

Wayne Krantz jams and talks shop

■ Krantz will play Taylor's on Saturday and lead a free, two-hour workshop on campus

By Mason West
Oregon Daily Emerald

Guitarist Wayne Krantz completed his latest CD, "Greenwich Mean," by compiling recordings of his band's weekly gigs at 55 Bar in New York City.

Krantz said he owes the wealth of material to Marc Bobrowsky, a devout music fan who attended the performances every week with small microphones attached to the side of his glasses that would record the sets on digital audio tape. Krantz said having so many recordings to choose from was great, because "really stellar" nights of improvisation

often go unrecorded.

Krantz said Bobrowsky started giving the tapes to him, and they sounded good enough to use for the CD instead of setting up a special recording session. Krantz selected portions of music from the tapes and edited them together on his computer, though he said there were no alterations. He said the result sounds just as good as a professional live recording, with one small exception.

"A couple times you can hear when he turns his head," Krantz said.

The unorthodox recording of "Greenwich Mean" reflects the attitude Krantz is taking toward his musical career. The CD is only available on his Web site, www.waynekrantz.com, which he designed and maintains. Krantz also organized the tour he is on currently, which stops in Eugene on Oct. 27 at Taylor's Bar and Grille.

Bjorn Estlund, talent buyer for Taylor's, said he booked Krantz after getting a heads up from friends at Jam-Base, a Web site for jam bands touring the West Coast. Estlund said his contacts would let him know "whenever something amazing came through."

Estlund quickly read the information on Krantz available through Jam-Base and listened to "Greenwich Mean." Those two things alone persuaded Estlund to book the gig.

"The guy's incredible," he said.

Estlund worked directly with Krantz to book the show, as Krantz has done for all his other tour stops. Krantz said all the responsibilities he is taking on are beginning to wear him down, and it's starting to have negative effects.

"In the last two or three months, I've never played guitar so little," he said. "I've gone two or three days without touching it."

The 45-year-old musician has been playing guitar since he was 13 years old and said he hasn't done anything else since. He said he has become so familiar with the instrument that music has become a second language for him.

"When I'm playing, I don't even know how to talk," he said.

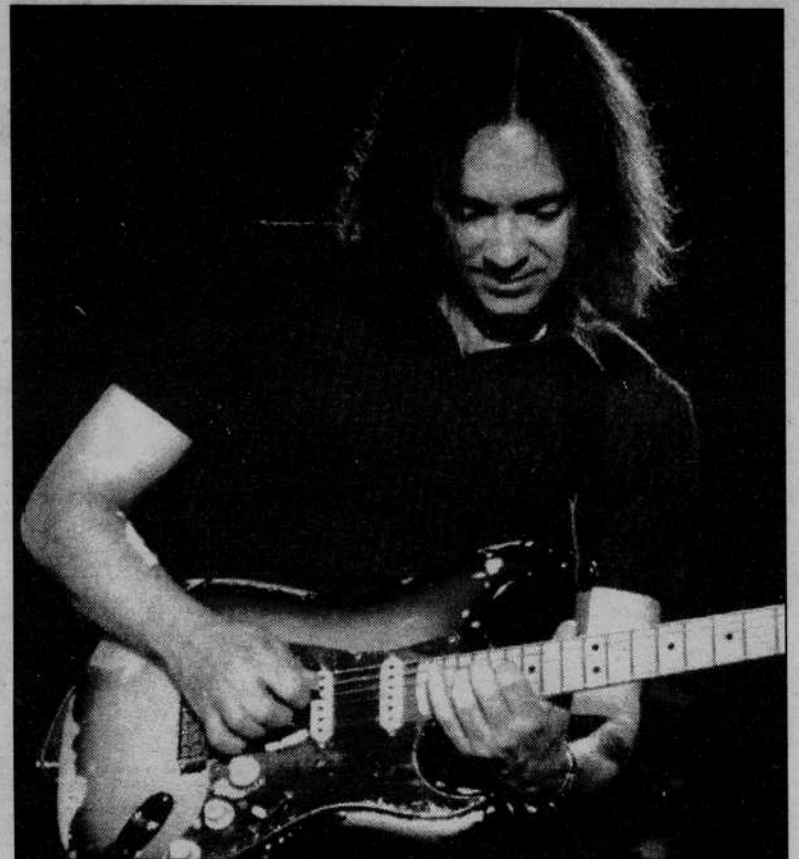
Though he said re-entering the world after a show can be draining, he said he never tires of performing.

"I want to play as many nights as I can, but that means you have to appeal to as many people as possible without compromising your music," he said.

Krantz said one of the draws of his shows is the note on his bio which says "ex-sideman with Steely Dan." The title means almost nothing to Krantz, and he said he wouldn't even include it if it weren't for media desire for a tie-in. He added that he didn't think anyone "who comes to Taylor's even knows who Steely Dan is."

For whatever reason the audience comes to his shows, once a person arrives, he said "they're in our hands."

"On a tour in England, a substantial number of Steely Dan fans came to the show because they saw me play there with them a while ago," Krantz said. "They were expecting something like Steely Dan, but they got something completely different and were happy with it."



Courtesy photo

Former Steely Dan guitarist Wayne Krantz is on a solo tour of clubs to promote "Greenwich Mean," his latest CD. Krantz booked the shows for the tour himself.

Krantz said his music is "pretty open-ear" and is based almost entirely on improvisation. He said 99 percent of the music on "Greenwich Mean" is improvisation based on skeletal song bases.

"It's so improvisational... that the songs almost didn't matter. Usually the people that see us are those that get off on creation like that," Krantz said.

The 21 tracks on the album are all instrumental sections from long jams. To make the CD more structured, Krantz gave titles to the selections that became "songs."

"I just wrote out names that I like, and I tried to match them to the tracks. I'm really happy with the titles on the record," he said.

Aside from being the title of the CD, "Greenwich Mean" is one of the song titles, along with "the end of wednesday," "escape from oblivion" and "elephant." Krantz said titles have always been tough for him because he doesn't generally write songs about specific people, places or things. On a previous album, Krantz said he titled the tracks after people he knew.

"Greenwich Mean" was released in 1999, and Krantz said although it is a good album, the material is dated with highly experimental improvisation.

"I feel that, at this point, I've gone as far in that direction as I'm going to go," he said.

Though he and his band still rely heavily on improvisation, Krantz said they have been writing more coherent songs, which is mostly what they will play on Saturday.

Another aspect of "Greenwich Mean" that Krantz said was uncharacteristic was the amount of solo guitar improvisation. All 21 tracks feature Krantz and leave drummer Keith Carlock and bass player Tim Lefebvre to play rhythm. But Krantz said the band members do much

more than play backup.

"I can't say enough about them. The concept of this band was not to be 'Mr. Guitar Player' up front with an anonymous bass and drummer in the back," he said.

Krantz has been with Lefebvre and Carlock for more than three years and said they are "irreplaceable." Krantz said he has received offers for more steady work if he were to use famous people as sidemen, but he wanted to form a band.

"The power of a band is undeniable," he said.

Krantz will share that power Saturday afternoon before the concert at a workshop offered through the University School of Music. Steve Owen, director of Jazz Studies at the University, has been working with Krantz to organize the free workshop from 2 to 4 p.m. in the music building. The location is still undetermined, but signs will be posted in the building. Owen said in a good year, the school will have between four and six workshops where musicians will answer questions and share knowledge when they pass through town.

"These things usually happen by dumb luck," Owen said.

The small fee the musicians are paid for the workshops comes directly from the students of the jazz program. Owen said it is called the "jazz tax."

"(The musicians) are pretty much doing it out of the goodness of their hearts," Owen said.

Krantz said he enjoys doing workshops because "students are cool; they're interested."

"There are always a bunch of questions because nobody knows how we do what we do," he said.

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Thriller

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are going for, drawing on their experience bringing modern inner-city problems to the screen ("Menace II Society") and successfully applying it to the equivalent 100 years ago. Viewers have been trained by countless Merchant Ivory and Edith Wharton adaptations that the 19th century was a time of etiquette, cleanliness and

order; "From Hell" tears those perceptions apart.

But the Hughes brothers bring more to the film than violence and gore. Jack the Ripper's famous quote, "One day, men will look back and say that I gave birth to the 20th century," is displayed at the beginning and provides the basis for their approach to the material. "From Hell" is most definitely a look from the 20th century back to its beginnings, and the direction

lends itself accordingly.

During one of the early crime scenes, the action fast-forwards from night into day, with passersby zooming in every direction; as the Ripper makes his escape, he fades into nothingness instead of ducking into a dark corner. Abberline's hallucinations also have the quality of similar scenes in "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas," another film in which Depp explores the wonders of drugs.