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000560

Deconstructing Ezra Holbrook

Independent musician
Ezra Holbrook has earned
a strong Eugene following

By Serena Markstrom
for the Emerald

A quick scan of the bedroom of Eugene musician Ezra Holbrook will end in a screeching halt at the sight of his music collection.

Hundreds of CDs dominate his shelves, with artists ranging from The Cranberries to The Pixies to Cab Calloway. With such eclectic taste in music, it's no wonder his own style is diverse.

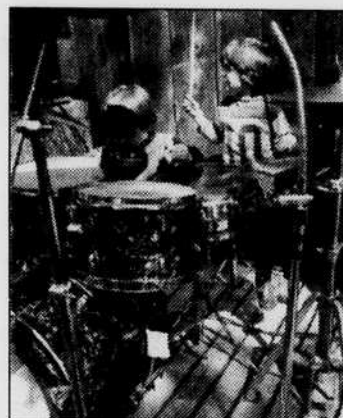
Eclectic taste is what Holbrook prides himself on. He has been performing in Eugene for much of the past five years, earning a dedicated following of 20-somethings.

The child of two musicians, Holbrook has had his hands in music from an early age.

He performed classical percussion in a community symphony while growing up in Los Angeles.

At the age of 19, he started writing music while working for a record store. But after an earthquake in the mid-1990s shook L.A., Holbrook followed his mother to Eugene, where he continued to write music.

He soon discovered a community of musicians in Eugene. From that pool arose Jacob Marley's Ghost, a band Holbrook put together to record an album for Capitol Records. Although Holbrook said he had a great time with the group, which included his brother Jules, he left the group last year be-



Courtesy photo

Holbrook (in football shirt) and his brother, Jules, perform on a drum set in 1980.

cause he felt the band was holding him back.

"I felt like when I was ready to make the record ... but the band was not up to the level I wanted them to be," he said. "There were just certain things that we weren't capable of that I thought were important."

After leaving Jacob Marley's Ghost, and a long battle with Capitol, Holbrook was free to record independently.

He has most recently shifted focus to his new album on an independent label, "Heart Off of Your Sleeve."

Holbrook said he plans to move to Portland soon, where, he said, the musical atmosphere is more professional.

But Holbrook will not shed his independent nature and his di-

verse style when he reaches a bigger pond. He said he will not package himself to fit a "rock star" image in order to make it in the music industry.

"The music industry has set up a system where everything has to be categorized and very similar. When you're a kid, you feel like you have to belong to one of those things, and music is very much a part of that. You have your punk rockers, your mod kids and your alternative rock kids." He said this is unfortunate because younger listeners don't get to know older musical trailblazers.

"It's a shame that people are always so focused on the present, as far as music is concerned. It's very depressing to me when I hear teenage kids say, 'Who's Al Green?'"

He cited songwriter Elliot Smith as an example of someone who holds the same values he does about packaging yet still managed to make it. Smith, who many came to know through the "Good Will Hunting" soundtrack, had a long career as a songwriter before his perceived debut for mainstream America.

Holbrook said he hopes he can mirror this aspect of Smith's career. He added that he wants to reach mainstream listeners without losing the independent style that has brought him success.

Holbrook will perform an all-ages show tonight at 8:30 at Cafe Paradiso. There will be a \$2 cover charge.

From The Director Of WELCOME TO THE DOLLHOUSE

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HAPPINESS

a film by Todd Solondz



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