

Music combos to jazz up Gerlinger

The Jazz Café combines University combos with professional musicians

By Mark Freed
for the Emerald

An elegant, passé room, laid with an oriental rug and bordered by two fireplaces, is hardly the smoke filled, basement-like atmosphere typical of most jazz clubs. However, the classy Gerlinger Alumni Lounge will fill with softly blown blue notes and ivory tickled tones tonight with Jazz Café.

Jazz Café is a showcase for University jazz studies combos and guest professional musicians to perform in a live, cabaret atmosphere.

However, when Jazz Café started three years ago, it didn't host professional musicians, and it wasn't held in the Gerlinger Lounge. Steve Owens, director of the jazz studies program, remembers when his students first initiated the idea.

"They would set up one of the music rooms with tables and special lighting," Owens recalls, "They even made popcorn."

Before long, however, the

room was filling, and they were forced to turn music seekers away. It was time to find a new venue. With the collaboration of the University Cultural Forum, the musicians booked the Gerlinger Lounge, which was already equipped with a piano.

Chad Sullivan, saxophone player and Jazz Café veteran, says, "Moving to Gerlinger was great. Instead of the classroom setting we were playing in, it is an actual venue with great atmosphere and acoustics, but without the typical background noise of a bar."

The move to Gerlinger also allowed the musicians to concentrate on performing and not worry about setting up the room and making popcorn. Owens explains that this is important, especially for jazz. "Jazz is all about improvising, which is a difficult thing for young musicians, especially in a live setting," he says.

Jazz Café gives the students an opportunity to perform in an intimate, relaxed live atmosphere. Devin Sanders, one of tonight's pianists, says, "It's exciting to be able to get up and improvise in front of people. It's a lot different from a practice room."

The gig also gives young aspiring musicians an opportunity to see, and sometimes even play with, professional working musicians. Scott Barkhurst, publicity director for the University School of Music, says, "It is a nice combination of performance and education. The students can learn a lot by hearing professionals."

The jazz studies program and Cultural Forum usually put on two Jazz Café performances each term. In addition to the Gerlinger Lounge, they have also held it at Cafe Paradiso and in the future hope to include The Buzz on their list of venues.

Tonight's performance, at eight in the Gerlinger Lounge, will include three University student combos followed by a duo performance with David Friesen and Gary Versace. Friesen, one of the top bassists in jazz, has appeared on some 60 records during a career that spans three decades. Versace, assistant professor of jazz piano at the University, has won several awards as a jazz pianist and has played with jazz greats like Marian McPartland.

Tickets, available at the door, are three dollars for students and seniors and five dollars for general admission.

Irresistible

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young executivewho likes his schedule and restaurant carefully charted. When he quickly falls for Amanda after tasting one of her eclairs one day, it throws him through a loop. Clearly he has not experienced much in the way of free-fall romantic experiences. Some of the funniest scenes involve Flanery stammering in an attempt to explain his newfound emotional experience.

This film relies on special effects scenes wherein Tom and Amanda often find themselves lost in a fog that seems to flow from the food in Amanda's kitchen. It's a nice touch, but its light properties don't carry the weight of the film.

With the crab looking on, Amanda's business takes off. Amanda's food not only impresses Tom and her new customers, but it also allows others to experience Amanda's emotions, creating humorous momentary gaffes for Tom during meetings with upper management and investors.

"Simply Irresistible" could be a better film, but it is not because it leaves the viewer waiting for the next romantic scene, because

those scenes in-between seem to be killing time before another move is made. The characters, possibly with the exception of Amanda, don't seem to give off the aura of real people. They ex-

'Simply Irresistible'

DIRECTED BY: Mark Tarlov

STARRING:

Sarah Michelle Gellar and

Sean Patrick Flanery

RATING:

★★★★★

ist simply to eat good food and feel good about themselves.

The most rewarding scene has Tom taking Amanda to his restaurant-to-be. The eclairs they have eaten send them into another foggy dream sequence wherein they dance to the music of a big-band shadow. The scene brings back the atmosphere of films by Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers such as "Top Hat" and "Swing Time," all of which carried a sense of timelessness and carefree attitude that is missing in many films today.

These films did not take themselves too seriously; this film does.

This film comes with the obligatory crisis: Tom begins to doubt the events that have occurred, especially after a fog-induced kiss sends him and Amanda floating to the roof of her restaurant (or so as we are made to believe).

They fight and he leaves, and it seems forced. Yet it is one of the more interesting points in the story, because it highlights the common problem of doubt in relationships. As one character points out, there is a difference between falling (or in this case, floating) in love and being in it.

I won't give away the ending, since it offers some of the best visuals in the film. The magical scenes in this film do deliver, but not as well as others such as 1990's "Mr. Destiny," which delivered more emotional magic, and the mystery man is given more time on screen.

"Simply Irresistible" is not a bad film. The standard themes are present, and the film has enough quirky energy to keep the audience's attention. But a few special effects are not going to save the day if we feel that we're lost in a fog.

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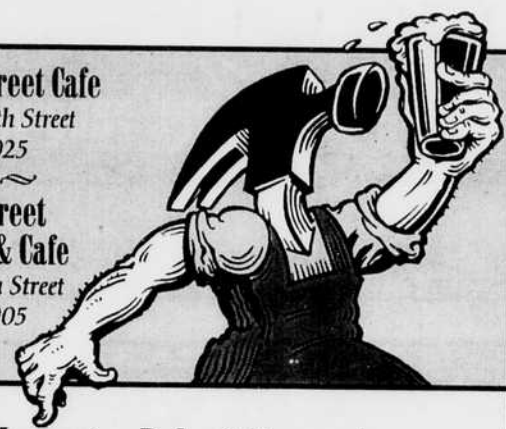
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