

Rain or shine the concert goes on

First Annual Oregon Music Festival tunes up Sunday

Come drizzle or shine, four of Oregon's finest bands will grace the Agate soccer field this Sunday for the first annual Oregon Music Festival. The noon-to-sundown event is the brainchild of the EMU Cultural Forum's Program Committee — the same people who bring us Beer Gardens and Spaghetti Feeds. This more ambitious undertaking promises some raucous and varied entertainment.

Eugene's own Lon Guitarsky will open the Music Festival with its original brand of high energy, jazz fusion. Guitarist and founder/leader Don Latarski is thrilled about where the group is now and where it is going. With personnel changes of four months ago bearing fruit, the release of *Haven*, its first album (due in July), and the prospect of West Coast touring within the next six months, Latarski has a lot to be thrilled about.

"We're sitting on the edge of something very exciting," he says, adding, "Musically, personality-wise, and in terms of potential, we've never been better."

The group has been plagued by personnel changes since its inception four years ago. But new members Kevin Deitz, bass, and Mike Snyder,

drums, are in the band to stay, and they have brought a new sense of stability, focus, and musical progression.

Keyboardist and vocalist Jack Buddeke has been with the band for several years. He and Latarski compose all of the group's music. Lynn Baker, soprano/alto/tenor saxophone, has been with the group for a little over a year.

"The identity crisis is over," Latarski says. "All of our previous problems are worked out now."

Almost all. The closure of the Eugene Hotel hurt Lon Guitarsky. "We were the house band," Latarski says. "Now we don't have a home."

The group's successful engagements in Ashland, Corvallis, Salem and Portland provide some solace, but the members would like to play in Eugene more often than opportunity allows.

"All the clubs here are playing rock and roll," Latarski laments. "They're afraid to book us because they think we're jazz. But we don't play jazz."

"What we play is high energy, electric music. We use jazz harmonies, but our rhythm is..."

"Funk-rock-contemporary-Latin," Mike Snyder interjects. "There's no other way to describe it."

To give a general idea of Lon Guitarsky music, Latarski offers the names Spyro Gyra, Pat Metheny, and Steely Dan. "But," he insists, "I don't think there's anybody else doing the kind of music we're doing."

The Music Festival audience can expect some strong rhythms, strong melodic lines, intriguing harmonies and some hot, imaginative soloing from this listenable, danceable and highly respected band.

Following Lon Guitarsky, an exciting new Portland group will make its first appearance in Eugene.

Kukrudu, which translates as "earthquake," has been heralded by much critical acclaim in Portland for its high-powered, high-spirited performances, which blend the traditional and contemporary music of West Africa with Western pop and jazz.

Ghanian master drummer Obo Addy, founder

and leader of the group, knows how to play his unique and original music, but is not quite sure what to call it.

"I haven't found a good, new name for our music yet. But when I do, it will be a simple African name, easy for Americans to pronounce."

He is not quite satisfied with having his music described as Highlife. "It's not Highlife music. Highlife is more like calypso. Our music is more rhythmic. It is Highlife with more traditional music in it."

Few people have had as much exposure to traditional African music as Addy. From the time he could walk, he studied drumming under the intense supervision of his father, a village priest and medicine man in Ghana.

At the age of 18, Addy embarked on his own career. He worked in numerous nightclub bands as percussionist and vocalist and performed on radio and television in Ghana. Eventually he was enlisted by the Arts Council of Ghana to study, teach and perform the traditional and regional music of the country.

He began to compose extensively, formed the group Oboade with his brothers, toured the United States, Europe and Japan. Recently he settled in Portland, where he teaches and performs. He has been working with Kukrudu since last August.

Addy's compositions have been recorded by Hugh Maskela and on his own record, *Kpanlogo Party*.

Percussionist, drummer and vocalist Brian Lavern Davis is co-founder of Kukrudu. Brian played with Upepo for five years, then left to perform, tour and record with Herbie Hancock. He has also performed with such notables as Slim Gaillard and Airtio.

Richard Burdell, trumpet/flugel horn/percussion/vocals, created and played for the well known Northwest band Cruise Control. He has played with Upepo, many prominent Northwest musicians, and studied with jazz greats Woody Shaw, David Baker, and Joe Henderson.

The list goes on. Mark Bjorklund, bass, Alan Hohlgrén, reeds, Tulim Graves, guitar, and Valerie Day, percussion and vocals are all multi-talented musicians with strong backgrounds in ethnic music and jazz.

Kukrudu ought to have a lot of people on their feet with their explosive, percussive, eclectic music.

The Bill Feldmann Band will blast off, following Kukrudu, with some indigenous North American music: rock and roll.

The group, during a recent appearance at B.J. Kelly's, exhibited some excellent vocal and instrumental talent, and some dynamite original material which draws from a wide spectrum of rock.

Bill Feldmann is the leader of the band in name only. Feldmann, guitarist Ron Stevens and keyboardist Mark Bosnian form the core of the group. All three of them write, and all three of them sing extremely well, both in harmony and individually.

Ron Stevens' rich clear voice, with its beautiful, tasty ornamentation, is conspicuously strong.

Stevens summarizes the styles of the three vocalists: "Bill likes to sing gravelly — he's more into the New Wave thing. I try to sing clean and sweet — kind of like Kenny Loggins. And Mark, he's somewhere in between."

The diverse musical inclinations give the band a broad base to work from. The tunes are hard driving, substantive, well conceived and executed.

They display a strong, easy command of different rock idioms.

Calvin J. Walker's intelligent, detailed work on drums goes beyond the bare simplicity that characterizes so much rock drumming, without losing its driving force and vitality.

"Calvin's a mother, man!" Stevens says. "Of all the people in the band, he's the best on his axe."

But Bill Feldmann is pretty hot on his axe too. His frantic, rollicking guitar solos are excellent, and Stevens' are decent too.

The band members have been paying their dues in the Portland area for quite some time, and are hoping their original sound will catapult them out of it.

"Our main thrust," Feldmann says, "is to not be playing in the Tavern circuit, which we've been doing for years and years."

Feldmann is best known for his lead guitar work with Johnny and the Distractions. In fact, it was Feldmann, Stevens and bassist Rick Edwards who were the original Distractions. The threesome also played together in The Wasted Rangers.

Walker was the drummer for Cruise Control, and Bosnian did a long stint with The Burnside Bombers.

Although the band has been getting good press, and a good public response, they are not yet drawing well.

"Sure, we got a lot of rave stuff," Feldmann says. "But we were expected to draw like Johnny and the Distractions. We're only five months old. We're still a brand new band. People don't know who we are yet."

Their appearance at the Music Festival ought to change that.

Upepo, one of the Northwest's most popular bands, will top off Sunday's entertainment with some of its well known and well loved high-energy Latin rock.

Upepo has been together for eight years, and exhibits a cohesion and confidence that shows it. The band boasts two new members, and retains four originals.

Upepo's bright, driving sound needs little in the way of introduction. But recently the band has been shifting its emphasis, moving from rock-influenced Latin, to Latin-influenced rock.

The stronger rock orientation, with a lot of New Wave and ska concepts, has a few of Upepo's old fans grumbling, but at the same time it has been gaining many new ears, which is what the band wants.

"We want to make our music more accessible," bassist Micheal Kersey explains. "The Latin influence is still there, but now we use it as a texture rather than a focal point."

The crossover to rock has entailed an increased emphasis on vocals, as well as on guitars and synthesizers. Glenn Rueger, a newcomer to the band, contributes much to the electric sound with his work on keyboards.

The second new member is drummer, percussionist Steven Blomberg. The other four are more familiar to Eugeneans. Micheal Kersey plays bass, Charles Croft plays lead guitar, and they both do percussion and vocals.

The multi-talented David Nelson, songwriter for the band, plays the steel drums, alto and soprano saxophones, guitar and percussion.

Stanford Wood plays congas, percussion and vibraphone, a flexible reed instrument, really an exalted rubber band, which puts out a sound

somewhat like a trumpet.

The band has an album out, *International Ties*, which Micheal Kersey calls a consolidation of Upepo's older material.

Upepo is a great band, and ought to put a nice finish on this fine, eight hour event.

Tickets are \$3.50 for students, \$4.50 for the general public, and can be purchased at the EMU main desk, or ordered there by phone: 686-4363. Tickets are also available at Toad Hall Hi-Fi and Bremen Town Records.

In the event of heavy rain, the festival will take place in the EMU ballroom. Due to limited space, only tickets numbered 1-1000 will gain admittance. Tickets numbered 1-1000 are available at the main desk only. The rest will be refunded at the main desk.

In the event of light or sporadic drizzle, the festival will still take place as planned, at the 18th and Agate soccer field.

The gates open at 11:30 a.m. T-shirts with the Oregon Music Festival logo on the front, and the names of the bands on back, will be available.

Medical facilities will be provided by White Bird Clinic. No bottles, cans or pets will be allowed in the concert area, but plastic containers and boda bags are O.K.

The First Annual Oregon Music Festival is a unique opportunity to see, hear, and dance to some of the hottest music the Northwest has to offer.

Story by Matthew Taylor
Photos of the Bill Feldmann Band
by Dennis Tachibana
Other photos provided by the Bands



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5:30 p.m.

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