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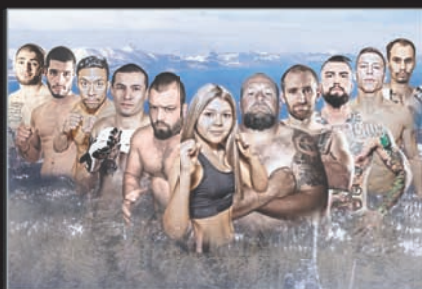
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## MUSICBEAT

BY MATT BIEKER | matth@newsreview.com



Under the Radar provides an instrumental ambience to bars and restaurants around the Truckee Meadows.  
PHOTO/MATT BIEKER

## Tuning in

### Under the Radar

In 2010, Dallas Phillips got a call from his friend David “Fez” Duffie to come play an open mic night at Captain Jon’s, a restaurant located on the shore of Lake Tahoe. Phillips hadn’t played in years but decided to haul his keyboard, bass and tenor sax down to the waterfront for an impromptu performance.

“I was just going around onstage playing different instruments, and Fez pulled me aside and said, ‘Dude, stop moving around the stage, pick an instrument and be that dude.’”

Phillips stuck with the sax, and for the past eight years, he and his fellow band members have been playing gigs around the Truckee Meadows as Under the Radar.

The current lineup includes Phillips, Duffie on bass, Richard Jon on guitar, Mike Badinger on drums and Doug Klotz on keyboard. Their blues/jazz sound draws on the collective influence of bands like Earth, Wind & Fire, Tower of Power, Van Morrison and Santana. The emphasis on funk and jazz is a refreshing outlet for the members, most of whom come from musical families with varying levels of professional experience.

“That’s what attracted me was that it was something different,” said Jon, who’s been playing guitar since he was a child. “I’ve been so rock and blues and doing the acoustic thing, that when I heard this jazz, I was like—I’ve always loved jazz. From the first time I heard Miles Davis, that was it.”

While they don’t call themselves a cover band, listeners are sure to hear some familiar ’70s jams in their setlists—sans vocals.

“I was a sax guy, so we didn’t really think about singers,” Phillips said. “I always liked playing the singing part of it on my sax, so that’s kind of how we started off.”

Their emphasis on familiarity and conscious choice to remain instrumental meant Under the Radar found a niche in venues like the Rue Bourbon or Midtown Wine Bar in Reno, or bars and restaurants in Tahoe and Carson City. The bandmates enjoy providing live ambience with a little nostalgia thrown in for the drinking crowd.

“We didn’t want to be playing the classic rock stuff that a lot of other bands play because what we hear time and time again is, ‘I haven’t heard that song in decades ... and it’s so good to hear that,’” Phillips said.

The band’s name has also served as somewhat of their work ethos over the past decade. While some of the members, like Mike Badinger, who tours full-time, have made careers out of music, the others balance their corporate jobs with as many shows as they feel comfortable playing.

“Because we have these other lives, we don’t want to do more than, like, 25 gigs a year,” Phillips said. “I think it’s been 27, 28 gigs this year ... If you’re doing it too much, then it takes away the fun and the novelty of doing it. That yin and yang kind of starts disappearing.”

After almost a decade of gigging, however, the members of Under the Radar have tight standards for their performances, opting for quality of shows over quantity.

“We try to be a very tight band,” Phillips said. “We don’t just loosey-goosey start up and try and work our way through it and kind of end at different notes or whatever. We try and be a very professional band.”

That said, they have a full calendar of shows to start 2019 and plans to develop more original material in the future. Under the Radar will be playing in Truckee at Bar of America, 10040 Donner Pass Road, on Jan. 4 and 5 at 9:00 p.m.; and Northstar Resort, 5001 Northstar Drive, also in Truckee, on Sunday Jan. 6 at 2:00 p.m. □

Under the Radar has complete show listings at [reverbnation.com/undertheradartahoe](http://reverbnation.com/undertheradartahoe).