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## **JAZZ SENSATION SPYRO GYRA RETURNS**

Multi Grammy Award-winning Spyro Gyra returns to the Reichhold Center for the Arts on Saturday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011, 8 p.m. The sensational jazz group opened for Reichhold Center's 23<sup>rd</sup> season in 2001. This year they return with another dynamic live performance.

This year, Reichhold Center dedicates its 33<sup>rd</sup> season to UVI's Golden Jubilee 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In honor of that occasion Reichhold asked the University's Presidents, past and present, to select their favorite performer from their tenure to make an encore performance this season. Spyro Gyra was Dr. Orville Kean's pick. Dr. Kean was UVI's third President from 1990-2002.

Jazz band Spyro Gyra got its unusual name in the most unusual way. Founding member Jay Beckenstein recalls the band's early days in their hometown of Buffalo, New York. The group was the headline band at Tuesday Night Jazz Jams in a local club. Says Beckenstein, "Before a gig, the club owner twisted my arm for a band name. As a joke, I said 'Spirogyra'--a type of green algae from a science paper I did when I was in college years ago. He misspelled it 'Spyro Gyra,' advertised it that way, and it stuck." That name has now become synonymous with smooth jazz.

Spyro Gyra got its unofficial start when Beckenstein started playing music with high school friend Jeremy Wall. Throughout their college years the two continued to play gigs together, with a rotating cast of musicians. The group became a regular on the jazz scene as their popularity increased.

In the late 1970s they officially dubbed themselves Spyro Gyra and released their first debut album, titled *Spyro Gyra*. The album became one of Billboard's Top 40 jazz albums of 1978. But, it wasn't until their second album *Morning Dance*, that Spyro Gyra became recognized on the national and international music scene. The hit song of the same name, a hybrid of jazz, R&B and steel pan melodies solidified the group as pacesetters. "Morning Dance" received significant play on the popular music radio stations. It became the Top 40 pop hit, a # 1 adult contemporary single, Billboard's #6 adult contemporary single and #17 on UK Singles Chart. And after 30 years, "Morning Dance" is still frequently heard on jazz and easy listening stations.

After the release of *Morning Dance*", Spyro Gyra followed up with yet another groundbreaking album, *Catching The Sun*. The album peaked at #31 in the UK. *Catching The Sun* also hit gold on the music charts. Other hit songs from that album include "Carnival," "Incognito," and "Jubilee."

Spyro Gyra has since headlined jazz festivals world-wide during the last three decades. With more than 25 albums released and 10 million copies sold, Spyro Gyra is one of the most commercially successful groups in jazz.

Showing little signs of slowing down, in early 2011, Spyro Gyra released their 32<sup>nd</sup> album, *A Foreign Affair*. The songs on the album are, as the title suggests, influenced by the band's international travels.

Spyro Gyra has been composed of various members over the years. Today, the band consists of the alto saxophonist, songwriter and bandleader Beckenstein, keyboardist, Tom Schuman--who has been with band since he was sixteen years old--guitarist Julio Fernandez,

bassist Scott Ambush and drummer/percussionist Bonny Bonaparte. Despite rotating band members over the years, Spyro Gyra still maintains its smooth jazz sounds

The Spyro Gyra concert is sponsored by International Capital & Management Company, Virgin Islands Lottery, First Bank, VI Waste Management Authority, Virgin Islands Council on the Arts and Marriott Frenchman's Reef Resort.

Tickets are \$50, \$40, \$30 Ticket outlets: UVI Book Store, V.I. Bridal & Tuxedo, Essentric Shoe Boutique, Urban Threadz, Home Again (Red Hook) and The Reichhold Center Box Office at 693-1559. Tickets may be purchase online at [www.reichholdcenter.com](http://www.reichholdcenter.com).

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