

# Beck hits 'uncharted territory' with 'Mutations'

The experimental musician tinkers with various genres in his 11-track release

By Amy Boytz  
Oregon Daily Emerald

As the saying goes, you can't teach an old dog new tricks. But Beck Hansen, who has been in the pop music scene for the better half of the decade, is not old. And he's continuously pulling new tricks out of his bag.

Beck's newest release, "Mutations," is yet another delve into uncharted territory — something Beck has been known for throughout his career.

To compare "Mutations" with 1996's "Odelay" is almost impossible; the two albums seem as if they were created by different artists. Then again, maybe they were.

Since the beginning of his musical career, Beck has continually altered his style — so much so that it is almost fair to say he has multiple musical personalities. He has released radio-friendly pop albums such as "Odelay" and "Mellow Gold" and alternated them with indie-folk records, such as "One Foot in the Grave."

"Mutations" is yet another in the series of folk-driven albums. All 11 songs on the disc feature lazy, laid-back rhythms and thoughtful vocals. Unlike the songs on "Odelay," this album features few samples and only the occasional up-tempo song.

But though "Mutations" has a subdued mood, Beck nonetheless

covers a whole gamut of musical styles on the disc. There are folk songs, country songs — even a bossa nova lounge track. Basically, it's like the perfect compilation album to play at a swanky party, but all the tracks are performed by one artist.

"Canceled Check" is a brilliant old-country style piece. The honky tonk piano and slide guitar make this song sound just like something sung in a saloon.

One of the highlights on the album is "Tropicalia," a bossa nova a la Beck song. This groove-based dance track is layered with intricate percussion rhythms and instrumental lines, all of which rest atop synthesizer samples.

Beck even tries his hand at the blues on this album. "Bottle of Blues" is a traditional blues song, complete with harmonica and distorted guitar. Lyrics such as "Ain't it hard, ain't it hard/ To want somebody who doesn't want you" push the song further into the realm of blues.

Songs such as "Dead Melodies" and "Nobody's Fault But My Own" sound like lost tracks off



Courtesy photo

Beck once again strikes out on his own innovative journey in his new album 'Mutations.'



## 'Mutations'

Beck

TYPE: Alternative

PRODUCED BY:

Geffen Records

RATING:

★★★★★

the Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. Both of these songs feature non-traditional rock instruments, such as the cello, viola and sitar.

As with Beck's previous

records, "Mutations" proves that Beck does not restrict himself to certain musical styles. He is constantly experimenting with new and innovative approaches.

Beck is a study in mutation.

# Ring of Fire spices up Eugene cuisine scene

The restaurant, which opened in June, serves food from the Pacific Rim

By Amy Boytz  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Sometimes names really do mean what they say.

Take, for instance, Ring of Fire, the name of a new Eugene restaurant that serves food from the Pacific Rim. The name alludes to the region from which the food comes, but it is also a strong indication of the burning feeling that remains on your lips after the meal.

Most of the items on Ring of Fire's menu are Thai. Traditional ingredients in Thai food include rice noodles, jasmine rice, seafood, tofu and vegetables. It is the sauces, such as peanut sauce or curry, that add heat. The menu

at Ring of Fire offers a key indicating how hot each dish is, with a scale from one to three stars. Three stars will clear your sinuses.

The restaurant offers a variety of noodle and stir fry dishes, as well as various appetizers, soups and salads. Ring of Fire also features special entrees each night.

As for the food, it was acceptable but not outstanding. For an appetizer, the Crispy Tofu was tasty but scant. Four slight pieces of fried tofu for more than four dollars is not reasonable, especially considering that appetizers are usually shared.

The entrees were served in healthy portions for a reasonable price, however. Prices range from \$8.75 to \$13.75 for entrees.

The Matsaman, a spicy mix of chicken or tofu, potatoes and onions in a peanut sauce, was very tasty but lacking in content.

The dish consisted mostly of sauce with only a few chunks of potato and onion. However, the delicate texture of the perfectly cooked tofu was satisfying and enjoyable. This dish was served with a bowl of jasmine rice, which nicely complemented the entree and helped extinguish the intense fire of the sauce.

The Phad Thai, one of the restaurant's most popular dishes, was excellent. The stir-fried noodles were just the right blend of tender but chewy. The mix combined the perfect amount of

chicken or tofu, egg, bean sprouts and peanuts in a sweet sauce, which nicely soothed the palate. This is the kind of dish to order if you're averse to spicy dishes, said Josh Keim, co-founder of the restaurant.

A tart honey-ginger lemonade was a good beverage to extinguish the flames of the dishes. Ring of Fire heavily caters to vegetarians and vegans, with the possibility to substitute tofu for almost all of the meat products in the dishes. However, watch out for dishes that sound vegetarian but made with fish sauce.

"Even though it says it's vegetarian, a lot of Asian cooking uses fish sauce and oyster sauce," Keim said. He recommended letting the server know your dietary

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## Ring of Fire

TYPE: Thai

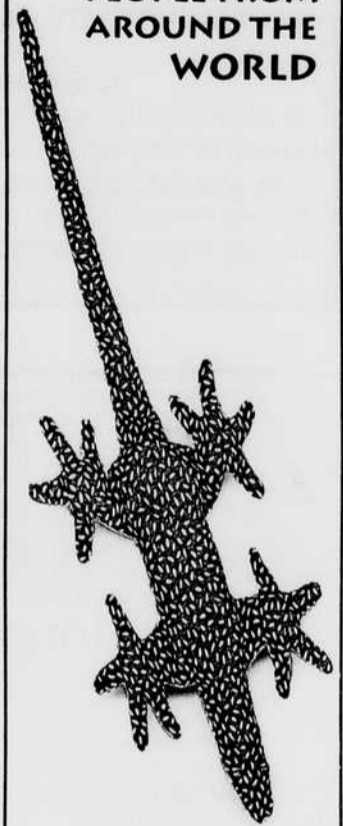
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RATING:

★★★★★

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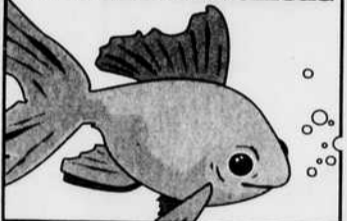
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