita bread.

Also on display were ornate jewelry boxes made of wood and mother-of-pearl, a wooden sculpture symbolizing the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and "worry beads," traditionally fingered by Muslims while praying.

The Tunisian booth was also impressive. Traditional foods of the north African country were

featured, such as *tajine malsouka*, a casserole made of pasta, chicken, eggs and cheese. Household items on display included hand-painted ceramic plates and handheld straw fans. The Tunisian Students Association has 27 members. Association president Bilel Jamoussi said.

Mehmet S. Taner, the cultural and educational officer of the Turkish Students Association, gave a detailed explanation of the items at the Turkish table. He explained the process of making Turkish coffee as well as the significance of several crafts displayed on an embroidered carpet. The Turkish Students Association has about 35 members, he said.

A self-proclaimed "famous artist" displayed his ceramic tiles and figures at the Egyptian table. Art education graduate student Mohamed Agag said he has exhibited his work in Washington, D.C. and Berlin. Additional articles at the booth were hand-embroidered traditional dresses, silver and turquoise jewelry and examples of papyrus — ancient Egyptian paper. Dr. Magdi Mashaly, advisor of the Egyptian Students Association, said the group has about 11 members.

In addition to the crafts and reasonably-priced food — one satisfied diner said she had spent \$2.50 and was full — guests were treated to live musical entertainment.

The most memorable performance was by the Penn State International Dancers, featuring belly dancing by Sujata Kakarla (graduate-computer science) and Egyptian folkdancing. The enthusiastic audience watched the dancers attentively, cheering and clapping to the music.

Advisor Elizabeth Hanley, glowing after the troupe's performance, said most of the dancers are American and study diverse majors. The group, celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, performs throughout the state, Hanley said.

LIACA, a dance troupe from Long Island,

N.Y., folk danced for 45 minutes to music from Greece and the island of Cyprus. A 20-minute performance of Turkish songs was also presented.

Guests approached during the event appeared to be enjoying themselves.

"It's an uninhibited, bacchanalian atmosphere," said Susan Pappalardo (senior-general arts and sciences). "People are enjoying themselves."

Anastasia Logotheti (graduate-English), who is Greek, said she was happy to see the Greek and Turkish tables side by side despite the political tension that exists between the two nations. "It shows that the countries don't fight on a personal basis," she said.

Taner from the Turkish Students Association agreed, saying, "It's very nice that there is no politics here at the festival."

Dick Gamble, a 67-year-old volunteer with the Office of International Students, said one of his passions is working with international groups. "I have a feeling for students who are far from home, in a different atmosphere," he said.

Imad Al-Qadi, president of the International Student Council, said the Council will co-sponsor a larger international festival with the Office of International Students in February at the HUB.

Al-Qadi said that although ISC acts as an "umbrella" to 24 foreign clubs, more than 100 nationalities are represented at the University. He said that of the approximately 2,000 foreign students, the majority are Chinese, Taiwanese, Indian and Korean. He added that 35% of graduate students here are foreign.

"There is a void between American and international groups that must be bridged by ISC," Festival publicity chairman Anish Wig said. "Americans have stereotypical images of foreigners. ISC can help bring the two groups closer together," he added.

Guitar recital offers 'a soothing break'

By RACHEL MARKOWITZ
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It wasn't a typical day in the HUB Fishbowl.

Sure, there were the usual studiers, dawdlers, dreamers and nappers sprawled out on cushions and on the floor. But something was different. People were making music.

The campus hangout was transformed into a breezy patio of a Spanish villa Wednesday at the Penn State Guitarists treated a midday audience

to a free concert. Works of such classical composers as Albeniz, Villa Lobos and Ponce were featured.

Members of the mostly male audience sat motionless, their eyes riveted on the guitarists' delicate finger movements. The performers refrained from chatting with the audience about their individual pieces, but the listeners responded with hearty applause.

Stan Mullen couldn't help but show his nervousness about being the first of the four guitarists to perform, but

he nevertheless mastered certain features of typical Spanish music, such as in his delicate execution of triplets in Albeniz's "Granada." Warmed up a bit for his second piece, Mullen displayed some complicated fingering in Villa Lobos's *Etude 8 in C# minor*.

Second player Steve Urbani dove right into Sor's *Etudes 3 and 5* and Ponce's *Preludes 2 and 6*, all simple melodies he played smoothly and carefully. The highlight was Villa Lobos's popular *Prelude 1*, in which

Urbani used dynamics and rubato to expressive success.

Third on the program was Mike Polashenski, who played Byrd's short "Pavana Bray" slowly and dreamily.

Bill Carter, the musicians' instructor, said he was pleased with his students' performance. He said the musicians are four of eight guitar performance majors enrolled in the music department. The guitarists have also played "boxed-lunch concerts" in the chapel near the music building.

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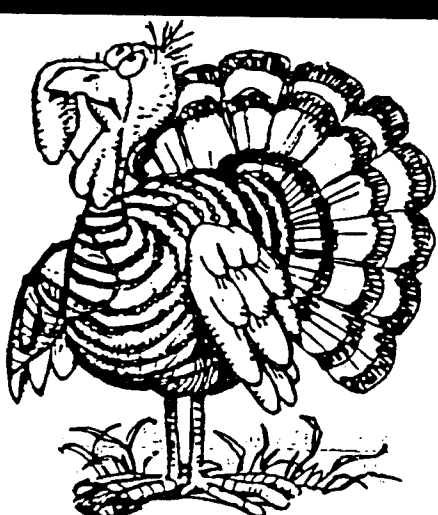
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