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Osoff charts new musical territory

Keyboardist leads Mosaic

Dave Osoff covers a lot of ground on his CD "Mosaic," but the adventurous keyboard player is careful not to leave his listeners in the dust.

"I'm influenced by a lot of different styles — funk, blues, fusion, boogie. I tried to make an album that was not so much eclectic, but exploratory," Osoff explained during a recent interview.



Scott
McLENNAN

To that end, Osoff evoked juke-joint blues ("Even Now"), spun some heady Traffic-style jams ("Hannah") and peered into the futuristic realm of music that fuses organic musical grooves and techno production sensibilities ("QX5"). The CD is balanced with enough rockers and ballads to keep the instrumental project nicely textured and engaging.

On Friday, Osoff brings his band, also named Mosaic, to the Tammany Club, 43 Pleasant St., Worcester. It's an interesting show that has Osoff opening for Jiggle, a band he belonged to in the early 1990s, when it was known as Jiggle the Handle. Mosaic isn't just opening for Jiggle, but also mining its ranks to use drummer Greg Vasso (who performed on the CD) and guitarist Gary Backstrom (who fills in for Max Creek's Scott Murawski, who played guitar on the CD). Osoff's Mosaic also contains flutist/sax player Amadee Castenell, guitarist Erik



"I love performing my own music," says keyboard player Dave Osoff. His band, Mosaic, appears Friday at the Tammany Club.

Ringstad and bass player Justin Kolack.

After leaving Jiggle around 1995, Osoff worked steadily with blues rocker Vycki Vox. The keyboardist from Lunenburg was also enlisted by Toni Lynn Washington, Nicole Nelson and Michelle Willson, all leading ladies in the blues scene around Boston. While it's nice being a first-call musician and in-demand teacher, Osoff said Mosaic is his most rewarding experience.

"I love performing my own music," he said. "Mosaic" is his recording debut as a bandleader.

But Osoff doesn't seem to be a ball hog. A lot of his original tunes bear shared writing credits, and he talked up the contributions his band mates made to the success of the "Mosaic" CD. Some tracks are rearranged songs from the Vox repertoire. And Castenell, a New Orleans native who has worked with Branford Marsalis and Paul Simon, helped Osoff define the spirit of Mosaic.

"I brought him in to play flute on one song. That's a first-take recording you hear on 'Hannah.' Then Amadee came in with his sax and I just let him help write the title song," Osoff explained.

"Mosaic" was a couple years in the writing and recording. And Friday's show at Tammany is Osoff's first proper gig in Worcester with the band. But along the way, he has racked up some nice reviews in Keyboard magazine, gotten some airplay on jazz radio and had "QX5" licensed for TV use by New England Sports Network and the Fuel Network.

Osoff said he's been writing new material, still dabbling with that "QX5" sound that is on the experimental end of the jam-band scene. But don't expect a guy who so nicely covers George Harrison's "Savoy Truffle" to get too far away from the fundamentals of good song craft.

"Mosaic" will be available at the band's concert and can also be ordered online at www.daveosoff.com.

The annual Jazz at Sunset concert series will begin June 11 with Shawnn Monteiro. Concerts are to be held Friday evenings at the EcoTarium, 222 Harrington Way, Worcester, through Aug. 13. New this year, tickets will be \$13 (\$11 for members of the EcoTarium and public radio station WICN-FM) if purchased before the Thursday of a given concert date. The price per ticket is \$16 (\$14 for members) on the Thursday before and the day of a concert.

The remainder of the Jazz at Sunset calendar reads: Greg Abate, June 18; Wanetta Jackson, June 25; Junior Watson, July 2; Emil Haddad and Dick Ogdren, July 9; Love Dogs, July 16; Herb Pomeroy Quintet with special guest Donna Byrne, July 23; Mike Duke and the Soul Twisters, July 30; Be-Bop Guitars with special guest Maggie Scott, Aug. 6; and Toni Lynn Washington, Aug. 13.

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