

# U.S. tour sweet for English Beat

## Group will play Eugene

By Cort Fernald  
Of the Emerald

It's been a whirlwind North American tour for The English Beat. The seven-man group from Birmingham, England, has sold out concerts in major cities and has had fans coming for hundreds of miles to see them.

They'll be in the fifth week of their seven-week tour when they play the EMU Ballroom on Dec. 8. The Eugene concert is their first appearance in Oregon.

David Steele, who plays bass and banjo with The English Beat, says the whole band is surprised at how well they are being received on this tour.

"We didn't know what to expect after we came over," Steele says. "But it's been absolute mania everywhere."

"All the big cities, all the major places have been sold-out weeks ago. Some of the sticks places haven't the same mania, but they've also been really good."

"We've had people traveling hundreds of miles to see us," Steele says.

The tour's success is just the tonic The English Beat needed at this point in its career. The English musical press had not been too kind to the band — nor have the fans.

"Third album time for The (English) Beat, after a dodgy period which has seen them failing to dent the charts time after time," is how Melody Maker prefaced its ambivalent review of "Special Beat Service."

The English Beat was worried about the reception "Special Beat Service" would get.

"We didn't really know," Steele says. "It could have gone either way. As it happened, it sold a lot more than the other two, but if it flopped completely, I think we would have been really depressed."

If it had flopped, "I think it definitely would've been the end of the band," Steele says.

As it stands the album is doing well in America, and Steele says

"it's quite surprising... I quite like it."

"Right now the album's number 33 on Rolling Stone charts. I think it's number 71 in Billboard. It's the first time we've even got in the top 75 in Billboard."

"Special Beat Service" is a different album altogether from the English Beat's previous offerings: "I Just Can't Stop It" and "Wha'ppen?"

The pace of "Special Beat Service" moves left, right and squarely center of the more frenetic "I Just Can't Stop It" and the moderate "Wha'ppen?"

Critics will always judge The English Beat against a scale of "danceability." That's too bad because the band achieves some astonishing lyrical twists and vocal harmonies that promote just as much "listenability."

In "Special Beat Service," The English Beat has eased off its turgid politicism and has directed its attention toward interpersonal relationships.

"We worry about politics still," Steele says. "It's just once you've written an anti-nuclear song on the second LP you can't go and write another one on the third one. There's no point in repeating yourself."

The emphasis on relationships in "Special Beat Service" has opened new possibilities for the band.

"We don't want to be getting into that little political band category, either. That's one good thing (about the less political songs), we seem to have broken that a little bit," Steele says.

Steele isn't quite sure how the single "Save It for Later" from the album is doing.

"It's not in the charts yet. The top-forty stations aren't playing it — just because they think we're a punk group."

The English Beat are far from punk. If one needs to categorize them — they should be viewed as part of the vanguard of the ska and reggae drenched Two-Tone movement. Unfortunately, Two-Tone, at least in England, has stumbled onto lean times.



Photo courtesy of I.R.S. Records.

The English Beat — bottom row, left to right: Andy Cox, Wesley Magoogan, Everett Morton. Middle row: Dave Wakeling, David Steele. Top row: Ranking Roger, Dave Blockhead.

"The Selector and Specials split up. There's only us and Madness left," Steele says.

Steele isn't confident about the future of Two-Tone either.

"I'd say there isn't any. I mean, Madness are doing probably really well. They're probably the top-selling band in England at the moment. And we're doing great over here as well."

The opening act for the English Beat performance in the

EMU Ballroom will be Crazy 8's. Crazy 8's are a reggae band from Corvallis who play material by the Specials and Selector.

Mike Quinn, director of the EMU Cultural Forum, says between 1,100 and 1,200 tickets have been sold for Thursday's concert. There are only a few hundred tickets left, and Quinn estimates it will be a sell-out.

"That hasn't been done since the Talking Heads played in the ballroom," he says.

### Rastafarians in EMU tonight

Good reggae music is hard to find, especially in the Northwest. But tonight at 8 p.m. in the EMU Ballroom, the EMU Cultural Forum and Music Bulletin Productions welcomes The Rastafarians, practitioners of reggae and ska.

The price of tickets is \$6 for University students and \$7 for the public. Tickets can be purchased at the EMU Main Desk, Earth River Records and Everybody's Records.

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