

# It wasn't an orgy, but it was pretty close

An Encore Perspectives recollection

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ENCORE EDITOR

I didn't really recognize the significance of having Elliot Sharp and the Sex Mob in Columbia. I had plenty of warning because of my dual involvement with WUSC and *The Gamecock*, but it didn't dawn on me until I saw for myself how important and great a thing it was for Columbia to host such intelligent, influential and incredible jazz artists. In partnership with WUSC, the Gallery 701 managed to get the New York-based Knitting Factory recording artists to stop in Columbia during their limited tour of the United States.

After all, the Sex Mob album, *Solid Sender*, spent a month atop WUSC's Top 30 list, and Sharp is mentioned in the same breath as many other avant-garde greats.

We, as concertgoers, generally take jazz shows for granted because they don't really draw that much attention to themselves. It seems that there is an intimate type of crowd that easily catches wind of a jazz show, and they are the ones who frequent these events. Jazz isn't for everyone, and when it is as improvisational and avant-garde as Sharp, it is definitely an acquired taste. Nevertheless, the Sex Mob and Sharp pulled a decent showing at the Gallery 701.

The hall was dimly illuminated by one light hanging above the stage and three colored ones that ran above the stage's front. However, this would be more than enough lighting to witness the incredible talent and expression of Sharp. Standing alone, Sharp used nothing but his guitar, tenor saxophone and looping machine to landscape the show's first hour. His concentration was unparalleled, and it never wavered. He kept his focus on his instruments, rarely looking up to acknowledge the mesmerized crowd.

Sharp had several pedals lying around his feet, and he used them as much as he did his guitar and saxophone. I am sure that his most specialized instrument is his ability to hear themes and order among the chaos he creates with his music. Perhaps the only person in the venue that got what Sharp was doing was the man himself. We all just sat there second-guessing our concept of rhythms and patterns. Just when we caught hold of something Sharp was doing, he would mix it up or loop it over what he was playing.

When he would stop playing his guitar and pull his saxophone toward him, he raised one leg like a flamingo and pushed his breath through the instrument. He made noises with that saxophone that I didn't know existed. While I wondered what the hell was going on, I trusted my instincts when they told me this man was brilliant and far out of the reaches of any of my comprehension. Finally, the music stopped, and the Gallery roared with applause and respect for this fine musician. Sharp might have been the opening act, but his

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PHOTOS BY ROBERT FLEMING



(Above) Elliot Sharp opens the show with an improvisational set. (Top) Sex Mob plays Sunday night at the Gallery 701. Gallery 701 and WUSC-FM brought both jazz acts to Columbia.

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