

## Jazz trumpeter Josh Rzepka to play at Tangier — the330.com

By Malcolm X Abram  
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Friday night at Tangier in Akron, local jazz trumpeter Josh Rzepka will hold a concert and CD release party for his second jazz recording, ... Into the Night. The album, which was recorded at the stately Clonick Studio at Oberlin College, features a sextet of mostly local veterans of the jazz scene ably performing nine Rzepka originals.

The project was mostly funded through a 45-day kickstarter.com campaign that raised more than \$10,000 including a \$500 donation from "some guy I never met in my life," Rzepka said, adding that the donor flew to Oberlin from Atlanta to sit in on a recording session simply because he wanted the experience.

Rzepka, 27, has become a one-man jazz and classical cottage industry. He books and promotes his own shows, organizes recording sessions in both the jazz and classical realms (he released his debut classical CD Baroque Music for Trumpet last year), all while teaching 40 music students at Copley, Wadsworth and Highland high schools.

On ... Into the Night, Rzepka expands on the traditional hard-bop sound of his debut jazz album, MidWest Coast, which featured a quintet. The sextet format, featuring trombonist Andy Hunter and saxophonist Steve Kortyka in addition to the MidWest Coast rhythm section of pianist Jackie Warren, bassist Peter Dominguez and drummer Ron Godale, allows Rzepka to display his growing compositional and improvisational talents with plenty of hummable melodies and cool harmonies and interplay from the horns on the title track and Sarah's Samba.

There's also some soulful old-school wailing from Kortyka on the simmering Blues for C.T. (named for trumpet legend Clark Terry) and both Hunter and Warren shine on the toe-tapping Salsa Queen written for the swinging, fleet-fingered pianist known among Northeast Ohio jazz aficionados as Cleveland's salsa queen.

For the Tangier show, the band will have different sax and trombone players and percussionist Sammy DeLeon, with whom Rzepka sat in for a few months, will make an appearance (perhaps on a salsa tune?).

It's a pretty gutsy move putting together a jazz concert at a decent-sized cabaret rather than an easier-to-fill small club such as the Northside, and Rzepka admits to some apprehension about the show's success.

"Yeah, I'm having nightmares," he said laughing, but he said he wanted to put on a show where people could come and settle in for an evening of good music. "I wanted to be able to play somewhere in Akron where people could see me play and I wanted it to be a real weekend show and I wanted it to be a place where people could come and relax, have a drink if they wanted, grab a bite to eat."

Rzepka has been running around the area being his own analog and digital street team, giving online and radio interviews, passing out fliers and Facebooking anyone who will listen.

"I decided I'd rather completely self-promote it and take on the risk but if I really work my tail off and let



Rising trumpet player and composer Josh Rzepka will release his sophomore jazz recording, ... Into the Night, during a concert and CD release party at 8 p.m. Friday at Tangier in Akron.

people know about it, then it can be a success,” he said.

Rzepka has also begun a series of lunchtime Web-only gigs streamed live from his Cleveland Heights apartment with various local musicians. He started the session to let fans, family and friends not in Northeast Ohio watch him do his thing, but he has gotten positive responses from folks in more than 35 states and 10 countries who have tuned in to the shows.

This is usually the part where people start to ask: Why are you still here?

Rzepka, a native of Stow, knows musicians in big cities such as New York, and his girlfriend lives in Chicago — another hotbed of young jazzbos — but he said Northeast Ohio is the best place for him right now.

“Besides all my family and friends I have here, the music scene is great. The musicians here are friendly and it’s possible to make a living here as a musicians,” he said. “Almost every musician I know in New York is working 40 to 50 hours a week just to pay the bills in a crappy place.

“For me, I can focus on my music, I can play gigs. It just doesn’t make any sense for me not to be here.”

Rzepka is already planning his next project, which will be a big one, and he says it will take a couple of years to put together. He’s planning to record a classical record featuring all new, commissioned compositions written for duets with an emphasis on unusual instrument pairings.

#### Random acts of music

This weekend, Highland Square’s favorite dive bar Annabell’s is playing host to the Akron 2 Day Punk Fest featuring 12 mostly area bands sweating and beating the hell out of their instruments.

Among the bands scheduled to perform Friday and Saturday are the Riverburners, MuchoGringo, Foose, First Offense, Ellen Degenerate (that name always makes me smile) and Repeat Offenders. You’ll notice that’s only six of the proclaimed dozen bands, so let’s call the other six bands that will play surprise guests!

On a different end of the hard-and-fast musical spectrum, Cleveland favorites Mushroomhead will hold its annual Halloween party at the Agora on Saturday night. The band released its seventh studio album, Beautiful Stories for Ugly Children, last September shortly before the October death of 41-year-old original guitarist John E. Sekula, better known to fans as J.J. Righteous, who played on the band’s first three records.

Mushroomhead has been banging heads around Northeast Ohio and the world for 16 years, so at this point, you’re probably into their brand of industrial-flavored macabre metal or you’re not. But you have to figure if there’s one thing this band of masked and made-up metalheads knows, it’s how to properly celebrate All Hallows Eve (though I’ve heard the band’s Christmas parties are quite entertaining also). Anyway, this ought to be a good place to break out your scariest and/or sluttiest and/or potentially offensive costume and have fun.

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