

Tom Wakeling Trio shakes up Sharky's with jazz



KARL KATZKE / Clackamas Print

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If you like jazz, then you missed an excellent performance last week by one of Clackamas' coolest instructors, and incidentally, also one of its' best musicians.

The Tom Wakeling Trio performed last Saturday, Jan. 8 at Sharky's, 355 N. State Street. Even though the crowd for the 8-11 p.m. performance was small, Tom Wakeling on Bass, Willie Thomas on Drums, and Gary Versace on Piano played two sets of some of Portland's best local jazz.

When you check out Tom Wakeling's next public performance, on Saturday, Feb. 12 at Typhoon! in the Imperial Hotel on Broadway, I'd advise bringing an old friend... maybe someone you haven't seen in a while... or, your favorite Valentine. It's easy to let the easy sounds of Versace's piano and Wakeling's bass guide your conversation, and you'll never miss the good parts - Thomas's drums will call your attention back to the stage just in time.

What's really interesting is that Wakeling is not only a top-notch performer, having played in clubs, restaurants, and parties around the world, but he's also a full-time teacher at Clackamas. Who would believe that someone can find time to grade papers, lead all of the student jazz bands, and work with the athletic department to run the Pep band? On top of that, Wakeling teaches the History of Music sequence, which includes his favorite, "History of Jazz."

Wakeling, like the other members of the Trio, have played music since they were in High School. Versace is a jazz instructor at the University of Oregon, and if you ride the Tri-Met bus 54, on Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway, you'll probably recognize Thomas.

"I work another job to make the rent," said Thomas.

The Trio's been together in its current form for just a couple of years, but the members have been playing together for quite a bit longer than that.

"I've played for fifteen years with Tom," said Thomas. "We had a steady trio gig at the Riverplace Hotel for five and a half years with

a different piano player.

Wakeling regards Jazz as a challenge - that's why he's chosen to play it exclusively.

"The music we played tonight is a little far out... a little avant-garde. One of the challenges is knowing the melody, and then sliding away from it."

Versace agrees.

"The performances are a little different each night."

Wakeling's favorite place to play is in Europe.

"It's nice [in America] when the audiences are involved, but sometimes they're not. We play because we love to play. If we get to play for an audience that's there to listen, it's like a bonus... European audiences are probably the best."

When he's not performing overseas, one of Wakeling's favorite places to play is at Sharky's, in Lake Oswego.

"It's not smoky," said Wakeling.

Sharky's is a family seafood restaurant right on Highway 43 in Lake Oswego that features live music six nights out of seven. While it is a smidge on the pricey side for students, with dinner entrees ranging from \$9 to \$30, the food is fresh and expertly prepared. The service is also some of the best I've found in the Willamette Valley - and that's saying a lot. Sharky's has live music on every day but Sunday, from 6:30-9:30 p.m. on weekdays and 8-11 p.m. on Saturdays.

According to owner Patty Dallal, Sharky's live music has gained a bit of a following among college students in the Lake Oswego area.

"We get a lot of students from Marylhurst and Lewis and Clark... every once in a while, we'll get a Clackamas or Reed student."

Any night the Tom Wakeling Trio's there, the music's definitely worth it.



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[Above] The Tom Wakeling Trio performs under a giant shark at Sharky's in Lake Oswego. [Left] Tom Wakeling, a music instructor at Clackamas, lays down a smooth bass line.

Cruise takes on unlikely role in three-hour *Magnolia*

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Bursting onto the screen like a blast of fireworks, *Magnolia* unfolds the outrageous, alarming story of a handful of seemingly unrelated Los Angeles dwellers, all teetering on the brink of huge life changes. Unfortunately, in spite of its color, electricity and spark, like any firework, *Magnolia* fizzles out in the end, leaving the viewer unsatisfied and full of disappointment.

Magnolia is the three-hour creation of writer/director Paul Thomas Anderson, the same twisted mind who brought Mark Wahlberg and his "13-inch friend" to the big screen in *Boogie Nights*. The premise is somewhat *Pulp Fiction*-ish in nature: there are about five plots that start out completely separate from one another and end up irreversibly intertwined. This blending of plots and lives is the delight of the movie, as well as the quirkiness of the

characters.

Tom Cruise stars as Frank Mackey, the painfully arrogant creator of *Seducer and Destroy*, a program designed solely to help men get into a woman's pants. This role is about as far away from Maverick as Cruise can get. Mackey is conniving, insincere and downright nasty in all facets of his life, and Cruise plays him surprisingly well.

Jason Robards plays Mackey's absent father Earl Partridge, who is now dying of cancer. His caretaker Phil (Philip Seymour Hoffman, *Boogie Nights*) spends most of the movie tracking down Mackey. As Phil stays at home and watches the old man die, Earl's trophy wife Linda (Julianne Moore, *Boogie Nights*) rushes around town in a Prozac-induced frenzy, trying to tie up loose ends and come to terms with her feelings for her husband.

On the other end of town, a quiz show featuring an exploited child genius (Jeremy Blackman) and an

alcoholic host (Philip Baker Hall) are enveloped in their own separate dramas of cancer and childhood confusion. Meanwhile, bumbling police officer Jim Kurring (John C. Reilly, another *Boogie Nights* alum) answers a routine disturbance call and falls in love with cocaine-addicted Claudia, (Melora Walters) the daughter of the game show host.

Sounds confusing, right? *Magnolia* plays like a party where you know absolutely no one, yet the stories and drinks and people and problems just keep coming at you, until you finally sort it all out and realize how everyone fits together. Once everything falls into place, the movie becomes an engrossing ride of talented actors and interesting plot twists and turns. A standout performance is given by Robards, whose portrayal of the last hours of cancer is so convincing that anyone who has actually been touched by that disease will be hit in the face with grief.

Even though the beginning and middle of *Magnolia* are fantastic and show an innovative style of filmmaking, the ending was a complete let-down. Note to filmmakers: if you are going to make a three-hour movie (which seems to be a trend in Hollywood these days) take some time and make the ending count. This is the last impression that the audience will have of your movie, and if they leave the theater with a look of confusion on their faces and questions swirling around in their heads, that usually is not good for you. Note to filmgoers: See *Magnolia*, but leave after the first two and a half-hours.



Tom Cruise, left, confronts his dying father (Jason Robards) in *Magnolia*.



William H. Macy (middle) takes his troubles to a bar in *Magnolia*.