

## Jazz in Az showcases students

### Teens jam with professionals

BY MARSHALL TERRILL  
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The spirit of New Orleans-style jazz is alive and well in Chandler.

Students from three high schools had the opportunity to perform an impromptu concert with professional jazz musicians Thursday night.

The student jam is part of a continuing project called Jazz in Az that seeks to promote appreciation and awareness of jazz in the Valley.

"Jazz is the only true original American art form," said Bart Salzman, East Valley director of Jazz in Az. According to Salzman, American jazz was invented in 1910 in New Orleans when ragtime, blues, black and Creole music merged.

Salzman began holding weekly jam sessions on Thursdays last May for professional jazz musicians at the Pita Jungle, 1949 W. Ray Road. After three weeks, the owners of Pita Jungle declared the jam sessions a major success and have committed to the weekly jam sessions indefinitely.

Manager Samir Elkdoor said business has improved 30 percent since he's hosted the live jazz nights.

"It seems as if our patrons like jazz," Elkdoor said.

Thursday was the first time students had a chance to play with the professionals.

"The best way for students to learn how to play is to just play," Salzman said.

Thirteen students from Chandler, Hamilton and Desert Vista high schools played with the professional musicians for two hours. They performed the music of jazz legends Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis.

Jazz in Az also supports the next generation of jazz artists through scholarships for promising students, such as James Casey.

Casey, 17, is a senior at Desert Vista High School in Ahwatukee Foothills. He will be attending the Berklee College of Music in Boston next year on a music scholarship set up through Jazz in Az.

Casey, who plays the tenor



RALPH FRESO/FOR THE TRIBUNE

**Sweet sax:** Desert Vista High School grad James Casey, 17, sits in with jazz musicians Gerry Reynolds, on drums, and Peter Gitlin as they perform an impromptu version of Miles Davis' "Four" at the Pita Jungle in Chandler.

saxophone, played Miles Davis' "Four" with three professional musicians. He said performing with professionals elevated his playing ability.

"He's pretty good for a teenager," said Jim Lloyd, a retired jazz professional who played Thursday with the group of students.

Last year, Jazz in Az hosted two dozen concerts. They plan to host 40 this year.

"I'd like to see Chandler become the hub of jazz in the East Valley," Salzman said.

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www.jazzinaz.org