

Acclaimed musician Skerik to play WOW Hall

Skerik and his Seattle-based band Syncopated Taint embody the spirit of the musical style 'punk-jazz;' they hit WOW Hall Saturday night

By Carl Sundberg
Pulse Columnist

Punk is usually the last thing most people think of when it comes to jazz. But like Bob Dylan said: "The times, they are a changin'." Punk-jazz is becoming a way of life for musicians and fans who are sick of the mundane and ordinary. One saxophone player from Seattle is touring the country to bring this new sound to the ears of every man, woman and child he can. He goes by the name of Skerik, and to the uninitiated, pay attention: Here is the story of an up-and-coming musical revolutionary.

"Punk-jazz is more of an attitude than a sonic description," Skerik said. "The punk sound of the '90s has been used and abused and commercialized. When I think of punk, I think of (Minute-men bassist) Mike Watt — you know, integrity, honesty. It's not motivated by a corporation. It's direct honesty at a personal expense."

These personal expenses come at a price. Skerik said he has actually lost thousands of dollars on his current tour, adding that music education has also suffered since the 1980s with government cuts to artistic programs nationwide. "America has been destroying art in this society," Skerik said. "Of all professional endeavors, musicians are the lowest paid and the least respected."

Skerik added that the key to changing this is to get rid of misconceptions about what music is and where it should be heard.

"You have to connect with people," he said. "You have to make art accessible. You should be able to enjoy art."

"That's why we play places like Oklahoma, and not just (cities) like Seattle or L.A. or New York. Your cultural experience in life can't be the record section in Wal-Mart."

Skerik grew up in Seattle and played in jazz ensemble and orchestra in school, as well as in a rock band during his spare time. During



Courtesy

Skerik's Syncopated Taint Septet will perform at the WOW Hall Saturday at 8:30 p.m. From left to right: Craig Flory, Joe Doria, Skerik, Steve Moore, Dave Carter (lower middle), Hans Teuber and John Wicks. Skerik says the band's shows are based on improvisation, and the band will play different tunes depending on crowd reaction.

the 1980s, Skerik left home to pursue his career as a musician, playing in bands all over the world in places such as London, Paris and the South Pacific. The styles of music he played included blues, rock, jazz, Caribbean and African music. He returned to Seattle during the late 1980s and started the sax-drum-

bass trio, Sadhappy. Later, he began the band Critters Buggin.

Skerik's approach to music has garnered him a great deal of praise from musicians and fans.

"He has a no-holds-barred (style that) combines everything he's learned to (create some-

thing) without fear of what other people think," said Tim McLaughlin, a trumpet player and leader of the local band Eleven Eyes.

McLaughlin's band will open for Skerik and his Seattle-based group Syncopated Taint Septet this Saturday at WOW Hall, located at 291 West Eighth Ave. Doors open at 8 p.m. and showtime is 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 in advance or at the door.

WOW Hall Publicist Bob Fennessy described his experience seeing Skerik.

"I saw Skerik perform here (at WOW Hall) when he was in Critters Buggin. He's a flamboyant player who uses a lot of effects to distort the sound of his saxophone," he said.

Skerik has made a name for himself playing with some of the most cutting-edge and innovative performers in postmodern America. His presence became otherworldly in the band Critters Buggin, an avant-garde punk-jazz tribal-electronic fusion group. Since then, Skerik has performed in several bands, including Garage a Trois and Les Claypool's Flying Frog Brigade. He's also played alongside legends such as Roger Waters, Galactic, John Scofield, Medeski Martin & Wood, DJ Logic, Robert Walters and Fred Wesley. Rolling Stone magazine has called him "jazz's best kept secret."

The Syncopated Taint Septet consists of seven all-star musicians from Seattle. The lineup includes Craig Flory on baritone saxophone, Joe Doria on Hammond organ, John Wicks on drums, Dave Carter on trumpet, Hans Teuber on alto saxophone and flute, Steve Moore on trombone and Wurlitzer electric piano, and, of course, Skerik on tenor and baritone saxophone.

"We have about 50 compositions (written) for seven musicians, five (of which are) horns," Skerik said.

Although the songs are rehearsed and written, Skerik said, they are also reactionary and firmly based in improvisation. He added that if the crowd is sitting and quiet, the band will play more tunes that are more ambient and subdued. But if the crowd is lively, the band will rock the house.

Contact the Pulse columnist at carlsundberg@dailymerald.com.

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