

Band testing chops with Lab Sessions at Bird's

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As a self-described impatient artist and musician, Eliza Schneider-Green thrives in the Florida heat. The humidity is a warm hug she wraps herself inside, and when she eventually ducks back into her air-conditioned studio space, she still sees the natural landscape via a window overlooking her backyard's banana and palm trees.

"I feel like Florida is a character and it shows up in almost all of my songs," admits Schneider-Green, whose recently began trying her hand at songwriting for her band, Liza and the Wise Guys. "It's this overwhelming presence, and if you've lived here for a while or you were born here, you feel it, and when you leave, you feel its absence."

Schneider-Green grew up in Tallahassee's Grassroots Community down the street from her neighbors, and now bandmates, Jean-Marc and Noah Wise. They always enjoyed making music at community bonfires and holiday parties and decided two years ago to put their chops to the test and form a band. Having played in different venues around town, they'll appear for the first time at Jim Crozier's Wednesday night Lab Sessions on Aug. 9 at Bird's Aphrodisiac Oyster Shack.

"I always say expect the unexpected with us," laughs Schneider-Green, as the band's setlist is always eclectic. "I've been to a couple lab sessions and they're fantastic. Jim plays with you, and it's a chance to collaborate and bring an honorary member into the band to see what cool stuff you can create. Hopefully, you'll leave with a few new favorites."

Something clicks inside for Schneider-Green when it comes to all forms of expression. As a dancer until age 16, she enjoyed being in the heat of the lights, feeling the vibrations of music, and seeing the reflections off audience members' glasses as she entered the stage. While her background in dance and theater greatly contribute to her creative processes as a musician, Schneider-Green says she's always felt most passionate about the visual arts.

After attending Tallahassee Community College, Schneider-Green fell hard and fast for photography, painting, and illustration, exposing herself the local artists and communities like Railroad Square. Coming from the perspective of being on stage gave her a crash course in the reality of being an artist and behind the scenes work that is put into the form.

"When you go to see a ballet, you're seeing a finished product and not the months of hard work and effort that's gone into it," explains Schneider-Green. "When you're in that world and see both sides of it, you get less frustrated if it's more of a struggle to get to that finished product. It gives you an appreciation for when everything does go right and a toolbox to choose from when things don't."

Her first teacher and biggest mentor was her mom, who homeschooled Schneider-Green and taught her how to "live creatively." A musician, beekeeper, and gardener, Schneider-Green always looked up to her mom's ability to live and breathe the arts. Likewise, Barbara Edwards, a photography professor at TCC, served as a professional mentor who transformed Schneider-Green's thoughts around creating.

"She taught me to not just take a photo but to make a photo," says Schneider-Green. "That can apply to any art form — don't just look at what's in front of you.



Eliza Schneider-Green, who started as a dancer, is drawn to the arts.



Liza and the Wise Guys will perform at the Lab Sessions with Jim Crozier at Bird's Aphrodisiac Shack.

as a short story. Though she doesn't read music, she plays by ear to find the right tempo and progression based on the written patterns. Just like when she paints, Schneider-Green says she forgets time, and two hours may pass without her noticing.

"I think songwriting can be healing," says Schneider-Green. "I like listening to songs that have depth and struggle in them, where you can really hear the emotion of whoever wrote it. It's going through situations and being able to create something tangible out of that experience. You can have these deep conversations with yourself, then whoever you share the song with, then with an audience and you get to have it over and over again."

Schneider-Green considers the upcoming Wednesday night Lab Session with Jim Crozier to be, in many ways, her songwriting debut. Though she's relatively new to the music scene at age 21, Schneider-Green already feels welcome among the Tallahassee's family of musicians and considers her greatest accomplishment to be not letting age or environment stifle her passion for artistic expression. "It's a brave thing to take something so personal and put it out there, but it's also liberating."

states Schneider-Green. "You can let your art speak for itself. Make paintings even if you're not selling them; make music even if no one is listening. Speak from your soul and live artfully even if you're the only one noticing. I think it's necessary to carve out time to just live an artistic and creative life and make a corner of the world that is inspiring to you."



If you go

What: Lab Sessions: Jim Crozier with Liza and the Wise Guys
When: 6-8 p.m., Aug. 9
Where: Bird's Aphrodisiac Oyster Shack, 325 N Bronough St.
Cost: Free
Contact: For more information, call 850-222-1075 or visit <http://jimcrozier.com/lab/>.

You have to look side to side, upwards, and behind you. She showed me how to be an observer of art and transport other people into your own world."

Schneider-Green considers her main subject matter in photography to be creative self-portraits. Her love for history and collecting vintage clothes, ephemera, and magazines, lead her to recreate shoots and fashion spreads from specific time periods. When it comes to painting, hikes and walks around Tallahassee grab her attention, and she is drawn to making more nature-based work and selling it on her Etsy store, The Silk and Cotton Shop.

As singer and guitarist for Liza and the Wise Guys, Schneider-Green feels the band has a little bit of everything when it comes to sound. Their signature is to take everything from an old jazz standard to a top 40 hit, break it down and make three-part harmonies to give it a folk, bluegrass feel.

"It's really fun to see how far we can push that by taking a song that is wildly out of our comfort zone and tweaking it a little bit and to make it our own," says Schneider-Green.

Now that the band is beginning to use more original material, Schneider-Green is experimenting more with how she approaches the songwriting process,

finding inspiration in Southern gothic literature and the human condition. She jokes that she can't write a happy song to save her life, as struggle remains a theme in her work, often based on true stories from her personal or loved ones' histories.

Schneider-Green says the right moment has to strike her in the writing process, and when it does, the lyrics come out

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