

Middle-Eastern infused free jazz delivers amazing experience

August Lysy
STAFF WRITER

Although I am a music enthusiast and have opinions about performances and content, I am willing to acknowledge when I am out of my depth. For example, because I am not very familiar with classical music and performances, I do not believe I could give a fair estimation of either. This holds true to a certain extent with Jazz, the particular subject of this article, and so I will tread lightly and offer the commendation I believe the artists deserve, although acknowledging I cannot give a perfectly-informed estimation of their artistry.

That being said, this past Friday night I had the pleasure to see SoSaLa at Surplus of Options, an independent antiques, furniture, and obscure art and objects buyer, seller and trader up on Lincoln Avenue. Initially, after reading the description of the band and considering the obscurity of the locale, I expected an amateur, indie effort—akin, perhaps, to a performance I once saw in a basement in which the “artist” periodically sipped wine from a bottle and put a microphone in his mouth to simulate a-melodic electronic crackles. Nevertheless, I went because I wanted to explore music in the city and hopefully make some contacts for my radio show.

To my totally-unexpected amazement, what I experienced in the intimate backroom space of that building so surprised and

overwhelmed me; I can hardly find the words to describe the experience: my mouth hung open in a bemused smile for the whole first set, and I entered altered states in the second.

SoSaLa is Sohrab Saadat Ladjevardi, a tenor saxophonist of Iranian descent. Accompanying him Friday night were three musicians he had never even met or played with before (and the same goes for among them, too, I think).

They were Steve Marquette on guitar, Lucas Gillian on drums and percussion, and Alex Wing on bass and oud. SoSaLa is currently based out of New York, but also has members in Germany (and at least one other country). As I understand it, SoSaLa picks up members wherever Saadat goes: this, I am sure, guarantees an incredibly organic and fresh sound with every performance—which is exactly what I heard.

SoSaLa, to Saadat’s implicit admission, defies genre in that it incorporates a diverse amount of influences: avant-garde, traditional, jazz, punk, progressive, and the list goes on. Surplus of Options describes it in their e-mail blast as “Fueled by improvisation, with lo-fi electronics... [And] various instruments [making] for an ambient and psychedelic take on world music.” However, that description led me to the erroneous expectation described above. There was no wine-imbibing to be seen in this performance—all were consummate musicians, seriously-honed in their craft.

Essentially I would describe SoSaLa

as free-form Jazz with various, exquisitely-incorporated influences, the most noticeable and beautiful of which being Saadat’s Middle-Eastern heritage. Saadat spoke to the audience between each piece, and although his thick, towering figure seems intimidating, he quickly reveals himself to be unassuming and quite open. It was during these breaks in which Saadat explained the intention and history of his music.

He expressed a great sorrow for Iran and a keen understanding of the world (this I attribute to his remark on New York: something to the effect of it being a troubled city).

I am quite partial to the tenor sax, and I felt it captured Saadat’s apparent melancholy over the state of Iran. Each piece seemed to follow a pattern: usually an intro by the sax and then a gradual build until an improvisational period at the end.

As I am most partial (and familiar) to the drums, I was most impressed by Gillian’s drumming, which powerfully and adeptly crafted the unique rhythm of each piece, and added a certain edgy quality to the overall Jazz feel—by which I mean he tended toward emphatic expression (which may not clarify my initial wording any better).

Marquette’s guitar work was subtle (or else timid, or too quiet?), but when I focused on his input I sensed an equal passion tempered by his use of space (i.e. rests or sustainment). This impressed on me the sense he was very intentional in his playing, working

around the other players.

Wing brought a very colorful versatility to the ensemble, playing both bass and oud, sometimes interchangeably during the same piece. However, as I am most unfamiliar with the bass (and utterly unfamiliar with the oud, a form of Arabian lute) I am least inclined to comment on his performance—however, I was equally-impressed and delighted in it.

The weakest parts of the performance were the ends of each song—a weakness that can be dismissed by the artists’ novelty to each other and under the overwhelming experience they were still able to create.

I have had the experience before where in the experience of live music I feel something spiritual is conveyed and impressed upon me: just such did I feel walking home last night. So much was I in an altered state, I can only describe it as an ecstasy: if God had reached down and touched the soft of my heart, I would not have felt any more ecstatic—and I quite believe he did.

Unfortunately, the CD I purchased of SoSaLa, “Nu World Trash,” lacks some of the sparking passion I felt last night. Alas, that must be the effect of production, in some cases. I’ll always have the memory, though.

Check out Saadat online at www.sohrab.info, and tune in to my radio show *Vagabond Airwaves* on WIIIT 88.9 FM (and online) Sundays from 4 to 6 p.m. Check online, too for when I post some excerpts from videos I took Friday.

Chicago 2013 Zine Fest showcases city’s thriving zine scene

Robin Babb
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The zine community in Chicago is unquestionably thriving. Every art student and punk kid in the city with access to a copier seems to have their own zine. Whether it’s a stapled-together, simple little black and white number or a fully illustrated graphic novel, the accessibility and freedom of content inherent in the zine format has made it quite a popular art form recently. This popularity is nowhere more apparent than at the annual Chicago Zine Fest, which took place this Friday and Saturday at Columbia College.

In its fourth year running, the fest

has managed to gain a massive cult following of dirty hipsters and super cute lesbians. This time around there were three floors of a Columbia building dedicated to the event, each packed, end-to-end, with over 200 zine-covered tables. The sheer amount of stuff at this place was crazy: zines, posters, stickers, patches and pins. There were established artists selling their hardcover books, and broke art students giving away flimsy little pamphlets about this or that marginalized social group. People from all over the country come to this event to sell and trade their wares, hobnob with fellow zinesters about the community, and collaborate on future projects. It’s the locus of tons of creative energy and new media.

I was only able to go to the second day of Zine Fest (Saturday, March 9), but has nevertheless was impressed by the scope of the event. Besides vendors, there were panels, workshops and readings, and even a bake sale to raise money for the future of the fest. The general political bent of the zine community was apparent through panel titles such as “Writing about Health, Disability, and Accessibility in Zines,” and through the many feminist and queer publications like *Motor Kitty City*. Besides these, there were zines about gardening, sex, food, music, having really good roommates, growing up in the city, and just about anything else you can think of.

This was the second year in a row I had been to the Zine Fest, and I was just as

impressed this time as the last. For being run by a young, volunteer-based outfit, this event has been well attended and organized on both occasions. Despite the space being uncomfortably packed with people, there never seemed to be the slightest of tiffs.

And how could there be, with so much awesome stuff in one place? I came away with a snarky feminist zine, some cute pins, a free little smut pamphlet, and some names of artists that caught my eye and require some further Googling. With most things under ten dollars, it’s pretty easy to come away with plenty of souvenirs for you and your buddies.

If you missed Zine Fest this year, I’m sorry. Go next year. I promise it’ll be worth your time.

App Review:

Temple Run 2 a fun challenge

Swasti Khuntia
LAYOUT EDITOR

In the last week’s TechNews has had reviews for movie tickets, transit, GPS, and more. This week I’ve decided to jump over to another exciting theme, Games. Yes, this week I’m looking at one of the most downloaded apps on Apple App Store as well as Google Play, Temple Run 2. The sequel to the popular endless runner game Temple Run was launched last month and it has been a success. It has recorded a massive 170 million downloads in the Google Play.

The first comment I would give is it’s a superb game. With enhanced graphics, environments, and obstacles, as well as more power-ups and achievements, and special powers for each character, the game is addictive. It takes all the same game play rules from the first edition, i.e., escaping from ravenous monkeys and collecting coins while running through an ancient temple, ducking, jumping, and swerving around to avoid obstacles. But in Temple Run 2, there are some very good additions to the running route. Now, the route has curves, hills, and dips and because of this, it’s

automatically more difficult than its predecessor. There are no more straight line paths and right angles as before which has increased the excitement. In addition, there are new modes of transportation like ropes to slide down and train carts to ride, which are thrilling inclusions.

With these sorts of exciting routes to run and power-ups, this game sometimes crashes, either due to my phone being unable to support it or a software bug. Also, compared to the first edition of this game, they’ve removed too many of the best features. You can no longer upgrade the magnet to double or triple coin values, and you can only work on three upgrades at a time. This really slows down your ability to make progress in a game to the point where it isn’t fun.

I would say that there is literally no end to this game, as it is always making you want to try to beat your high score. Again, I would say graphics has been the biggest positive factor for this game which makes it smooth to play and very challenging. If you haven’t yet started playing, go and start running.

Got an app on your phone that you think other students should try? Send an email to ae@technewsit.com and we will review it!

Game Review

Sims 3: University Life

Melanie Decelles
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This week EA released the newest expansion for their insanely popular Sims series. The Sims has become one of the most popular PC games available, selling escapism to the masses. In The Sims, you can look however you want, be whomever you want, and even own a pony. With expansions that allow you to train and breed dogs, become a singing sensation, and learn how to give tattoos, there is no failed life dream that can’t be acted out with these tiny virtual people.

The community in The Sims is large and involved, with fan made challenges that usually span multiple generations of Sims families. This means The Sims can be as complicated as you want, with hundreds of different ways to play.

I was ecstatic about the new expansion. With diligent playing, it’s easy to exhaust even the most limitless of worlds. I found my Sim spending her Sundays catching up on laundry and playing with her cat, hardly an experience I need to simulate, so I was thrilled to hear about Sims University Life.

In this expansion, any young adult Sim can enroll in college. Once enrolled, you can decide

how long you want to attend, how many credits you want to take while there, as well as decide a major. Your Sim is then whisked off to a small college town where they can live off campus and pay rent or dorm for free. A notable difference from previous Sim games is the addition of a phone that allows your Sim to join social networks based on interests. The life goals of your Sim can now include becoming a street artist or a famous blogger. One of the major selling points of attending college is that it allows your Sim enter into their chosen career above entry level. It also allows them to meet people who can help them be promoted faster. That’s right, not even the Sim world is a meritocracy anymore.

This expansion seems to have been created purely so the developers can try to connect with the twenty-something members of their fan-base. This is complicated by the fact that they seem to believe we dress like it is the 80s and all want dreadlocks of varying colors. In the end, the game still manages to be entertaining in a strange way. What can I say? There’s something relaxing about attending classes that don’t matter, while I attend classes in the real world that get increasingly complex. I recommend this game to anyone who wants to watch a slightly more popular and attractive version of herself take a final.