

Sylvan Street closes summer jazz series



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There is newer jazz being played out there than those iconic albums of Miles Davis, and **Jay Rees** knows where to find it. Even better, Rees and his band Sylvan Street know how to play it.

Sunday puts Sylvan Street in the spotlight as the season-closing concert presented by the Tucson Jazz Society at the Loews Ventana

Canyon. Rees founded Sylvan Street five years ago specifically to give jazz more immediacy.

“This show will be exciting, different, unusual and unique,” Reese promised. “We want to break down all the barriers that have kept jazz bottled up for so long, like the attitude of many young people that jazz is too slow or too intellectual.

“We want to reach everyone with our music, from kids and families right on to those jazz purists,” he added.

Swinging into the task at hand, Rees and his six bandmates keep on adding blends of Latin, rock, fusion, funk and electronica to their Sylvan Street repertoire.

“Our sound is definitely evolving,” said Rees, a bassist and former Los Angeles studio musician. These days Rees is best known as director of the University of Arizona’s marching band The Pride of Arizona and that ubiquitous student pep band that livens up so many UA basketball games.

Rees is joined onstage by saxophonist and UA music professor **Kelland Thomas**, Los Angeles recording artist and touring trumpeter Chad Shoopman, former lead trumpet and jazz soloist with the U.S. Air Force Airmen of Note big band Kenny Smukal, jazz educator and Los Angeles recording studio guitarist Frank Browne, drummer and teacher Andrew Hix, a mainstay on the Chicago jazz scene, and Tucson music educator **Michael Faltin**, who handles percussion.

Completing the lineup is precocious pianist **Evan Rees**, Jay’s son, who started winning prestigious competition awards in high school and is now a college student

at the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts in Phoenix.

“Evan’s music is so modern,” said Jay. “He has the freshest ideas. He was just recently in Los Angeles doing dance electronica,” which the father described as “modern with an edge.”

“Frank and I are contributing more funk, just like we played back in L.A.,” Rees laughed.

Reedman Thomas favors the Munich-based ECM studio sound with its lyrical blend of jazz and classical elements.

“That’s what’s so cool about it,” continued Rees. “All these different guys are writing music for Sylvan Street. Each piece takes the band in a new direction.”

For the Sunday concert, a highlight of the program is sure to be “Free the Toronto Nine,” a churning piece flaunting those funky rhythms pushing along fanfares of aggressive chords that make their own demands.

“That title does reflect on events from our misspent youth,” Rees said with a smile.

Sylvan Street will call on the repertoire from its two albums — “The Perfect Leaf” and “Here in America” — and some new material in rehearsal.

There will be ballads on the song list, as well, and some blue s, along with good time salsa, Latin, jump swing and excited looks into the future of this uniquely American music.

If you go

IF YOU GO

- What: Sylvan Street, a jazz septet in concert
- When: 7 p.m. Sunday
- Where: Loews Ventana Canyon Resort, 7000 N. Resort Drive
- Tickets: \$30 in advance; \$35 at door. Discounts available.
- Reservations/information: 903-1265 or tucsonjazz.org
- Sample the sounds: sylvanstreetjazz.com