

Mp3 Slajo - Jazz: Big Band



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14 Piece Salt Lake City jazz ensemble performing cutting edge originals and inventive interpretations of jazz and rock classics. 8 MP3 Songs JAZZ: Big Band, JAZZ: Weird Jazz Details: SLAJO stands for Salt Lake Alternative Jazz Orchestra. It was formed in 2002 by young musicians from the University of Utah's Jazz studies program. Functioning as not only a creative outlet, but also a breeding ground for emerging talent, SLAJO has forged a sound that is on the cutting edge of musical evolution. In an effort to connect with listeners of varied taste, SLAJO not only performs arrangements of Jazz classics and originals, but works by artists such as Nine Inch Nails, Nirvana, and Radiohead. Beyond Big Band--Salt Lake Alternative Jazz Orchestra Takes Music to Another Level By Luziano Marzulli Vargas For most of us, the word jazz denotes something old, complicated and inaccessible-especially to those who listen to pop music and can't go more than three and a half minutes without a catchy hook or phrase to hold our dwindling attention. With their debut performance last Thursday night, the members of the 12-piece Salt Lake Alternative Jazz Orchestra (S.L.A.J.O.) dispelled the myth of jazz as only art music by filling the Urban Lounge with fresh compositions, blazing a trail into uncharted territory. Dave Chisholm plays trumpet for the orchestra and described the inception of the group: "I was driving home from a lesson I had with Tully, my teacher, and I just thought, 'hey there's a bunch of players up at the [University of Utah] who are really good players.'" Chisholm's vision involved a lot of brass players for a really smokin' rhythm section, so he figured, "might as well use it. Once I told one of the players, [Marco Blackmore,] about it he kept buggin' me about it every day of class to write music for it. 'Did you write anything for S.L.A.J.O.? Did you write anything for S.L.A.J.O.?' " Chisholm said. Over the winter break, with time away from classes, Chisholm was able to write the arrangements for most of his four original compositions as well as a new arrangement of John Coltrane's "Blue Train" and nine inch nails' Trent Reznor's "The Day

the World Went Away." "Maybe just myself I'm kind of sick and tired of jazz. So we just listen to stuff that's good music that's not like part of the jazz idiom," Chisholm said of the decision to write a jazz arrangement for a nine inch nails tune. In addition to Chisholm's arrangements, Willis Clow arranged four songs and Will Lovell arranged three. The majority of players are currently or were at some time part of the U's jazz program. They include Jim Follet and Dave Chisholm on trumpet and Joe Chisholm and Ryan Shepard on trombone. Matt Moor plays tuba and Mike Forbes plays tenor sax. The band's multi-instrumental wind players are Adam Leishman on tenor sax, flute and bass clarinet; Andrew Kuhnhausen on alto sax, soprano sax and clarinet; and Marco Blackmore on alto and baritone sax. Willis Clow plays electric guitar, Will Lovell mans the double bass and Steve Lyman keeps time on the drumkit. "The main reason I wanted to write for this group-and also the tunes I've written for the U Big Band-is that I'm sick and tired of Big Band music," Chisholm said. Chisholm, Clow and Lovell all agree that the majority of Big Band music in the popular sense is cheesy, unemotional and dated. "We are trying to play music that's in the now," said Chisholm. "We want people to open their eyes and realize that, this music, you can do great things with it and anyone can get into it, not just fuckin' jazz musicians." Lovell went on to say that big band music is very repertory and often big bands play charts that were written 20 to 60 years ago. "We're not playing stock charts, we're playing our charts," Lovell said. The three composers/arrangers agree that the attitude in this group is more relaxed and more inclined to comment and input than in the U big band because no one is afraid of getting a bad grade. Plus it helps that they all know each other and get along. While individual members practice their respective instruments anywhere from two to five hours a day, the band has been holding rehearsals on a weekly basis since the beginning of the new year. From the unity and near flawless performance in their live show, one would never guess that this orchestra has only practiced together for a little more than a month and half. the show The first composition set the tone for the night, Dave Chisholm's original composition and arrangement "Naked" began with a real mellow bass line accompanied by the drum kit. The horns entered right on time and then Chisholm began his trumpet solo. A little ways into it, Clow and Chisholm began some call and response with Clow playing chords. This heightened the intensity of the music and paved the way for dynamic movements. In every sense, the players filled their parts with emotion. One of Chisholm's other originals, "Contract Killer," began as a mellow ballad and soon required participation on the part of every band member. Adam Leishman shined with a flute solo that moved right into Chisholm's trumpet solo,

which was played over drum brushes and warm guitar chords that added color and texture while the brass players helped finish it off with some tension. "A lot of the tunes that I did, and I think Willis too, were tunes that we already played with other bands. And you just take the tune and add on and extend a section," Chisholm said. Clow's original "Sound of Inevitability" was originally written and performed with the Folz Ensemble, another jazz band Clow is a part of, along with Joe Chisholm, Lovell and Lyman. The arrangement for S.L.A.J.O. conveyed a dark quality; it was a long composition, which left room for much soloing and ultimately an abrupt end, resulting in a truly moving piece. Lovell's three compositions were all written specifically for S.L.A.J.O. "The [material] that I did write for this band was just something where either I read a book or I named my stomach or something," said Lovell. "Met Dan" was the standout among Lovell's compositions. It established a deep groove and featured Jim Follet with a trumpet solo over a 12-bar-blues line, Lyman added some syncopated drum lines for texture and Lovell soloed on the double bass before the song ended. While all the arrangements, especially the originals, contained an unheard of quality, the band visited material that the audience might be a little bit familiar with. The good old jazz standards included two John Coltrane songs. Clow did the arrangement for the ambitious "Giant Steps," in which he managed to hold down the challenging changes and deliver a knock out guitar solo with silky smooth licks and a warm tone that made his Telecaster sound like a big fat Gretsch guitar. Chisholm arranged the S.L.A.J.O. rendition of "Blue Train." This was the closest the orchestra got to a traditional big-band sound with Freddy Green-style chord strumming on the guitar. Not only did it swing, but Joe Chisholm and Ryan Shepard traded bars on trombone, picking up where the other left off, thereby demonstrating their skills on the instruments and their ability to listen. Dave Chisholm followed suit along with one of the sax players. The popular non-jazz songs arranged for the band included Radiohead's "Fake Plastic Trees" and nine inch nails' "Hurt" and "The Day The World Went way." Clow arranged the jazz rendition of the bittersweet "Fake Plastic Trees." Appropriately, he led into the song playing chords and melody on the guitar over drum brushes and soon Dave Chisholm joined him on trumpet. Clow dominated the tune until the rest of the brass came in and then re emerged at the end with some rapid-fire licks. It was at this point-in the beginning of the second set-that the audience finally broke the barrier and occupied the dance floor in force. Clow said that rearranging a song requires you to "take the song and figure out the chord changes and the melody that the vocalist is singing. And then just basically take the melody, figure out who you want to play the melody, how you want it played, if you want a bunch

of people playing it or just one person featured. And then just build the arrangement around that." Clow also arranged "Hurt." He began the song with Dave Chisholm on trumpet while the tuba helped hold down the bass line. The arrangement sounded traditional for a few minutes and then became jazzier at the drop of a hat. Chisholm arranged the other nine inch nails song, "The Day The World Went Away." Clow began the song with a distorted guitar and the rest of the band joined in over a syncopated drumline to reach a boisterous and beautiful end. For Chisholm, the rearranging process involves stripping a song down, he said, "after you figure out what makes the song tick, then you can start adding your own little flavors in it." The crowd's enthusiastic cheers and cries for an encore show that S.L.A.J.O. impressed the crowd and, despite the one-song encore, the crowd left wanting more. After the show, Clow said, "I was absolutely blown away, better than anything I could have imagined. Having such a huge crowd helped." Clow mentioned that the group's plans for the immediate future are to play more gigs in order to tighten up the sound, then record in the studio. With luck, in the summer the 12 piece orchestra will hit the road to play some jazz festivals and spread the sound outside of Salt Lake City. Tully Kathey, an adjunct associate professor of music at the U, was impressed by the band's debut performance, the arrangers' skills and how quickly they came together. "I'm excited to see this level of creativity with jazz students," he said. Kathey said he liked that Coltrane's work continues to be reinterpreted, and that the pop-to jazz arrangements offered something fresh, adding that, "they are breaking down style barriers." Kathey also said that "it's unusual to have a group with all that brass and rhythm be so appealing to a younger crowd." With one performance, S.L.A.J.O.'s members delivered 14 compositions and arrangements full of emotion, playing as a united orchestra and lending support for others to shine on solos. With their two consecutive hour-long sets, the band drew in the crowd as the night went on and made their mark as a force to be reckoned with amongst local jazz bands. The next S.L.A.J.O. performance happens Tuesday March 4, at the Urban Lounge (241 S. 500 East) and truer worlds couldn't have been spoken when Chisholm said, "you'll pay for your whole seat-but you'll only need the edge."

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