



Dan Brunell Emerald

Operated by a non-profit community center, the WOW Hall has nearly seen it all when it comes to performing arts. Various performers have pulled in diverse crowds since the hall opened in 1906.

# THIS HALL IS OUR HALL

The WOW Hall has drawn in crowds for concerts and other events for nearly 25 years, and the beat goes on

By Josh Ryneal  
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**W**ant to see a punk show? Go to the WOW Hall. A reggae show? Go to the WOW Hall. What about a folk show, or a rap show? You guessed it: Go to the WOW Hall.

The WOW Hall has meant a lot of different things to different groups of people. One of Eugene's consistently all-ages concert venues, the hall provides a diverse selection of music to fans of all kinds.

The hall first opened in 1906 when the fraternal organization Woodmen of the World bought the building, a Presbyterian church, and turned it into a meeting hall. As the organization declined, promoters began renting the hall for dances and concerts.

Now owned by the Community Center for the Performing Arts, the WOW Hall puts on concerts as well as other forms of theater and art.

Fran Chyleck, general manager of the WOW Hall from 1982 to 1995, said the reason the it is so eclectic in its offerings is because it is run by the CCPA which is a not-for-profit company.

"We offer the Encore Theater [a senior theater troupe], children's theater, dance classes and art shows," she said.

Chyleck said that the WOW Hall acts as a springboard for local bands but also attracts big regional and national acts because of what it offers.

"A lot of bands and booking agencies like the WOW Hall because it's a non-profit organization," she said. "It's not alcohol-oriented, and it's all ages. It's all about the music, and they trust the professionalism of the WOW Hall."

Bob Fennessy, WOW Hall spokesman, said the CCPA puts on some of the shows, although others are put on by outside promoters who rent the venue for their own concerts.

"When we put on a show, it's a co-production; the proceeds are split 70/30 between the artists and the hall," Fennessy said. "Sometimes, they don't want to take a chance with the percentage and will rent the hall for themselves. They take care of tickets, the door, the security, everything."

When the WOW Hall does put on its own shows, Fennessy said, a big part of its staff is made up of local volunteers.

"We do a lot of recruiting at the U of O street fair," he said. "Volunteers help in the office, set up the

stage or even run the lights and sound. A lot of people who run sound in Eugene got their start here."

There is a monthly volunteer orientation at the WOW Hall and no minimum time commitment for those who want to get involved.

Fennessy also said that the hall has been targeted in the past by the Oregon Liquor Control Commission because of its dual all-ages and alcohol-serving policies.

The WOW Hall is different from most other Eugene venues in that it's consistently all-ages yet still serves beer from its basement bar. Through careful policing and a special permit from the OLCC, the hall allows adult patrons to drink in the basement, but they cannot bring their drinks upstairs.

Fennessy said that alcohol consumption has never been a problem because of the separate levels.

"We're the first to cut someone off," he said. "But the OLCC wanted to force us to choose between being an all-ages or alcohol venue. Thankfully, an amended law passed, and they backpedaled away from that."

Despite the hall's reputation as a concert venue, the CCPA also puts on a variety of other shows and events.

"We have a community focus; we're always open to groups from the community putting on shows," Fennessy said. "We've got the Young Women's Theater Collective, the Bad-Ass Shakespeare Company, art shows... we've got it all."

Mike Meyer, a local concert promoter and DJ at radio station KRVM, said putting on concerts at the hall is usually a great proposition.

"When I want a really good quality presentation, I go to the WOW Hall," he said. "It's one of the neatest places to see shows."

Meyer attributed the hall's success to the fact that "most of Eugene appreciates the value of the WOW Hall" but said that more formal, upscale shows don't do as well.

"It has a little bit of a stigma of being in a particular neighborhood, or because of incidents that happened in the past," he said. "But I think the neighborhood is one of the safest in Eugene and anything else is unfounded."

Although concerts make up a large portion of the hall's schedule, the CCPA also puts on a monthly art show in support of local artists.

Steve LaRiccia, art director for

The WOW Hall is bringing its usual diverse collection of musical genres to its November concert lineup. Throughout the next week, rock, rap, bluegrass, folk, reggae and psychedelic music are all represented.

**Tom Landa and the Paperboys**, a bluegrass band from Canada, will be playing their blend of Celtic and Latin influences at the hall today at 8 p.m.

Richard Flohil, the band's publicist, says the band focuses around Landa, and the lineup is constantly changing.

"They've played huge folk festival events in Canada and won the JUNO Award," which is the Canadian equivalent of the Grammy, he said of the band, who has been touring Canada and the United States since 1992.

**Mountain Con**, a self-described "hick-hop" band from Seattle, will be playing with **King Black Acid** at their CD release party Saturday. Jim Nugent, the band's lead singer, said the band sounds like "what would happen if Bob Dylan from 1969 jammed with the Beastie Boys."

The band features the traditional arrangement of guitars, bass and drums, but complements them with turntable scratching and sampled drum loops. Mountain Con's resident DJ, Erik Blood, said it wasn't difficult combining the sounds.

"The organic sound of drum loops lend themselves well to folk music," he said.

On Monday, the WOW Hall will host the **X-ecutioners** and the **Souls of Mischief**, two rap groups whose styles are decidedly different.

The X-ecutioners perform "turntable art," while the Souls of Mischief, part of the West Coast Hieroglyphics hip-hop crew, are gaining fame thanks to the success of Hiero frontman Del tha Funkee Homosapien.

The hall will feature the rock stylings of the **Delgados**, who hail from Glasgow, Scotland, on Thursday, Nov. 16. Touring in support of their third album "The Great Eastern," the band features strings as well as indie-rock guitars and drums.

the WOW Hall, said the hall has been doing art shows since 1992. One of his current projects is the Salon des Refuses, a show consisting of works that did not qualify to be in the official Mayor's Art Show.

"We don't judge or jury anyone's work," LaRiccia said.

LaRiccia holds his shows in empty spaces around town, and each show has a different theme.

"Right now we're showing the work of Samonberry Marposa, a famous poster artist," he said. "Last month, we did fantasy art."

"People will usually find something different every month because we

like to focus on different formats and mediums."

LaRiccia said he welcomes submissions, and interested parties can talk to him at the WOW Hall.

"I know how to promote artwork," he said. "I used to be a promoter, and I can give artists help in promoting their artwork."

Artists can also have their art shown in the WOW Hall, which is good exposure to crowds attending shows there.

"The hall is a good venue for art because so many different groups of people come to see shows," he said.

The hall is celebrating its 25th anniversary in December, and perhaps it will be a fixture in the Eugene music and art scene for years to come.

The WOW Hall is located at 291 W. 8th Ave., and information on various events can be obtained by calling the hall at 687-2746.



Courtesy of SHURE  
The X-ecutioners will play at the WOW Hall on Monday.