

Let it CROCK

• For the kids in Cascades Rock Ensemble, it's about learning — and living — music

By David Jasper • Photos by Rob Kerr / *The Bulletin*

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Last Monday afternoon on the west side of Bend, five young musicians picked up their instruments and rocked their way through the old J.J. Cale song "After Midnight," made famous by Eric Clapton.

Their music teacher, Georges Bouhey, patiently stopped them mid-song to help the backup singers work out the highs and lows of harmonizing on their background chant — "after midnight, after midnight" — behind lead singer Judi Kelley, 15. A moment later, they launched back into the song sounding as polished as any working band.

Damon George, 15, plays guitar in the ensemble, Christian George, 13, plays bass and Stephen George, 8, lays down the beat on the drums. Keyboardist Laz Glickman, 12, rounds out the ensemble.

If you were going just by the equipment, including instruments, cables and amps, the practice space could have been mistaken for a music studio.

Instead, it was the family room of Jean George and his wife, Patricia.

When the Georges moved to Bend in September from Austin, Texas, they sought out private music instruction for their three musician sons. The boys now play in the School of Rock ensemble at Cascades School of Music, and also take private music lessons with two of the school's instructors.

But when the Georges began seeking out an intensive, performance-focused rock ensemble for serious young musicians of the kind the boys played in back in Austin — in effect, turning the intensity level up a notch — they felt there was a lack of options.

The end result: The family created Cascades Rock



Photos by Rob Kerr / *The Bulletin*

Cascades Rock Ensemble's Team Bachelor ensemble: Singer Judi Kelley, 15, sings with Laz Glickman on keyboard, Damon George on guitar and Christian George on bass during a rehearsal.



Ensemble, or CROCK for short.

Their mandate, says Jean George, a software developer, is to accelerate the performance skills of kids who consider themselves musicians and performance artists.

Along with playing in the ensemble, students in the program pursue regular private lessons to better learn their instruments and study "the language of music," George said in an email. That means they study time signatures, learn to read music and more. "We don't care about the focus (jazz, classical, what have you) as that's for them and their (private) instructor" to work out, he continued. "We have some instructors we recommend, but we're not an exclusive club, either. We just ask that they are committed to performance arts."

CROCK ensembles rehearse 90 minutes once a week under the guidance of experienced music directors such as Bouhey, with whom Glickman also studies piano privately.

George says that they incorporated CROCK as an LLC because the process was faster than it would have been if they'd sought nonprofit status. Tuition is \$25 per practice, which goes to the instructor.

"I always tell people, 'It's to pay for Georges' time,'" George says, referring to Bouhey.

Each session culminates in a performance at a venue, yet to be determined for the winter session.

In December, CROCK's first ensemble, "Team Bachelor," completed its initial 10-week session, during which they practiced, and practiced, two songs: "After Midnight" and "Mercy, Mercy, Mercy."

As he did with the background harmonies, Bouhey will break down every portion of a song for the students to focus on. "He dissects it," George says.

That focus on the parts to make the whole sound right is one reason that after 10 weeks, the students had worked out "only" two songs.

"Now maybe two years from now, if they're together long enough, they'll have a portfolio, but he can really only teach so much so quickly," George says.

"You do a lot of preparation so this stuff works," Bouhey



Rob Kerr / The Bulletin

Cascades Rock Ensemble's Christian George, on bass, rehearses Monday.



Rob Kerr / The Bulletin

Cascades Rock Ensemble guitarist Damon George practices at his family's home.

explains.

"The reason I harp on (practice) so much is it's what makes them want to go back on stage next time," George says. "Not bombing is an important thing for kids."

"But if you do bomb, it's important to know why," Bouhey adds.

Since all of the Team Bachelor kids attend Cascades Academy, a private school in Bend, they wrapped up their fall CROCK term by playing at the school's holiday program at the Century Center. Videos of the band playing at the performance can be seen at CROCK's website, cascadesrock.com. By the looks of it, and the audience reaction, they never came close to bombing.

The Bachelor ensemble will soon begin its winter session, meeting Saturdays beginning Jan. 26. They had been planning to start today, but postponed a week to allow the students to attend today's free musical workshop with artist Karrin Allyson at Summit High (see box at top).

If interest demands it, CROCK will start another ensemble, "Team Newberry," meeting Thursdays beginning Jan. 31.

"We have three other kids who are interested right now, but that's not enough for another ensemble," George says. "If you don't get five, it's really hard to start."

He estimates that each of his sons are at their instruments about 6 to 8 hours a week, including spontaneous jams.

"The most interesting thing about that is how little of it is practicing alone behind the instrument," he adds. "It's one of the things that I try to relay to parents. Alone-time practice is not what gets your kids over the hump musically. While it is absolutely imperative they do work on technicals, it's working with others and breathing the music they like that makes it click."

When that happens, at least in the George family's case, "the technical work flows naturally and they actually practice more — voluntarily! — and they seek out opportunities to play too."

Dillon Schneider, executive director of the nonprofit Cascades School of Music, now in its 11th year, agrees that the more opportunities for budding musicians, the better.

"Any musician, over the course of their development, is going



Rob Kerr / The Bulletin

Drummer Stephen George, 8, and his guitarist brother Damon, 15, work on timing with the help of coach Georges Bouhey during a rehearsal Monday.



Rob Kerr / The Bulletin

Cascades Rock Ensemble students break music down as they learn how to play better.



Rob Kerr / The Bulletin

Laz Glickman and Damon George rehearse on

to, hopefully, have input from many different teachers," he says. "We've been at this a lot of years, and have been honing and refining the model."

"My feeling is that anybody can teach kids songs, and our focus is much more on teaching kids what it takes to function as musicians in a band," Schneider continues. "Part of being in a group — of anybody doing anything, really — is understanding how to be a leader in a situation amongst your peers, as well as how to be a band member that can work with a leader (who) is really one of your peers."

There are parents looking for more opportunities for their kids. "That's true whether it's in sports, education, language or what have you," Schneider says.

George agrees.

"It's really about accelerated performance training," he says. "If you watch those shows on TV — I don't know if you agree with 'American Idol' or not — the ones who are winning are the ones who have been training. They're like the downhill skier that makes the Olympic team. They didn't just walk up there one day and go, 'I bought a pair of skis the other day, and now I want to race.' There are some of those (prodigies), but you know, they're not our kids."

"Music advancement is really no different than any other pursuit kids are into these days," he says. "And frankly it's a bit of an unfortunate consequence of the specialization of our society. There is a rec level and a performance level in everything out there these days."

"It's not about getting everyone into music school in college," George says. Again, "it's more like skiing. Some will go competitive, the rest can do it right and well for the rest of their life."

George and Schneider also agree there's an intrinsic value in learning to play together — whether or not that growth leads to some kind of music career.

"There's an enormous amount of personal growth, personal satisfaction and self-understanding that comes from studying music. That's where I think the prize is," Schneider says. "It's in coming to understand yourself and having an experience where you're being creative and feeling what that feels like."

"Because (with) that experience, it doesn't matter whether you are playing in a stadium for 10,000 people or just playing

Monday. CROCK ensembles rehearse 90 minutes each week.

Learn more

For more information on Cascades Rock Ensemble and its performance-based youth music program, visit cascadesrock.com or email crock@cascadesrock.com. At 11:15 this morning, Cascades Rock Ensemble instructor Georges Bouhey will have another gig: helping to facilitate the first of a new series of free educational workshops happening in conjunction with the Jazz at the Oxford concert series.

The workshops will be taught by visiting jazz musicians and targeted to Central Oregon music students. Today's artist is singer and pianist Karrin Allyson, who will perform this weekend at the Oxford Hotel in Bend.

"For young music students in our region, this is an incredible opportunity to get up close and personal with some of the most accomplished musicians in the world," a press release quotes Marshall Glickman, Jazz at the Oxford's executive producer and father of Laz Glickman, keyboardist for CROCK's first ensemble.

The elder Glickman expects more than 100 students from around Central Oregon, which sponsors of the jazz series have helped to keep free. "All of us involved with Jazz at the Oxford felt strongly that we should give back to the community," Glickman said.

Invitations to attend today's workshop at Summit High School have been sent out to band and choir directors at all regional public and private middle schools, high schools and Central Oregon Community College.

Today's event is being held at Summit High School. Next up in the workshop series is drummer Mel Brown on Feb. 23 at Summit High, followed by saxophonist Tom Scott (March 16) at Mountain View High. All workshops run from 11:15 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and will take place at the schools' main auditorium.

Those who are not yet registered can do so at the door this morning.

With input from each artist, Bouhey has come up with comprehensive programming for the workshops. At today's, the Summit High Vocal Choir will perform "Somewhere over the Rainbow," to be followed by critique and discussion.

"Having world class performers work directly with our local students is an amazing opportunity" the release quotes Michael Gesme, conductor of the Central Oregon Symphony and Central Oregon Community College

with your friends. The experience of that creative satisfaction is something that I hope people have."

Team Bachelor singer Judi Kelley says of CROCK, "It's really great. It's definitely a really good experience, and shows my different styles I can sing."

The voice student has also sung jazz, as well as in choirs and musical theater, and hits a note that might resonate more deeply with a teen than music theory or talk about the personal growth music programs engender:

"It's cool to be in a rock band," she says.

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music professor. "I encourage all students with an interest in jazz, regardless of instrument or voice, to attend the Jazz at the Oxford Music Education Workshops."

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