

## Jazzy Fundraiser at the Orinda House

By Cathy Tyson



The Grant Fine Jazz Quartet playing at the Orinda House Photo courtesy of Joyce Fine

The Grant Fine Jazz Quartet was in the House, the Orinda House that is. They weren't alone; the place was packed with Wagner Ranch families there to enjoy a "Dine Out Night" to benefit the Parents' Club. "Orinda House will donate a portion of the proceeds directly to the Parents Club. We really appreciate the support," said Principal Janice Arnerich.

A steady stream of families came in, and by 7:00 all the tables were filled. One parent waiting to be seated noted that Grant Fine, "is famous within the Wagner Ranch Dad community." Marc Evans said the fundraiser evening helps the school, and as he was waiting for margaritas at the bar shared a tidbit about the featured musician, "Grant got a law degree from Harvard and went to school with Barack Obama."

Playing what the Orinda House describes as, "a soulful blend of blues and straight-ahead jazz," Fine was joined by pianist, David Udolf, bassist David Ewell and Darrell Green on drums. Many a toe was tapping to the swinging music, which lent a festive air to the evening.

A quintet of young girls leaning over the mezzanine level watching the musicians, and a blazing fire from the brick pizza oven, gave the place a homey feel. The lobby area morphed into a bit of a playground and dance floor for some of the squirly younger patrons that night.

Not only is it one of the few venues in the area that hosts live entertainment, but the Orinda House, also has a separate kids' menu that appeared to be a great fit for the elementary students in attendance. As a parent, what really stands out on the kids' menu is,

"The kitchen is always happy to accommodate special requests when possible." Classic child-friendly choices include a kid size burger, chicken tenders, penne pasta, macaroni and cheese, along with mini-pizza.

The music, full bar, grown-up menu, and large flat screen TV, hit the right notes for adults. Choices ranged from appetizers like calamari, crab cakes and bruschetta and more, along with soup and a variety of salads. Main courses featured grilled rib eye or flatiron steak, salmon, cioppino, chicken marsala, a pair of pasta dishes, a sirloin burger and a number of pizzas.

The restaurant has a unique layout, in that quite a few tables are toward the front of the establishment, separated by a partial glass wall. On nights when live music is playing, diners are welcome to sit in this section. But for those wanting to be up closer to the high caliber entertainment, some of the same musicians that play Yoshi's, there is an \$8.00 surcharge that will be applied to the City of Orinda's Commercial Live Entertainment Use Permit.

"Jazz compliments the dining experience," said Orinda House Owner Ron Bonner, who opened the restaurant in January of 2006. He encourages area residents to support local retail establishments, to make Orinda vibrant and to add to the sales tax, a portion of which goes to fix local roads.