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December is month of music

■ This month offers plenty of live performances at local venues for music fans

By Aaron K. Breniman
 For the Emerald

When the sounds of Salvation Army bell-ringers, panhandlers and holiday shoppers have driven you crazy, gather some friends and spend an evening or two listening to some of the music this holiday season has to offer.

December offers an array of performances immediately following Dead Week, with Karl Denson's performance as the highlight of the month. Denson's Tiny Universe plays at the Wild Duck Brewery at 9 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 6. San Diego-based Denson, 33, Lenny Kravitz's former saxophonist and founder of the acid-jazz band Greyboy Allstars, returns to town nearly a year to the day after his last Eugene performance.

"He's one of my all-time favorite musicians," University student Joe Bechard said. "He's good on the sax, but he really rocks on the flute."

The six-member jazz-funk influenced band consists of a trumpeter, electric bassist, guitarist, keyboardist and drummer, with frontman Denson performing his magic on the tenor, alto saxophone and flute.

"Like Maceo [Parker] and those guys, we're all about the dance floor, but we're also trying to get away with playing a little bit more jazz," Denson said on the Web page for Silver People Presents, the production company putting on the show.

A last-minute addition to the show will include Mr. Rosewater, a five-piece funk band from Portland. Doors open at 9 p.m. and the music is scheduled to begin at 9:30 p.m.. Tickets can be purchased for \$12.50 in advance at the Wild Duck and Mountain Jam or for a few bucks more at the door.

For something a little more relaxing, the Carl Woideck Quartet will perform Saturday, Dec. 9., at Piccolo, located on the third floor of the Downtown Athletic Club. An instructor of jazz history in the University's school of music, Woideck has been known to invite students to join him on stage, making each show a unique experience.

Woideck's shows feature songs ranging from classic jazz standards to inventive, lesser-known styles, and he adds context to his music by dispensing insight about many of the songs he plays. The free performance begins at 8 p.m..

Also on Dec. 9, the English-born, Seattle-based singer/songwriter John Wesley Harding will play at Taylor's Bar and Grill. Harding has recently returned to his folk-rock roots with his latest recording, "The Confessions of St. Ace," which has been well received by critics. Tickets are on sale for \$10 in advance and \$12 the day of the show.

The reggae band Wailing Souls will perform at the Wild Duck on Sunday, Dec. 10. The Jamaican style, roots-reggae duo began recording together more than 25 years ago and has survived decades with minor personnel changes. The duo's current tour will also include songs from its recent release, "Equality." Contact the Wild Duck at 343-0417 for ticket information.

A New Year's Eve celebration at the WOW Hall will feature the Sugar Beets and DJ Laser on Dec. 31. Voted best local band in the Eugene Weekly's Annual Manual, the Sugar Beets play a self-described "psychedelic bluegrass," a mix of folk, funk, acoustic rock and a ragtime-swing combination.

DJ Laser's "sonic tribal rhythmic dance beats" will provide an additional dimension to the performance. The Sugar Beets played at this year's Willamette Valley Folk Festival and were a headline act at the Oregon Country Fair this summer. The band's instrumentation consists of a violin, mandolin, upright bass, keyboard, and various percussion instruments.

WOW Hall publicist Bob Fennedy said they are looking into acquiring some vaudeville acts, such as fire-eaters and sword-swallowers. Tickets are \$11 in advance and \$13 at the door.

The city will host its annual New Year's Eve Celebration, First Night Eugene, on Sunday, Dec. 31. The alcohol-free event, held downtown on the Broadway Mall, will feature live entertainment and fireworks.

Each Saturday during the break, the Holiday Market at the Lane County Fairgrounds Exhibit Hall will host live entertainment. Promising acts include the Soromundi Lesbian Chorus on Dec. 17, Olem Alves Jazz Quartet and the Mike Denny All Stars on Dec. 23. The Willamette Week and the Portland Mercury, which can be found outside Allen Hall and the University Bookstore, offer listings for most Portland-area venues.

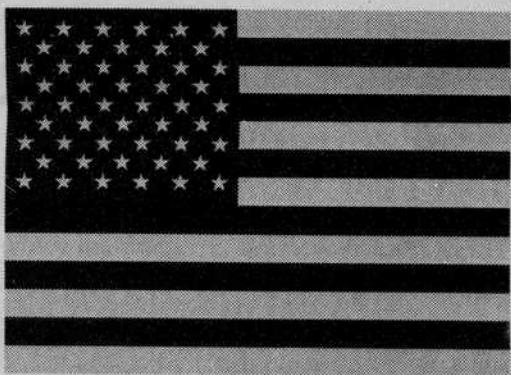
Blues legend John Lee Hooker brings his distinctive blues guitar style to the Roseland Theater in Portland on Saturday, Dec. 16.

The Oregon Convention Center will host 2001: A String Cheese Odyssey New Year Celebration that begins Friday, Dec. 29 and continues nightly through the new year. The String Cheese Incident will headline the event, accompanied by Vinyl, Karl Denson's Tiny Universe and others, many of whom will perform after-hours shows at various venues throughout the Portland area.

Without the daily stress of constant schoolwork to consume your time, spend awhile listening to the live music Eugene has to offer during the month of December.

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