

LONG-FOCUS LENZ

Jersey guitarist uses his fans as inspiration

By **SUE BRUSKIN CLARKE**
CORRESPONDENT

Guitarist B.D. Lenz knows how to electrify a crowd. Whether he's performing edgy contemporary jazz with long-time bandmates or accompanying soulful singers who turn up the funk, the Hackettstown resident's music always strikes a chord.

MUSIC

Lenz's talents will be showcased at two distinctly different gigs taking place tonight and next Friday in Morristown. The B.D. Lenz All Star Band, featuring vocalists Justin Wade and Lelica Palecco, will get you moving with an evening of funky cover tunes tonight at Yo & Papa. On Jan. 28, the B.D. Lenz Trio will offer up a mix of jazz standards and original tunes at Hibiscus.

The multidimensional artist was first turned on to jazz while attending the Musician's Institute in Hollywood, Calif.

"I grew up listening to rock bands like Zeppelin and Rush and guitar greats like Stevie Ray Vaughan," he says. "At music school, I originally only wanted to learn jazz so I could get work playing it, but in the

process of learning it, I fell in love with it."

While Lenz's biggest jazz influences are guitar players Pat Metheny and Mike Stern, he admits his style of jazz fuses many genres including rock, blues, funk and soul.

"My music is pretty eclectic," he says. "I take from everything."

Recording six studio albums over the past several years has enabled Lenz to work with such greats as legendary bassists Will Lee and Mark Egan and Grammy-winning trumpeter Randy Brecker. But it's Lenz's recently released independent CD, "Five and Live," a collection of tunes recorded at three New Jersey shows, that has him — and his fans — excited.

"My studio albums are generally highly arranged productions, and while those are the kinds of records I like to make, they're more serious," he says. "My band has been playing together for 15 years, and our live performances are different from the way the records sound because we're able to cut loose and play without inhibitions. I thought it was time to capture that, and I know my fans did, too."

Most of the tunes on "Five and Live" are originals that Lenz has been playing for the past few years. Others are covers that are staples of his live shows, such as "People Get Ready," "Superstition" and Pink Floyd's "Another Brick in the Wall."

"When I was compiling the CD, at the last minute I had three songs I was considering but only had two spots to fill. I actually polled my fans on my website and let them decide which were the best two," he says. "My fans really were a big inspiration for the album."

Although the CD was recorded in New Jersey, Lenz's fan base extends well beyond the Garden State. He has toured extensively throughout North America and the United Kingdom, playing at large festivals and intimate clubs. His music has been picked up by more than 100 television shows internationally, and he was awarded "Best Jazz Group" for the past two consecutive years by GigMasters.

Looking ahead, B.D. Lenz also will be performing on March 25 at the Salt Creek Grille in Princeton. Call 609-419-4200 for more information.

B.D. LENZ ALL STAR BAND

9:30 tonight • Yo & Papa, 190 South St., Morristown
• No cover • 973-993-1100; www.bdlenz.com

B.D. LENZ TRIO

7 p.m. Jan. 28 • Hibiscus Restaurant (in the Morristown Inn),
270 South St., Morristown • No cover, but you must buy food
• BYOB; reservations recommended • 973-359-0200;
www.hibiscusrestaurantnj.com; www.bdlenz.com



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