



Nubia Calvo Wilmore *Corsair*

Kevin Brandon, "Brandino," on acoustic bass during his performance at the SMC Performing Arts Center, Edge Second Space. Brandino played with his jazz band, "Brandino and Friends." The show on Friday, Sept. 12, was sold out. Brandino's style of bringing out the best out his musicians during every piece is entertaining and moving.

World Renowned Jazz Bassist Entertains a Sold-Out Crowd at SMC

By Bobby Bodell
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Santa Monica College's music department kicked off their "Friday Night Jazz Series" Friday, Sept. 12 with a performance by the Brandino Quintet at the Edye Second Space Performing Arts Center at the Madison Campus.

The intimate concert was the first of many planned concerts this semester, and an especially notable one. Led by world renowned jazz bassist Kevin "Brandino" Brandon, the quintet put on two consecutive shows for students and anyone else who wished to hear some good jazz, one at 7 p.m. followed by another at 9 p.m. While the jazz series is meant to be a learning experience primarily for music majors to witness and participate in different genres of music, it was not only students who attended.

The 7 p.m. show sold out, while the 9 p.m. show filled nearly every seat in the house. But the densely packed bodies did not take away from the intimacy of the concert that took place in the small rehearsal studio which barely held 100 seats as the five spotlighted musicians played with their free-form style, feeding off of one another's cues and leads.

Brandino, who has won six Grammys and three Emmys while working with a slew of big name musicians such as Outkast, Beyonce and Stevie Wonder, was asked to play the opening night of the series by Keith Fiddmont, a teacher of several jazz classes at SMC. Fiddmont also happens to be the saxophone player in Brandino's band, which normally is a quartet called Brandino and Friends, but was expanded by an additional member for Friday night's performance for the sake

of broadening the possibilities of the avant-garde jazz that was played during the performance. Aside from Brandino on bass and Fiddmont on soprano and alto saxophones, John Beasley played on piano, Dale Alexander on drums, and Tony Poinegsett (the added fifth man) on percussion completed the ensemble. "I thought a percussionist would be a nice touch for the students who aren't necessarily familiar with jazz, so I had Tony jump on," said Brandino.

Brandino also stated that he wanted to play a very diverse set on Friday, and while just about everything that was played was jazz, there was a nice variation of sounds and unique utilization of instruments for everyone, as Brandino started off songs in unorthodox methods, such as drumming with his thumbs on his bass, to pulling out his bow and playing his instrument like a cello, and giving attendees a taste of the boundless possibilities that come with playing an art as free form as jazz. "Jazz is basically improv," said Brandino. "You have the original composition, which is sort of like a basic guideline of where the song is supposed to go, but whatever happens happens."

Another factor that helped to accent the specific style of jazz was the incredible chemistry that the quintet had within itself. From solo to solo, each of the band members laughed back and forth for much of the show, leading each other into and out of the spotlight.

The absence of vocals that usually is seen with jazz in its purest form didn't make the music dull either, as many subscribers of modern commercial music might believe. After the show, during a brief Q&A period with the audience, one audience member asked Brandino if he could sing, to which Brandino responded, "The instruments

do all the singing."

The songs that made up Brandino's set were also relatively lengthy, something else you don't normally see in modern music nowadays. "The songs we play are usually at least between 10 and 15 minutes, unlike commercial music, which is cut down to two or three minutes for radio play and shorter attention spans," said Brandino. "But jazz is very different from most forms of popular music. For example on Friday night, [Alexander] and [Poinegsett] went into a lot of impromptu solos, and we didn't interrupt that. It just goes where it goes."

When Brandino isn't playing music, however, he operates his non-profit organization, "You Can Do It If You Try," whose mission statement is "designed to offer hope and encouragement to the physically and mentally challenged, and underprivileged of the inner city world wide. "You Can Do It If You Try" will serve to spiritually motivate people of all ages through music, learning, arts, speech, and example." On the subject of his organization, Brandino said, "It sounds very cliché, but it's my way of giving back to the community."

And although Brandino is a native Angeleno, born and raised in South L.A., he feels that his roots remain in New Orleans. "That's where my people are from, it's in my DNA," he said. Brandino also attributes much of his jazz success to the fact that his roots lie in Louisiana.

So if you have any interest in jazz, be sure to catch the next of this semester's Friday Night Jazz Series. Or if you are interested specifically in Brandino, check his website at www.myspace.com/brandinoandfriends or at [brandino11GR.html](http://brandinofrontpage.homestead.com/brandino11GR.html).