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Student musicians get lessons from the Jazz Fest pros in Kutztown

By **Dan Kelly**
Reading Eagle

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Grammy-winning jazz guitarist David Cullen said he always cautions young musicians against fantasizing about a career as a professional musician.

"It's a hard life," said Cullen, an Exeter Township resident.

"But if you have the music in your life, at a high level it can be very rewarding," he added.

Cullen paused between sessions at Get JazzEd 2010, a Saturday symposium for jazz musicians from Berks County school districts that was taught by 10 musicians playing in the 20th Berks Jazz Fest, which began Friday and runs for 10 days.

Participating were bands from eight middle schools and high schools in the Kutztown, Gov. Mifflin, Wilson, Schuylkill Valley, Tulpehocken, Muhlenberg and Reading districts. Members were taught jazz techniques and critiqued on their play by jazz professionals such as Cullen, Eddie Severn, Randy Brecker, Ada Rovatti, Sean Kennedy, Steve Rudolph, Gunnar Mossblad, Kevin MacConnell, Denis DiBlasio and Jim McFalls.

Adam Rabenold, 17, an 11th-grader at Kutztown High School, said he jumped at the opportunity to learn from the masters, even for a day.

"Opportunities like this don't come around that often, maybe once or twice a year," Rabenold said. "I go to jazz camp, but this is great."

Derek Rock, 17, also a Kutztown junior, said attending was a no-brainer.

"I just love jazz," Rock said. "There are lots of great musicians, it's free and there's food."

Katie Schroeder, 17, another Kutztown 11th-grader, said that in addition to having fun, she's learned a lot about jazz.

"We really benefit from their experience, (with things) like good practice techniques," she said.

Severn, a jazz trumpeter who is director of jazz studies at Lock Haven University and has played with Tommy Dorsey, Kenny Rogers, The Temptations and others, said he wanted to be one of the instructors at the JazzEd program to preserve the genre's great lineage.

"I always work to try to continue the legacy of this music," Severn said.

Severn said the one lesson he tells all students is to listen to jazz as much as they play it.

"If you don't do that, you'll never understand the language," he said. "And, preferably, listen to it live."

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Reading Eagle: Bill Uhrich

Jazz trumpeter Eddie Severn of Williamsport works with the Tulpehocken High School jazz band during the Get JazzEd symposium Saturday in Kutztown High School.

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