

ALL THAT Jazz

From the Blue Note and Village Vanguard in New York City to Preservation Hall in New Orleans and Yoshi's in Oakland, California, jazz clubs have long offered great ways to experience up-close and personal performances by renowned and budding artists of the genre. Boasting stellar acoustics and intimate vibes, they're where musicians historically would go to perfect their craft; where they could experiment with new rhythms and rework and revise old classics.





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David Bauer

Writer Rebecca L. Rhoades // Photography Courtesy of Ravenscroft



In North Scottsdale, a new venue that debuted in October 2021, is taking the Valley's music scene by storm — and reinventing the public perception of what a jazz lounge is and what it can offer.

WORLD-CLASS PERFORMANCE CENTER

Known simply as Ravenscroft, the venue is the eponymous brainchild of renowned pianist Bob Ravenscroft and his late wife, Gretchen.

“Bob and Gretchen have always had a passion for the arts,” says David Bauer, director of Ravenscroft. “Bob's a prolific jazz pianist and very accomplished musician in his own right. They've invested heavily around town and in some other jazz outlets in the area, [including Arizona State University's jazz program], but they always dreamed of having a building in which live music could be performed at the highest level possible.”

Located steps away from the TPC Scottsdale golf course, the 30,000-square-foot venue is housed in a converted office warehouse. Designed by Phoenix-based architecture firms Architekton Studio and Barduson Architects and built by 180 Degrees Design + Build, the innovative facility showcases multiple live performance rooms, a state-of-the-art recording studio, a showroom for Ravenscroft pianos (see “Tickling the Ivories” on Page 38) and the most advanced sound system in the Valley.



The organization behind the adaptive-reuse project is Music Serving the Word, a nonprofit, faith-based foundation started by the Ravenscrofts. Prior to having a building, the MSW team would travel to churches and other venues, and Bob and would play improvisational music and conduct readings or inspirational teachings.

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Bauer points to Jazzbird, a relaxed lounge adjacent to the lobby and styled after a Chicago or New York City jazz club. Initially, the Ravenscrofts hoped shows in the lounge would attract 50 or 60 people. But on any given Friday, upward of 200 people queue to see local and visiting artists while enjoying wine, local craft beers and catered meals. Shows are first-come, first-serve, and the cover charge is \$10.

Just off the Jazzbird, tucked away behind closed doors is a fully equipped recording studio. Here, Rob Moore, the staff music director and drummer for the Bob Ravenscroft Trio, mixes recordings by Bob.

“The studio right now is primarily utilized by Bob and not open to the public,” he says. “We also have the ability to record all the rooms in Ravenscroft.”

Bauer adds that he aspires to have artists “actually cut some songs or maybe even an album while they’re here to do a show.”

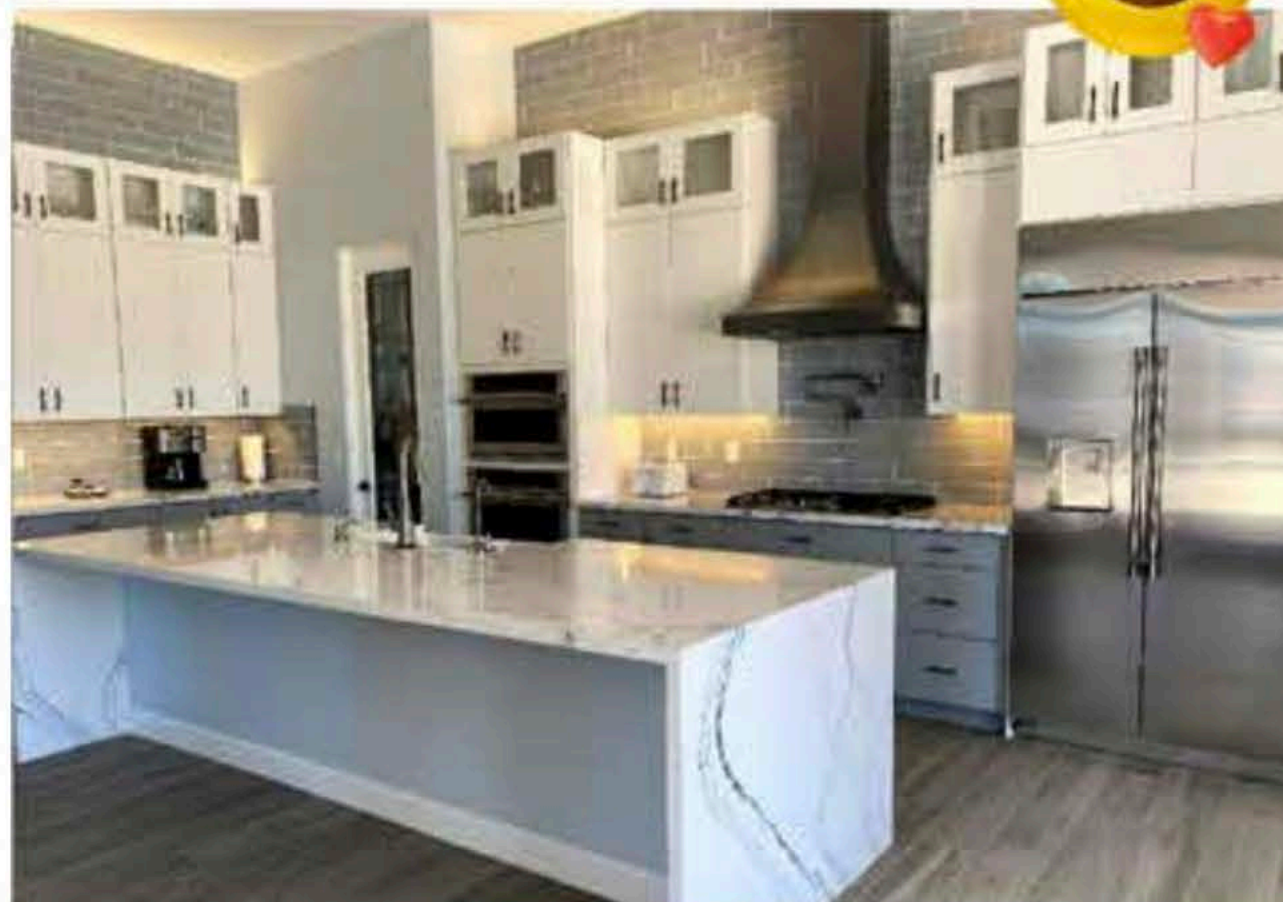
When it comes to the overall aesthetics of the venue, the staff credits Gretchen, who passed away in February, with creating a look that’s contemporary and urban yet welcoming.

“A lot of what you see in the building — the artwork, the color of the seats, the style of everything — is largely her perspective,” Bauer notes.

Sleek midcentury modern-influenced designs dominate furnishings in muted neutrals and bold jewel tones. Oversize black dome pendants lined in a gold finish illuminate the spaces. Earthen materials, such as concrete, terrazzo and raw brick, contrast



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David Bauer, director of Ravenscroft, and executive assistant Stephanie Kosloske.



with floor-to-ceiling windows and steel details. And vivid abstract artworks by Colorado-based artist Britten decorate the walls.

HIGH-TECH SOUND

The centerpiece of the venue is the luxurious 200-seat performance hall.

“No expense was spared in the building of the music performance venue,” Bauer notes. “Bob was like, ‘Let’s build the best performing space that we can with the technology that’s available.’”

Ravenscroft is one of only two venues in the state to feature a Meyer Constellation Acoustic System. The other is Valley Presbyterian Church in Paradise Valley.

The cutting-edge approach to audio uses an array of ambient-sensing microphones, digital signal processing and high-tech loudspeakers to redistribute sound throughout the space and ensure a natural acoustic experience from every seat. It’s a dynamic sound reproduction system that takes the music and can adjust it to share the acoustics of a variety of spaces, including a classroom, symphony hall or vast cathedral.

“With the Constellation, the acoustic nature of the instruments gets carried out to the audience. If the system is off, that sound just stays up on the stage,” Bauer explains. “The reason [the Constellation] works so well in a jazz venue is that it lifts the sound and brings it to the audience. I tell people, when you’re sitting here in the seats, you’re part of the music. It truly is an experience.”

A 9-foot Ravenscroft concert grand piano commands the stage.

Video projection mapping on the side walls and around the stage adds to the immersive multisensory experience, while plush seating covered in leather by Poltrona Frau — the interior outfitter of Ferrari vehicles — invites audience members to sit back and get lost in the music.

“I think Bob’s dream was to build a facility that just sounds good — not only for the audience members but also for the artists, the musicians on stage,” Moore says. “It’s a high-quality experience for everyone.”

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