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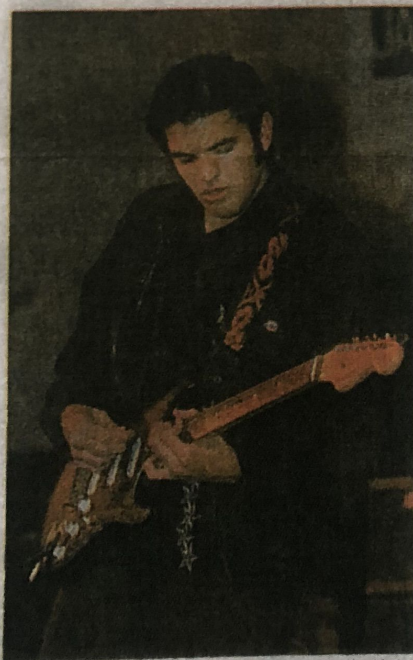
# Jazz jam

Oak Ridge senior Kyle Hernandez is expert guitarist

By Sarah Thaller  
BEE STAFF WRITER

While many high school seniors are busy planning winter formals and anticipating graduation, Kyle Hernandez is playing solo jazz guitar at venues such as the Boardwalk, the Distillery and the Sacramento Brewing Co.

Hernandez, a 17-year-old senior at Oak Ridge High School in El Dorado Hills, also is



Sacramento Bee/Jay Mather

Kyle Hernandez works the frets during a gig last month at Club Retro in Ctrus Heights. At 17, he's at ease onstage at capital-area venues and with the CSUS Jazz Ensemble. He'll soon attend the Berklee College of Music in Boston.

the youngest member of the California State University, Sacramento, Jazz Ensemble.

He has been playing music since the fourth grade, when he learned to play trumpet, piano and guitar. He only recently began taking formal lessons.

"I pretty much taught myself how to play," Hernandez said. "(Music) always just kind of made sense to me."

Hernandez appreciates music spanning genres such as Latin, John Mayer-type vocalists, indie bands and classic jazz.

"While most kids in rock bands are banging away at heavy metal," said Kyle's father, Michael, "Kyle appreciates the old masters of jazz."

Not only does he have natural talent, explains CSUS music professor Steve Homan, but "Kyle has a lot of knowledge for his age and is quite experienced."

When asked if being the youngest member of a university group was intimidating, Kyle Hernandez joked, "It doesn't matter if you're the youngest as long as you can blow the socks off everyone else."

The young musician, who bears a resemblance to Elvis Presley, seems to have blown the socks off college recruiters. Hernandez was offered a scholarship and will attend the prestigious Berklee College of Music in Boston in the fall.

"He's a great kid," Homan said. "He's got a real ear for music, a terrific melodic sense and a great attitude."

Hernandez dreams of playing in a 1940's-style big band, traveling around the world and making music.

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Kyle Hernandez  
jazz guitarist and senior  
at Oak Ridge High School

