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Eugene jazzier leaves for the big time

Musicians have long understood several things about Eugene: it's a nice place to live and study; applause is generally bigger than the door; and the door rarely opens into a grand recording foyer. An artist may produce an album, several of them even, but in jazz parlance, Eugene just isn't happening.

To be happening is to be in L.A., longing perhaps for the good earth in Oregon, but necessarily immersed in the art and the business. And so it will be for Dan Siegel, a native Eugeniean, but also an ambitious jazz pianist with five albums behind him.

Before he leaves, Siegel is bidding goodbye to hometown Eugene in a final farewell concert at the Hult's Soreng at 8:30 on Saturday night. Sharing the limelight

**Story by Patrick Bleck
Photos by Mark Pynes**

and all the fine acoustics with another Eugene virtuoso group, The Don Latarski Trio, Siegel says it will be a special event. The keyboardist has lots of goodbyes to make before he takes off for the big-time in L.A. The farewells include ones to his family and his friends — but also to the band which backed his most recent tour and has been with him for nearly a year.

Siegel is both excited and apprehensive about a move that he says will be permanent — at least for five years.

"It's basically a career move," Siegel says with some resignation. For the last couple of years he has lived two or three months out of each year in L.A., and says he has never wanted to live there. "But," he adds, "time has run out for me to relax and mellow out here in Eugene. I've gotta go for it."

He has a lot to go with and for. All of his five jazz fusion albums, produced in a three-year period, have risen to the top of national air play charts both for jazz format stations such as KLCC and for AOR stations (album oriented radio) such as KZEL. Sales have been good, especially for his second album, "The Hot Shot," which

rose to ninth position on Billboard's sales chart, the industry's premier publication, two weeks after its release in June, 1981. Critics have heralded Siegel as a trendsetter for the '80s in the fusion idiom, and his latest album, "Reflections," is reportedly doing well.

Siegel plans to diversify his career by working in television and movies while continuing to produce his own albums and those of other artists. Thus far he has produced (read: directed, as in film) two albums for other fusion artists, including University music school graduate, Steve Narahara.

But life for Siegel will be different in L.A. No more lush verdure and clean air to inspire the composer's soul. No more disciplinary rain to close in and concentrate his flight.

Is there beauty and art to be had in the suffocating, concrete jungle?

Siegel remains optimistic. In one sense, he feels the change will benefit his work.

"In a place like L.A., you know, there're so many outside forces that are negative — the cars and the air and driving — it's just an unhealthy place to live. And that kind of environment puts a different light on your art; it makes your art so much more worthwhile; it's like a haven," he says.

Siegel has experienced an artistic haven before, in Boston, where he studied privately with heavyweights. They included such people as Micheal Gibbs, composer in residence at the Berklee College of Music and orchestrator for such notables as Stanley Clarke and John McLaughlin; famed tutor Madam Chalof, whose students have included Keith Jarrett and Herbie Hancock; and jazz pianist Ray Santisi.

"Boston was weird," Siegel says.

It was a difficult place to relate to for a small town Oregon boy, unaccustomed to the harsh Eastern climate, sidewalks mined by dogs and a large, excessively regimented study program. He quit Berklee after a week, knocked on doors and established his own program.

His biggest influence came from Madam Chalof, whom he describes as a frail, eighty-year-old woman of unusually intense spiritual mind dedicated to the advancement of musical talent. Among other more or-



In addition to saying goodbye to Eugene, Dan Siegel will also be saying goodbye to friend and fellow musician Don Latarski. Latarski's Trio will be opening the show at Siegel's farewell concert. (Related story on Page 5B.)

thodox displays, Siegel recalls witnessing Madam Chalof tap the positive energy she insisted her student discover in his own solar plexus and snap a string of a nine-foot Steinway with her baby finger, hands on the keyboard. "At that point," Siegel recalls, "I thought she was dangerous."

Ironically, though, Siegel eschewed structured training at Berklee, he describes his own music as highly structured. (He later received his degree in composition from the University of Oregon.) It is melodic, tight, neatly

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