

After homework is all finished

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What started as a Christmas present of a small, cheap plastic keyboard quickly became **Chase Morrin**'s lifelong dream and obsession. At 9 years old, Morrin started playing the keyboard and creating his own compositions. A year later, he asked his parents for lessons and has been playing the piano and writing music professionally ever since.

The kid's already got style. When Morrin gets behind a piano or keyboard, he makes sure to wear his signature black bowler hat while his nimble little fingers zip effortlessly across the keys. He currently plays with four different bands, including The Jazz Ensemble and The Jazz Ensemble Combo, two big-band jazz groups under the direction of Vince Greco.

"He's extremely good," says Greco of Morrin's skills. "Extremely good—way beyond his years. Highly respected, by not only just the kids, but the professional musicians he works with."

Fresh out of an after-school history study group, Morrin, now 15, told CityBeat about his newest project, **Latin Connection**, a Latin-jazz ensemble made up of fellow teen musicians Michael Valentini, David James, Daniel Feldman and Chris Burgess.



"I met the drummer at a public-library concert playing solo piano," Morrin says. "This British kid came up to me and gave me his whole résumé. I called him a couple days later, we jammed together and he ended up being this absolutely incredible drummer."

Soon after that first session, Morrin and the drummer, Feldman, started Latin Connection by rounding up some of the best young musicians they knew. Now just a little more than a year old, the band practices a few times a week and gigs almost every week, too.

"I guess you could say we're pretty serious," says Morrin, who admits that his mother and the saxophone player's mother help them score the gigs and handle most of their public-relations and promotion. "My mom does most of the website stuff, too—she's pretty savvy with that stuff. It's kinda nice."

From 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 5, Latin Connection will play at Dizzy's, Downtown). Morrin says they'll play a few original compositions, jazz standards and Latin arrangements. Check www.myspace.com/chasemorrin and www.dizzyssandiego.com for details.

—Kinsee Morlan