

The sweet sound of Jillian Lebeck

The Vancouver Sweet Basil Jazz Festival aims to provide a permanent showcase for some of the best musicians around. That means not only the Juno-winning top names, but also some of the finest home-grown talent. Among the graduates of Capilano College's jazz program on the bandstand this year is North Vancouver's Jillian Lebeck, leading the Jillian Lebeck Trio in a set of her own compositions.

Lebeck was born into a musical family and began playing piano when she was four years old. Jingle Bells was the first thing she could play with two hands. Then, when she was about eleven, she found a tape that opened up a new world.

"It was a cheesy tape, something that my folks had picked up in a gas station," she says. "I put it on, and it was Smoke Gets in Your Eyes. I thought it was so beautiful, I just couldn't stop listening to it."

Lebeck started playing trumpet soon afterwards, influenced by Wynton Marsalis. She finds the two instruments complement each other well. The piano came naturally to her, and since she pretty much taught herself she doesn't remember much about learning it. But the trumpet was —and still is — more demanding. For one thing, you have to play it every day to stay in shape.

"The trumpet is more like a voice. The way phrases come out is similar to the way somebody would sing them, because you have to stop and take a breath. It's a very physical thing. With the piano you have ten different notes you can play at the same time."

In 1996, her first year at Cap College, Lebeck won the Fraser MacPherson scholarship for young instrumentalists. She used the money to augment a scholarship for a year's study at Berklee College of Music in



Jillian Lebeck, smitten at age 11 by Smoke Gets in Your Eyes: "so beautiful I just couldn't stop listening to it"

Boston's Berklee, whose alumni include Quincy Jones, Branford Marsalis, and singer/songwriter Bruce Cockburn, is an unusual school. It tries to produce musicians who can manage their careers as well as well as perform at a high level. So how was it?

"At first I was a little surprised. It was very contemporary. There was pop and jazz, which wasn't what I was expecting right away. But it was great. I got some incredible experience. They do a lot of performances and they have a huge theatre. And I learned a lot about improvising. They have theme ensembles, and I got to play in the Cannonball Adderley ensemble. It was meeting people, and playing on a whole different level."

There are many amazing jazz musicians in Vancouver, Lebeck says, and no shortage of people to play with. She plays standards if she's booked for corporate parties, but she's happier playing her own pieces. Writing music can't be hurried, she says.

"I only write when I feel like it. If I'm not inspired, I don't try to force anything. I wrote a tune yesterday, but that was the first thing I'd written for seven months. And that was fine, because when I'd been writing seven months ago, then I wrote eight tunes in a few days. I find it's best to just write when my body or mind tells me to."

And when it's done, it's done. No endless fiddling about for her. "I leave it as it is. I never go back and change things. I don't like to tamper with the way it came out. I'd feel weird about that, I think."

You can see Jillian Lebeck with Paul Rushka on bass and Paul Townsend on drums at 1.30 on November 17 at Tom Lee Music Co., 929 Granville St. Call 604-685-8471 for more information.



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