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# Hipsters' improv jazz fusion earns award nominations

**A** lot of great things are derived from musical improvisation, including the very origins of the jazz-world-music trio Sultans of String.

The band, made up of violinist Chris McKhool, guitarist Kevin Laliberte and bass player Drew Birston, was born out of a regular gig in a hip North York lounge four years ago. Working to entertain the crowd for three hours, when they only had about half-a-dozen shared songs, meant McKhool and Laliberte had a



**GET OUT THERE**  
**KIM MANNIX**  
**VERMETTE**  
kim.mannixvermette@metronews.ca

lot of time to experiment, or as McKhool puts it "make stuff up."

"We had no idea back then what a trip we would be taken on with this band," says McK-

hool, who is a proud Ottawa native.

"It's a shock, a surprise, and a joy that it worked out."

Many of the improvised tunes discovered during those gigs evolved into the tracks on the Sultans of String's disc, *Luna*, which they will showcase with a "homecoming" show at CentrepoinTE this weekend.

They describe their sound as "atomic gypsy-jazz flamenco" and McKhool says it



McKhool

exemplifies the way in which their travels have inspired their songwriting. Musical

collectors, the Sultans draw on instruments and musical styles learned in the Middle East, South America, Europe and the Canadian Arctic. "I really be-

lieve in the vision of Canadian multiculturalism as a way to build bridges and create harmony, so it's been a really interesting voyage to explore multiculturalism in a musical way," explains McKhool.

The eclectic and original mix of music not only draws people to their live performances, but also has recently earned the Sultans a lot of accolades from the industry and their peers.

In just the last few months they've been nominated for an International Independent Music Award, Ontario Independent Music Award, Canadian Folk Music Award, and received the Toronto Exclusive Magazine Award for best Latin jazz group.

While McKhool says that

while he and his mates are thrilled with the recognition, they are mostly just happy people are listening.

"For me, it means people are able to relate to our music and that's really important to me as a songwriter."

Sultans of String play CentrepoinTE Theatre, Saturday at 8 p.m. Tickets range from \$19-\$30. Call 613-580-2700 or visit [sultansofstring.com](http://sultansofstring.com) online.

After covering hard news for a few years, Kim discovered her real passion - writing about the wonderful world of music, theatre, visual arts and literature.