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Funky Klezmer Madness mesmerizes

By DR. NORTON CHRISTESON | Special to The News-Journal

DAYTONA BEACH — The stained-glass confines of the Bank and Blues Club were the scene of



Jer plays his clarinet with Klezmer Madness at the Bank and Blues Club during the Florida International Festival Saturday, July Daytona Beach. (Photo: News-Journal/Jessica Webb)

the equally colorful sounds of clarinet virtuoso David Krakauer and his band Saturday night.

The genre was klezmer, that lively rhythmic music of Eastern European Jewish tradition; but, in the hands of Krakauer and Klezmer Madness, the old, folk-based form took on myriad modern nuances.

The band consisted not of traditional folk instruments but of electric guitar, bass and drums — more the denizens of a rock band than a Hassidic ensemble. Add two accordions and a world-class clarinetist and one has the makings of a definitely New Age musical experience.

Traditional klezmer melodies, with their exotic modal flavors, were pumped up by the throbbing bass of Nicki Parrott and drums (Michael Sarin), while the whirling-dervish keenings of Krakauer's clarinet were frequently in unison with the equally facile Sheryl Bailey on electric guitar. Will Holshouser's accordion was just audible enough to remind us of the roots of this otherwise rocking, even funky ride.

Sidekick accordionist, Socalled (his real name), added not only samplings, but brought the house down with a genuine Jewish rap, "Lies My Grandma Told Me," including dozens of old maxims like "Don't cross your eyes, they'll get stuck" and "If you can kiss your elbow . . ."

But it was the last of the 10-song set where Krakauer displayed his amazing ability, not merely by note-speed, but by the variety of sounds. His circle breathing, usually assigned to brass players, allowed him to sustain tones seemingly forever.

In the hands of Klezmer Madness, the old form is brought up to date and expanded far beyond its old country origins. This is world music now but with a serious kick.

I can't think of anyone who wouldn't get a fanny-boot from this Madness.

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