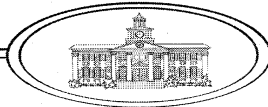


# THE PICKET

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## Fred Hughes Trio Returns to Shepherd

by Dominic G. Zippilli  
*Picket Staff Writer*

When Fred Hughes considers a venue, he looks for only two things: "A good piano, and a crowd that enjoys music." With a Steinway on the stage and a sell-out crowd for its last jazz performer (the venerable Poncho Sanchez), it looks like Shepherd College will be able to provide both in abundance.

Now in his fifth semester as adjunct faculty, Hughes is finally bringing his trio back to Shepherd, the first time since October of 1998. After that concert that Hughes got the call inviting him to teach.

With such a successful show, and a list of associates and credentials that includes Arturo Sandoval, Roy Hargrove, Toots Thielemans and the Army's elite Jazz Ambassadors, Hughes was a shoe-in for the job.

With 28 years of professional playing under his belt, Hughes is a fluent player on low brass as well as his main axe, the piano. Hughes toured the world with Jazz Ambassadors playing at some of the most prestigious venues all over the world, including the Montreux and Newport Jazz Festivals. It was during this time that he met the members of his first trio, Alternative.

This group saw some lineup changes and eventually became known as The Fred Hughes Trio. Hughes and his trio have played venues such as the Cape May Jazz Festival, Sunset Jazz Festival in Philadelphia and the Clifford Brown Jazz Festival in Delaware.

Recently Hughes appeared with his trio on the nationally-syndicated Mitch Albom show, and just finished his first book, published by Warner Bros. His latest album with his trio, *No Turning Back*, is released on Summit Records, an independent jazz label.

So with a list of credentials that would inspire confidence in any man, how does Hughes feel about



Photo courtesy of Karlee Management, Inc.

*The Fred Hughes Trio will be performing at 8 p.m. on Jan. 26 at the Frank Arts Center.*

performing for his own students?

"I can't wait," says Hughes, who feels that his current group of students has had neither the time nor the occasion to see him perform with his trio.

The trio appears regularly at 49 West in Annapolis, Md., the second and fourth Sundays of the month.

"So," you might ask, as a Shepherd College student who has nothing to lose by going to this concert except a few hours of a Saturday night, "should I go?" The answer is a certain "yes." Even for non-students, who can expect to pay the usual PASS pricing (\$15 Public, \$10 Seniors, \$5 Faculty/Children under 18), this concert is well worth the price.

As Hughes will tell you, the trio is anything but a simple rhythm section, and do not play background music. They have an up-front sound that is meant for active listening.

Without having seen the trio live myself, my evaluation is based on the awesome cuts on the trio's latest CD, *No Turning Back*. I cannot hope to review this album from a jazz standpoint and do it justice. I can, however, review it from a more general, collegiate standpoint with one

simple question: Does it rock?

Absolutely. While you won't find wailing guitars licks or vocals, what you will find are completely fresh and hip takes on standards that are delivered with the technical excellence, mutual understanding and respect between the players that jazz reviewers have been praising the trio for from the start. The group has a rare cohesion that allows them to take liberties with the rhythm and pulse in a way reminiscent of Wynton Marsalis's ground-breaking *Standard Time* series (except for the horns, of course).

Also, you will find five original pieces by Hughes that demonstrate Hughes' wide and varied experiences and influences. Besides of its excellence, the album is worth buying simply to support an independent musician, who is on an independent label and who is an active member of Shepherd's faculty to boot.

If you are someone who enjoys good live music and appreciates talent and originality, you will be sure to find that The Fred Hughes Trio provides an engaging, highly entertaining and original performance that will keep you in your seat from the start right up to the standing ovation.