

# No posters, no MTV, just music from the heart

■ A local musician prides herself and her band on an all-around unmatched style

By Lisa R. Griffing  
Oregon Daily Emerald

A self-taught guitarist from Corvallis sings her way through Cafe Paradiso and the Buzz, practices martial arts on the side and is an environmentalist, to boot.

To say University sophomore Jessica Plotkin possesses originality is an understatement. She started singing and strumming her Ovation back-packing guitar in high school and recently made a CD in her dad's friend's basement. Making a CD is a big deal, and even bigger when a musician goes through Virgin Records or Columbia. But not to Plotkin. She said music companies are only there to make money.

"When music turns into a business, then it's not music anymore," she said. Instead, Plotkin is promoting herself and the band by word-of-mouth. No posters, no MTV videos and no cheesy songs.

"Being independent is really important to me," she said. "I write my own material, and I am trying to stay away from love songs. There's too many."

"I don't want the female folk stereotype," she said, adding that "it would make me feel dead inside to be so boring. I just want to be unique and utilize creativeness. I wanna pick music out of the gutter just like any other self-respecting musician."

Plotkin admires vocalists outside the mainstream. She is passionate about such female vocalists as Bjork and Cibo Matto, a Japanese band.

There has been talk that music is getting too mainstream or perhaps that rock and alternative are dying out. Plotkin said she is not surprised that people would be drawn to stars such as Britney Spears.

"People are way too obsessed with pop culture," Plotkin said. She said that music has to go through some lows, and right now it is at a low.

"Music was at a low in the '40s and '50s. Then, there was an explosion of music in the '60s. I read in Bob Dylan's biography that there was this inane music. Shal-

low and light — we're just low — on the edge of something new, something good, and I want to be a part of that."

Reflecting on the days when she didn't have a clue what her talent and interests would bring into her future, Plotkin said Dylan and the Beatles influenced her.

"Even though I have the greatest appreciation for music, I don't listen to it much, only in the car or my Walkman," Plotkin said.

Plotkin sings at coffee shops and creates music with six other musicians, who did not want their last names used. She is in the band Olympus Mons, which consists of: Dan, who plays bass; Cassidy, who sings and plays guitar; Cooper, who plays drums; Rowan, who jams on his guitar; Plotkin, who sings and plays the viola; Zev, who plays the drums and grooves with a didgeridoo; and Brendan, who plays the keyboard.

Zev described the Olympus Mons as an "interdimensional alien tribe of feathered Shamans and twin-horned fools dancing in spirals and chanting to forgotten gods for a re-evolution of fractal brain-chemical gymnastics."

Brendan said some of their influence came from TchKunG! because "they drew the audience into their performances; they dumped mud on them."

He described the Olympus Mons as neo-tribal and rhythmic oriented. He said the band hopes to weave Cooper's juggling skills, Zev's fire dancing and other choreographed elements into their performances.

"We are working on a set list. We are trying to be different," Plotkin said. "We will play within the next year. Keep your ear out."

When Plotkin isn't strumming tunes, she can be found in the gym. Her interest in Japanese culture snowballed into martial arts. She said that she loves it. "I practice Brazilian jujitsu (grappling) and Jeet Kun Do (Bruce Lee style)," Plotkin said. "I am learning how to punch and kick on the ground. Exercise is important to me, and I get it through fighting." She said that she really likes to show off her bruises.

College seems to make or break people. Reading books and attending lectures is important. But what about lessons on life? Plotkin said



Jessica Plotkin, a University sophomore and self-taught musician, prefers to make music with a message and out of the mainstream. Laura Smit Emerald

that college taught her to trust "vibes."

"The most important thing is to be genuine," Plotkin said. "I can't stand people who wear a mask all the time, and who are always acting."

She said it's uncomfortable being real around people who are not acting real themselves because they will take advantage, adding that "it's really important not to

care what other people think and to do what you like. I see people not doing what they like."

Plotkin describes herself as a non-practicing Jewish environmentalist. She said she recycles and buys products with less packaging.

"I think about the consequences of what I do. Most of my politics are green," she said.

Plotkin's attitude gets her

through college life as she constructs her theories about the world and studies Japanese.

"When I am out in the world, and I see something that needs changing, I file it."

She said that she tries not to hold preconceptions and asked, "What is normal? Even being super weird is normal. Where do we go from here?"

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