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Learn how a local band named Daybreak is enchanting both fans and casual listeners with their distinctive brand of smooth jazz. The story of how the five performers came together and the vision that lies behind and drives their music is sure to capture your interest.

East County's Daybreak Band

Five local musicians have combined their talents to create music that is accessible to the mind, pleasing to the ear, and soothing to the soul. The men of Daybreak are using music to inspire and encourage their listeners.

by Tim Wat, with Patrick McVeigh

The first time I knew I wanted to be a musician was when I was nine years old. My older sister was beginning to take piano lessons and I wanted to beat her, so I began my musical career for no noble reason — simple sibling rivalry.

I took to music like a fish to water. Before very long my sister conceded the competition to me and began playing saxophone. I couldn't quit playing piano by that time, because I had become caught up in the lure of learning to master the instrument.

My Musical Journey

For the next decade I devoted myself to studying classical music, and then in high school began playing rock, pop, and progressive rock. My years of classical training served me well in learning the new music I was becoming involved in. I began doing commercial recordings for jingles, etcetera.

My musical passions transformed once more in college when I encountered the amazing world of jazz. I was pursuing a Business Degree at Cal State Hayward and my world changed when I took a music class to fulfill one of my General Education requirements.

I had no idea of what I was getting into. Dave Eshelman, who was the Department Chair at the University's Jazz Department, taught the class. I quickly discovered that Eshelman was a legend in the world of jazz and studying with him dramatically expanded my horizons — providing me with a new musical vocabulary, a fresh esthetic, and a completely new frame of reference for understanding what it means to be a musician.

Patrick's Tale

A few years ago I ran across Patrick McVeigh's ad on Craigslist. By that time Patrick had been working for five years on Daybreak as the fulfillment of a passion for music that also started for him at age nine when he began pounding out rhythms on cardboard boxes or any resonating surface that he could get his hands on.

Patrick came from a musical family. His dad played trumpet, but Patrick liked the drums and felt at home with them. He began playing rhythm instruments in grade school, played for choirs in high school, and saved his pennies to purchase his first drum set, which he acquired when he was 15 years old.

The next year Patrick started his own band, named Oasis, playing covers after the style of the pop rock band Chicago that was, at that time, selling more albums and singles than any other group except The Beach Boys. Like Chicago, Patrick included brass instruments in his band. He also performed with a number of church groups, and later sat in with Al Green's Brothers, and with a notable 70s musician named El DeBarge.

Patrick was born and raised in Grand Rapids, and moved to Northern California when he was 18 to visit his brother who was in the Air Force in Sunnyvale. Patrick knew that he could go back to Michigan at any point, but says that when he got off the plane at the Santa Maria Airport he became an instant and permanent California resident. He attended Allen Hancock College and played in the college jazz band, plus played in a couple bands accompanying musical productions at the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts.



PHOTOS BY RUSSELL BYRNE

The first time I knew I wanted to be a musician was when I was nine years old.

At that time San Jose-based band called Spangalang, featuring a notable vocalist named Tony Lindsay, was performing smooth jazz in venues throughout the Bay Area. The band operated in an informal mode letting people sit in on sessions. Patrick sat in a number of times and became enamored with the whole smooth jazz groove. They did some high-level jamming together. A few members of the band later ascended to the heights. Some of them toured with Carlos Santana, and one of them is still playing with the Doobie Brothers.

Dawning of Daybreak

Four years ago Patrick decided to start his own jazz band, so he ran an ad on Craigslist and a gifted guitarist, Ron Bacurin, responded. The two of them hit it off and began performing a

smooth jazz play-list as a 2-piece band, while searching for other members.

Patrick began auditioning prospective band members — bass, keyboard, sax — searching for performers who were into the smooth jazz sounds that he and Ron were creating together. The pool of excellent musicians becomes smaller the further you move from the City, but there are always some wonderfully talented musicians around if you can figure out how to connect with them.

Patrick continued looking for potential band members any place he could find them. Peggy Schuitemaker, his hairdresser, knows everybody. She said she would keep her ear to the ground. He took the late Bruce Stuart to lunch. Bruce, who was a long-time resident and director of the Community Band, probably knew more musicians than anyone else in the area. “He was

helpful in giving me ideas of where to look,” Patrick said.

Patrick found Malcolm Hunter’s card in Antioch’s Gill’s Music store and Malcolm ended up becoming Daybreak’s third member so now he had a trio. Malcolm is a saxophonist of prodigious ability. Patrick says that sometimes while we’re playing together he looks over at Malcolm, listens to a riff that he’s laying down, and imagines that he’s playing next to Grover Washington, Jr. himself. Washington was one of the originators of smooth jazz, and Malcolm plays in the genre just like Washington intended the music to be performed. He really gets it!

A few years ago I responded to Patrick’s Craigslist ad, and that made us a quartet.

Malcolm’s acquisition ended up becoming a “two-for…” because he brought in his son, David, who at 19 years of age can play the bass at a level that most performers twice his age can’t reach. He’s a gifted musician and was one of the Rising Stars at the JazzSchool Institute in Berkeley. David’s entrance into the band grew us into a quintet.

The Sound of Our Music

We believe that five is a good number. Sax, guitar, and keyboard provide a complementary variety of textures, especially when grounded by our excellent rhythm section. Also, a quintet is a sufficiently small group that each performer can be a featured soloist.

I have learned over the years that talented musicians won’t be able to make a great sound if they don’t have the chemistry. We members of Daybreak have the chemistry.

We’re experimenting with some original works that Malcolm and I are composing together, but right now we’re mainly doing smooth jazz covers. Audiences love to hear pieces they recognize from artists like Stevie Wonder, Dave Koz, David Benoit, and others that they’ve been listening to on the radio.

I’m a member of three other jazz ensembles and play everything from traditional standards to post-bop contemporary. But I particularly love Daybreak’s smooth jazz because of its unique quality of being able to connect with audiences at all levels of age and musical tastes. Smooth jazz is melodic, danceable, and resonates with people where they live.

The five of us can bring our technical skills to bear on the music, while demonstrating a sense of fun that engages people. We’ve been giving audiences a happy musical experience in venues that range from small restaurant gigs to a command performance at The Fremont Festival of the Arts, which is the largest free street-fair west of the Mississippi.

Landing that spot at the Fremont Festival was a real feather

in our caps because we were booked for that performance by Jim Douglas. His Primetime Entertainment company works with top-drawer musical artists of all types. We were honored to be selected to perform with such an exclusive company.

We like to perform somewhere a couple of times a month. We have a few annual gigs such as the Brentwood Art, Wine, and Jazz Festival and the Harvest Celebration at Orchard Nursery in Lafayette. We perform at special events such as Hannah Nicole’s Release Party and at local restaurants such as The Nines and Qins.

Support from wives is another quality that is required for a successful band. They are often called upon to become musical widows so we can practice and perform.

Besides keyboardist for the band, I’m the recording engineer and webmaster. We are able to create high-quality sound files in the professional-level recording studio that Patrick has set up. Our music is accessible on the Web, plus we have a demo CD and are planning to produce an album for the retail market someday soon. Daybreak is homegrown; we don’t have a lot of overhead.

Music to Soothe a Savage Beast

Daybreak differs from some contemporary bands because we’re committed to creating music that uplifts and encourages audiences. We like to think that we provide good sounds for bad times. We don’t do the blues, which someone described as “a good man feeling bad.”

Things are tough out there now. People are facing real challenges; some of them are going through very difficult times. We think they are ready to hear music that can soothe their spirits and provide a peaceful space in the midst of the storms that are breaking around them.

The fact is, our music is healthy music. Researchers have discovered that listening to smooth jazz releases endorphins in





the brain that provide quieting effects and diminish the body's ability to sense pain and discomfort.

We are committed to helping folks feel better about their lives. When people listen to us for a few hours, they tend to forget their cares and problems, and we've done what we set out to do. We would like people to make our music the soundtrack of their lives.

None of us are making a living through music. For example, Patrick is a video engineer for Comcast Cable. We're not trying to become wealthy. I don't want Daybreak to become a job; I don't want jazz to become work. I simply want to be part of this amazing group of musicians, sit down at that keyboard,

get into a groove, and let the music both come from and minister to my spirit and to the spirit of anyone listening. Everyone needs a Daybreak sometimes.

For more information go to www.daybreakjazz.com, call 925-595-0943, or email tim@daybreakjazz.com. Have an opinion about this article? Send it to editors@110mag.com.

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