



**Josh Rawlings Trio is (from left) Adam Kessler, Nate Omdal and Josh Rawlings.**

## **Skyline graduate returns to Issaquah a seasoned veteran of Seattle jazz scene**

To think, the future Josh Rawlings once had mapped out involved the rock star route to fame and fortune, with him comfortably seated behind the skins of his drum set. Even in the marching band at Skyline High School, the quad drums had that rock element.

His path to becoming the next Keith Moon veered, however, when he joined the school's jazz band and vocal jazz choir. Now, the Seattle music scene may well be ready to learn about the next Herbie Hancock.

Rawlings debuts his first headlining album, "Josh Rawlings Trio: Climbing Stairs," Oct. 17 at Bake's Place.

Rawlings, 25, a Minnesota transplant, was among Skyline High School's first freshman class. This proved beneficial in his musical development.

"I basically had free reign on all the new instruments," he said. "I didn't have to wait for seniors to finish with them first. Plus, the theater was brand new. I had a great advantage of resources."

He transitioned from percussion instruments to the piano, much in thanks to his vocal jazz teacher Nancy Ziebart.

"She made jazz cool," Rawlings said. "My appreciation for jazz grew. It became my gateway to more professional music."

Rawlings knew guys making a living at playing jazz music, such as at weddings and other receptions, and thought there was something cool and hip about that.

So, he accepted a partial scholarship to Cornish College of Music in Seattle to germinate his seeds of interest in jazz.

Along the way to earning a Bachelor of Arts in performance, Rawlings dove into the Seattle music scene.

His freshman year, he played regularly with friends Nate Omdal and Adam Kessler. The three, seven years later, are the trio on Rawlings' debut album.

Because the music scene was so prolific, Rawlings had myriad opportunities to sit in with other musicians and groups.

"I've probably played in 12 different bands over the years," he said. "Jazz proved to be the language I longed for. Open to influences from other genres — hip hop, R&B, funk — jazz was an all encompassing language that helped my abilities progress like no other style of music I could have played."

College turned out to be the right outlet to prove becoming a professional performer was the right path. Rawlings developed a plan to build his name within the music community. He said Seattle has slowly been transitioning from the 1990s' "grunge" to a more universal jazz scene. To facilitate bringing together performers, be they musicians, rappers or poets, Rawlings has hosted "The Hang: at LoFi" on Thursday nights at Seattle's LoFi Performance Gallery.

To further keep the pulse of the burgeoning scene, Rawlings went to work for the Seattle Musicians Union. He helps musicians find gigs, make connections and generally offers whatever help he can to further others' careers.

"The union's membership has been declining," he said. "So, they've been looking to me to help this generation stay relevant."

And, as if Rawlings wasn't already immersed in the music scene enough, he formed his own booking company, J&J Music.

But it has been his album that has taken up much of his time the past two years. It proved to be a difficult task to record a full album, especially when already performing live three or four nights a week.

But with the debut of his straight-ahead jazz trio album — featuring him on piano, Omdal on bass and Kessler on drums — Rawlings said he is excited to showcase their labor of love at the intimate setting of Bake's Place, a renowned venue in Providence Point that is gaining notice across the country.

"I heard about the place from my teachers and other musicians," he said. "It's got quite the reputation in town."

After Bake's, Rawlings is eyeing a tour of Eastern Washington, a gig at Egan's Ballard Jam House Nov. 7 and even a stint back where his roots first sprouted in Minneapolis.

"But I picked the Issaquah show to debut to have an intimate, sort of thanks to those who have supported and cared for my music from high school on," he said.

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### 3 Responses to "Josh Rawlings Trio ready to debut at Bake's"

1. Lois Wade on October 16th, 2008 9:02 pm

Way to go Cuz! From your Arkansas Kin....

2. Mike and Marge Williams on October 17th, 2008 5:26 pm