



TRENDS >>

Texas State graduate joins funk, rock, jazz band Progress

By Glen Tadych
Trends Reporter

From the hills of San Marcos to the Live Music Capital of the World, one of Texas State's own joined five others in bringing a fresh combination of funk, rock and jazz to the Texas music scene under the name Progress.

Originally formed in Dec. 2011, Progress features the talents of saxophonist and band leader Brian Donohoe, guitar players Matt Muehling and Carter Arrington, trombonist Paul Deemer, drummer Daniel Watson and bassist and Texas State alumnus Nick Clark.

Their purpose for making music involves a much deeper sentiment than just wanting to play and entertain local folks. The six individuals strive to impact the world of live music itself.



Photo courtesy of Brian Donohoe
Matt Muehling and Carter Arrington perform with Progress Feb. 13 at One-2-One bar in Austin.

"Music is about more than going to gigs," Clark said. "There are great musicians in Austin, but the scene is segregated. We're working to integrate the scene."

This musical ambition spawns straight from the meaning behind the group's name. Arrington said Progress refers to the natural and inevitable growth that comes with life.

"Things have to change," he said. "You move on, make changes—and it feels great to change."

Progress' sound is also reflected in the name—its music is an instrumental mixture of influential noises from the band members' lives.

Muehling said instrumental music is crucial to Progress' mission because of its subjectivity. He said instrumental music fuels one's imagination in ways lyrical music cannot.

"We're trying to make pictures and evoke imagination," Muehling said. "There are no lyrics telling you what to think."

Although Progress originally established itself as a live band, the group recently took its musical endeavors into the studio, releasing its first album, "Beatmaker," in Febru-

ary. The "Beatmaker" sessions presented the opportunity for Progress as a whole to explore familiar tunes from its regular lineups, even though studio experience was not new for the individual members.

"Playing in the studio wasn't hard at all," Watson said. "It was pretty much like playing a live show with headphones on."

The band laid the album's tracks down in only a few days, playing them naturally without layering and other studio tricks. The sound one hears on the album resembles that of a live Progress, which Donohoe said provides the listener with a more organic sound.

The "Beatmaker" tracks are diverse. The album is only six tracks in length, but offers blends of funk, rock and jazz, along with a wide range of dynamics and tempos.

In the title track, "Beatmaker," and in "Strut," the bass is heavy, pounding the listener. "The Dark and Dry" lets the listener kick back and relax to a ballad of light bass and romantic sax and trombone, and for those wanting to taste upbeat funk, "Meltdown," the closing track, is the way to go.

"Every song is very compositional, but also very improvisational," Clark said.

Clark said the songs are some of the staples they perform regularly—but never the same way. He said the basic structure of each tune is present, but the overlying lan-



Photo courtesy of Brian Donohoe

Brian Donohoe, saxophonist and band leader, is a member of Progress, a rock and jazz influenced band that formed in late 2011.

guage constantly shifts, reflecting the members' diverse backgrounds and moods at that time.

"We're having a conversation with the crowd," he said. "It's more authentic when you're having different conversations every week."

Progress performs live most Thursdays at One-2-One in Austin. They are not holding an official showcase during the upcoming

South by Southwest Music Festival, but Progress will be playing at 6 p.m. on March 14 at Key Bar in Austin, followed by an 8 p.m. joint performance with bands Foe Destroyer, Funky Knuckles and Dahebegebees at their regular spot, One-2-One.