

Familiar artists debut newly formed group at Jacoby Arts Center's Friday Nites Live

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ALTON — Three well-known area musicians, pianist Gigi Darr, singer Jessica Butler and bassist Rich Mendoza, are appearing together as a trio for the first time at Jacoby Arts Center on July 31. “Since we are performing for the first time, we don’t have a name YET,” Darr laughed. “But, here are a few of the composers we will definitely be featuring ... Alicia Keys, Norah Jones, Sting, Stevie Wonder, Etta James, Van Morrison and yes, we are performing a few French tunes!” The group will perform as part of Jacoby’s Summer Music Series at 8 p.m. Doors will open at 7:30 for two short one-act plays performed by Bankside Repertory Company: “The Apology” performed by John

O'Hagan; "A Lonely Impulse of Delight" by John Patrick Shanley, performed by Jeff Steele and Caleb King. Seating is available on a first-come basis. A stylish, versatile solo pianist and teacher, Alton-based Darr embraces opportunities to collaborate as a way to continually learn, grow and evolve as a musician. She has performed with both Off the Shoulder and Ralph Butler for a number of years. Through her versatile collaboration with Butler, Darr first experienced the golden-toned voice and expressive saxophone playing of his daughter Jessica Butler. "Music is definitely one of my passions in life!" Darr explained. "It is so fun performing a variety of styles and genres ... playing pop, easy listening, jazz standards and classical music." Darr's extraordinary range is the perfect complement for Butler's sultry voice and Mendoza's rich jazz and easy groove vocabulary. "I've been a musician since I was 8-years-old, and it's always a gift, every time I play," Butler noted. "I think I get a chance to make people feel good; if you're in a bad mood, music will put you in a good mood. Music is something I can't live without." To hone her craft, Butler lived in Paris for seven years to study jazz. The experience bolstered her confidence to take artistic chances. In addition to performing with the Ralph Butler Band, Butler has fronted The Usual Suspects, a broad-spectrum jazz group that introduced her to Mendoza's creative, inquisitive approach.

Mendoza has played jazz and pop in St. Louis for over 20 years, broadening even further the new trio's already diverse repertoire.

The evening's cabaret concert will also feature the delicious edible talent of State Street Market. Under the creative direction of new owners Glenn and Terri Beaubien, items served will include Italian Beef Sliders and Gazpacho Soup Cups with a Jumbo Shrimp Side Car.

"We have been so excited by the community's response to Friday Nites Live! that we have extended the Summer Music Series through September," said Denny Scarborough, Jacoby's president. "By showcasing the area's many talented musicians and performance artists in the east gallery as well as exhibiting visual artists in our main gallery, we are reaffirming Jacoby's position as an important and vital voice within the community." Details on the summer's schedule and artists through August are as follows:
Friday, August 7 Featuring The Mound City Slickers, an old-time string band for your dancing pleasure. Tastes by Katherine's Bounty
Friday, August 14 Featuring Matt Taul and Friends on guitar, fiddle, steel guitar and drums performing great Americana and original music with a country slant. Tastes by Chez Marilyn

Friday, August 21 Featuring Just Sayin' with Laurie Oyer and Mike Tice on keyboard, guitar and banjo performing vocal harmonies of original songs and pop standards from across the decades. Tastes by My Slice of Pie

“We are in the process of confirming a few more dates in September adding to this incredible line-up,” Scarborough added. “Please enjoy and stay tuned! Our series offers a wide variety of musical genres from a very diverse array of local talent so that no two Friday nights at Jacoby are ever alike.”

Tickets can be purchased at the door for \$10, and no reservation is required. Food and drink are available at an additional cost.

For more information on the series, call (618) 462-5222 or visit.

About the Jacoby Arts Center

The mission of the Jacoby Arts Center is to nurture and promote the practice and appreciation of the arts through education, exhibits, cultural programs, and community outreach initiatives.

Jacoby Arts Center is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization

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