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MUSIC



Jars of Clay's first release combines an alternative element with Christian rock and does so unplugged. COURTESY PHOTO

Band creates 'alternative rock unplugged'

Matt Garton
Graphic Artist

"Alternative rock unplugged" perfectly describes the first release by the band Jars of Clay.

This Christian equivalent to popular mainstream bands such as the Cranberries and Smashing Pumpkins has produced a self-title album that has a familiar sound: mainstream alternative.

However, there is one slight alteration. There isn't one electric guitar on the entire album - it's unplugged.

Jars of Clay made their start on the road to national popularity when several music distributors put the song "Flood" on their release lists this month.

If you were listening to KNRQ (New Rock), you would have heard this release when it was voted a smash. It has made several more appearances on the airwaves on both Christian and



secular stations.
The song diversity is not extreme. The songs all are about the same tempo, and the instruments used don't vary much. But Dan Haseltine, lead vocalist, contributes a lot.

As with most Christian music the vocals are very prominent, and Haseltine really brings it all together with a voice that is brilliant and piercing. He is easily one of the driving forces in each of these songs.

After the first track, the CD kind of runs out of surprises. The first song has a really heavy

and strong drum beat with a monk chant dubbed on it to create a powerful and almost danceable tune.

This release comes in the shadow of other popular hit Christian artists such as Newsboys, Audio Adrenaline and DC Talk, so the company may find sales lower than they had hoped.

My advice for alternative fans that want a change is to pick it up before you listen to the other artists.

Jars of Clay brings a new and much needed sound to the rock scene and doesn't deserve to be drowned out by music we've all heard before that's just copped up and put back together again.

Hopefully we'll see more from this band in the future. I'd like to see some more experimentation like that on first song of the CD.

Points of Jazz equates music with emotions

By Les ZacZek
Freelance Reporter

In a music world flooded by rock, techno, rap and metal, it is easy to ignore other types of music, such as jazz.

Sadly, it seems that many people have forgotten the roots of most of today's music. But Eugene's Points of Jazz revives jazz's spirit of improvisation with a unique sound.

"Joseph Campbell once said that humans aren't so much interested in the meaning of life as the feeling of being alive. When done right, jazz is a short path to feeling alive," guitarist Steve Johnston said.

The other members of Points of Jazz are Greg Nathan on bass, Rich Platz on drums and Fred Wesley on tenor saxophone.

Making a living as a jazz musician is virtually impossible these days, especially in a small city like Eugene, according to Nathan. Jo Federigo's is the premier jazz club here, and there is always fierce competition to get booked.

As a result, all of the members of Points of Jazz have other jobs.

"Around Christmas this year I probably had 12 jobs playing as a solo musician to generate some income, because as a substitute teacher I'm not on contract and the work is temporary," Nathan said.

"One reason I like jazz so much is because my job as a mail carrier is not very mentally challenging, and with the kind of music we play you have to constantly figure out what you're doing each second. It's a creative outlet for me," Wesley said.

Ever since Points of Jazz did their first show at Jo Federigo's about three years ago, they have been playing the circuit of Eugene's clubs.

"We're probably Eugene's best rehearsed jazz

ensemble," Nathan said.

The band is focusing on recording these days, so they will not be playing gigs as frequently in the near future.

"Steve invested in some recording equipment, and we've been recording a couple of times, although we don't have anything releasable yet," Nathan said.

The band's goal is to produce a full-length disc. "With the disc in hand we'd like to approach some in-state jazz festivals and make some more money," he said.

Beside playing with Points of Jazz and working as a substitute teacher, Nathan also plays with the Eugene Symphony and is involved in projects with other musicians.

According to Nathan, jazz is about taking great tunes from as early as the 20's and recomposing them. "Music is a language of emotions. We express how we feel about the world through it. Most of the time we deal with the emotion of love in jazz."

The members of Points of Jazz seem to be happy and enthusiastic about their music and playing, despite their lack of commercial success.

"The most meaningful statement about Points of Jazz is that to all four of us, it's important in our lives to be jazz musicians, and we love the music. Everyone's heart is in the right place," Nathan said.

"We have a lot of great local players, and Points of Jazz is one of those bands that the audience really loves," said Jerome Seljan, the owner of Jo Federigo's.

Beside appearing at Jo Federigo's Feb. 23-24, Points of Jazz will play Feb. 24 from 6-7 p.m. in Studio One of the Hult Center.

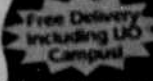
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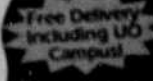
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