

Tuning up the Bend jazz scene

Businessman has brought in some of the Northwest's best for monthly concerts

By Ben Salmon / *The Bulletin*

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Joe Rohrbacher's full-time job is running his musical instrument store, Just Joe's Music, located along Third Street just north of Powers Road in Bend.

But he constantly fights the urge to pour more time into the monthly jazz concerts he has hosted in the shop for the past nine months.

"I love doing the shows, and I love the music," says Rohrbacher, 47. "It's like a magnet."

Music seems to have been a magnet throughout Rohrbacher's life. Raised in Hemet, Calif., he started playing clarinet in fourth grade, moved to the saxophone to join the middle school jazz band and polished his skills at Chaffey College in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.

After college, he went back to Hemet to work in a nonmusical family business, and an expansion of that business took him to Portland. There, he spent evenings checking out the jazz players in town. And when the family business came to an end, Rohrbacher decided to go to Mt. Hood Community College to "tune up" his skills.

For the next five years, Rohrbacher played in bands on cruise ships, thanks to a friend who hooked him up with a gig. And when he began to long for land, he headed back to Oregon, unsure of what he'd do next.

On a bit of a whim, he ended up in Bend, where he eventually latched on at the now-defunct instrument store Central Oregon Music. Rohrbacher stayed there 11 years, and when it went out of business about three years ago, he started Just Joe's.

"Being in that business, I think I found my calling," he said. "I really enjoyed working with the students, helping them get their instruments, watching their eyes light up. It was fun. It was really rewarding."

All along, Rohrbacher never forgot where he first learned to love jazz.

"It hooked me when I was in middle school," he said in a recent interview. "I remember it like it was yesterday, going to a performance at the high school and listening for the first time to a jazz quartet."

Therein lies the genesis for Jazz at Joe's, the concert series Rohrbacher started in February that has brought some of Portland's and Seattle's best jazz players to Bend. The nature of his business — renting and selling instruments to some adults, but mostly students — means Rohrbacher works with developing players on a daily basis. And one of the best ways to nurture a developing player is to show him or her where that development can lead.



Andy Tullis / *The Bulletin*

Since February, Joe Rohrbacher has been putting on jazz shows at Just Joe's Music, his instrument rental and sales shop in Bend.

Take in a show Next show On the Web

Saturday, Nov. 15 — Tim Gilson Quartet (bassist Tim Gilson, pianist David Goldblatt, saxophonist Tim Willcox, drummer Charlie Doggett)

For more information or to reserve a spot at a future show, visit [www .justjoesmusic .com/jazzatjoes](http://www.justjoesmusic.com/jazzatjoes).



