

Rock Review of Eugene

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of The Beach Boys through the pure rock and roll of The Stones to the new wave sounds of Devo. Surprisingly, they do them all gracefully—the audience never gets the impression that it's a rock band copying various styles.

To top it off, they are fun to watch. Stage presence is important for bands who make their bucks performing (as opposed to selling vinyl discs). Hot Whacks understands rock and roll, and its knowledge is infectious. If this is what one means by the term "bar band," then perhaps the phrase should be positive instead of perjorative.

by tom senor

lon guitarsky group ★★★★★

The Lon Guitarsky Group has been knocking around Eugene for the past four years. But don't be mistaken, because this is not just another local band.

This band has qualities of greatness. Real talent mixed with hard work and dedication has put Lon Guitarsky above the rest. Their only mistake may be that they play a kind of danceable jazz, which appears to be less palatable to Eugene tastes than conventional rock and roll.

But if you like good music, Lon Guitarsky has lots of it to offer. The band's original tunes carry plenty of punch, and they are presented with enough class to tickle the most cultured of ears.

Combine good original songs with some of the best musicians in the area, and Eugene is given a band with a future. Watch for Lon Guitarsky. They're going places.

by chris courtner

los xplorers ★★

Los Xplorers perform a mixture of musical styles that guitarist Henry Cooper calls "rockin' rhythm and blues." The band's chief weakness is that its repertoire contains no originals.

Although many of their tunes may be new to the audience because they are not well known, the audience still feels a little cheated.

Los Xplorers has been together for a year, and has recently brought in a new drummer, Merlin Reiber. Merlin has a strong, driving beat that (dare I say it?) magically pushes the crowd towards the dance floor—which, of course, is the band's main objective. Reiber also brings his outstanding vocal ability to the band, adding to its diversity.

Los Xplorers produce a consistently strong, danceable sound combining guitar, bass, vocals, drums, and intermittent harp and sax riffs.

by wendy perotta

the megatones ★

The Megatones play everything from 50's and 60's bebop to contemporary hard rock. With all of this material in their repertoire, they only have one real problem: they don't play it well.

The 'Tones are sadly lacking in the vocal department. Where strong, exciting lead vocals are needed to pound the lyrics home, they tend to have faint, unaggressive lead vocals. And as if this wasn't enough, the harmonies are awfully pitiful.

Lead guitarist David Newman is a Buddy Holly look-alike, and his hot licks are one of the few things that make the band bearable. Unfortunately, even Newman's talent can't spice up The Megatones enough to give the band any real flavor.

All in all, The Megatones is one of those bland bands you listen to when there is no cover charge. For all practical purposes, it might be better titled "The Megabores."

by chris courtner

mithrandir ★★★★★

Mithrandir specializes in a happy, spicy kind of rock, often underscored by latin rhythms, and a reggae tune thrown in here and there.

The three Smith sisters, Kathy, Janey and Kriss, give the band most of its character, and their diverse instruments—two violins, saxophone, flute and mandolin—create a unique, bright sound. The flute and sax solos are good. The violin solos are excellent.

Guitarist and lead vocalist George Navarro writes the band's original material. The arrangements are simple and tasty, but don't make as good use of the diversity of instruments as they might. Sometimes the metallic twang of the guitar doesn't blend well with the relative smoothness of the other instruments.

This complaint aside, however, Mithrandir is a good local band. They know how to fill up a dance floor, and can really build up excitement within a tune.

by matthew taylor

the party kings ★★★★★

Since The Robert Cray Band has moved on, and since the dissolution of The Bluetones, The Party Kings now reigns as perhaps the best and certainly the most popular blues band in town.

Singer and harp player Bill Rhodes lays down the style and character of the band, and calls the tunes (which he pulls from his immense blues library).

Each musician is good at his own craft. The vocals and harp ornamentations of Rhodes, and the guitar solos of John Ward and Jim Cochran are spirited and true to the spirit of the blues. Ed Clark's drumming shows a lot of skill, care and focus.

Together, they get the crowd hopping and stomping with the raunchy, vital power of the blues. Unfortunately, they're not as together as they could be. A little more listening and interaction between the band

members might bring out a tighter, more cohesive sound. The total sound is often not the sum total of the individual talent, but sometimes a merely better-than-average repetition of familiar chord progressions.

by matthew taylor

rock band ★★★★★

Although Rock Band (the first generic rock group) doesn't play any originals, its song selection is superb, including The Kinks, The Stones, The Beatles, Elvis and a medley of several Buddy Holly and Police songs. Its versions are even comparable to the originals. With your eyes closed, drummer Noi Trusty might just as well be Sting. His vocals on the several Police songs are flawless.

Overall, the musicianship is the best in Eugene. Marty Emundsen, crawling out from the depths of Richie Blackmore's "Rainbow" and Black Sabbath's "Iron City," adds ballast to the light material with his heavy metal-tinted leads. Steve Myers brings to mind John Fogerty with his distinctive, unpolished singing and colorful guitar style. Trusty's drumming is not to be sniffed at. And it would be indiscreet to describe how Tom McCauley fingers his bass. The members combine their talents to produce some of the hottest sounds around.

Despite the fact that they don't do any originals, Rock Band is one of the finest bands Eugene has to offer.

by gordon brown

sequel ★

A Portland-based band, Sequel has been decaying in one form or another for over five years. Their music is contrived high-energy pop, of which about half is, unfortunately, original. None of the originals, including the exalted "Gossip," has the bite of a toothless Chihuahua, and the covers include music by such groups as the much-respected Bay City Rollers. On stage, Sequel substitutes well-rehearsed theatrics for spontaneity. Bass player Todd Osmond, er umm, Jensen, heaves his microphone stand off the stage in a rock and roll frenzy, only to have a roadie right on the spot for an easy catch and subsequent replacement.



photo by chris courtner

While Jensen is the band's excuse for energy, guitarist and band leader Gregg Gibb, er umm, Georgeson, appeared to have swallowed one too many Valiums before taking the stage, and could barely keep his eyelids propped open. Georgeson can play quickly with flash when pressed, but reminds me of a guitar student who's mastered a cute lick, but can't come up with a lead to use it in. He doesn't even have the good sense to cop interesting licks off of other musicians.

Sequel plays middle-of-the-road AM-oriented pop, and if you didn't know any better, they might even make you think you're rocking. Danny Field, manager of Steve Forbert and Iggy Pop, said it best when describing a Pointer Sisters show long ago: "I thought we invented rock and roll to get away from crap like this."

by gordon brown

sneakers ★★★★★

The Sneakers' style is hard to define. A third of the act consists of covers ranging from R & B versions of "My Girl" and "Who Do You Love" to the punk sound of "Police" and the Thieves. The remaining two-thirds of

the show consists of original material. Songwriting, like performing, is a group effort for The Sneakers with no one member dominating.

The group's drummer, Marquis O., sees the band's music as a combination of many musical styles. "We're not really a New Wave band. We're dance-beat rock. The pop artists of the 60's, The Stones, The Kinks, and The Beatles, to name a few, have influenced our music a great deal."

The Sneakers are in the process of putting together their second album. The songs on the first, guitarist Billy Rich says, were "fast tunes with dumb words." The second album, Rich says, will have more substantial material that will "make people think."

Whatever they're doing, it seems to have a good effect on the audience. The constant movement and electricity generated on stage is transmitted to the crowd, almost compelling them to dance. Bass, guitar, drums, sax, keyboards and vocals are woven together to produce the tight sound that has made The Sneakers one of the best bands in the area.

by wendy perotta

what's his name & all those other guys ★★★★★

What's His Name and All Those Other Guys isn't really a band. The amazing thing is that, with only one rehearsal behind them, eight musicians can come off sounding better than bands that have been playing together for years.

Keyboardist Mike Van Liew writes arrangements of tunes by Lee Morgan, The Jazz Crusaders and Weather Report. Drawing from a large pool of extremely talented and highly-trained jazz musicians, he gets a band together "every once in a while."

It is hoped that What's His Name etc. will appear less sporadically in the future. Heavy duty jazz-funk with a cooking rhythm section and a nice array of horns isn't easy to come by in this town. Make sure you don't miss them, because you never know when another "every so often" will come along.

by matthew taylor

wheatfield ★★★★★

Wheatfield offers a huge variety of music served on a silver platter. There may never have been a more diverse group of musicians to regularly assemble in Eugene.

Fiddles, accordians, harmonicas, trumpets, and mandolins are used along with guitars and keyboards to produce the band's distinct brand of "good-time music."

Wheatfield has its foundations laid in bluegrass, but plays anything from country to punk. And they play it well.

They've got funky-up versions of songs like "A-Train" that draw all those who can walk to the dance floor. The smiles that can be seen on the peoples' faces are genuine, because Wheatfield seems to promote a genuine type of happiness.

Wheatfield has large followings in both Portland and Seattle, so the time that they spend in Eugene is sometimes short. When the band does make an appearance, it's worth your effort to go out of your way to see them.

by chris courtner



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