

Live Beets offer up dance beats

■ The fifth album from The Sugar Beets captures the eclectic essence of the band's energetic live shows

By J.J. Burkart
for the Emerald

One of Eugene's local music fixtures takes the stage Friday night to unveil its latest album, "Sweet Ride Home."

The Sugar Beets will perform with Cold Mountain Rhythm Band at WOW Hall at 9:30 p.m. WOW Hall seems a fitting spot for the group's CD release party, given their long-standing association with the venue.

"The Sugar Beets have an extremely long history with us. They recorded their very first album here," said Bob Fennessy, a WOW Hall spokesman.

The Sugar Beets took root in the University residence halls in the late 1980s as a duo and steadily grew in skill and popularity, said Marty Chilla, The Sugar Beets' guitarist. The budding group gradually added more members until flowering into its current eight-member arrangement.

The Sugar Beets play an amalgamation of Celtic, bluegrass, country, Motown, gospel and pop music. The number of variables in the band's musical equation allows for an expansive assortment of songs. The breadth of styles also gives The Sugar Beets' music a universal quality.

"Instrumentally, we are traditional Celtic and bluegrass with stand-up bass, acoustic guitar, fiddle, and mandolin. But we also have drums and keyboards, and we're pretty much open to any musical style," Chilla said.

"Sweet Ride Home" showcases the band's versatility. The opening track, "Higher," is a lively soulful tune, punctuated by the up-front



Courtesy Photo

The Sugar Beets bring their high-energy acoustic music to Wow Hall on Friday. The band's music has influences in Celtic, bluegrass, country, Motown, gospel and pop music.

vocals of the band's two female vocalists. The second song, "Bill Blake," brings a calypso beat into play. "Bring it Down" sounds similar to a grunge translation of '70s British rockers Cream. "For Linda" is reminiscent of an Elton John ballad, and the sounds of "Avatar" are not unlike The Beatles' sitar fascination. Magically, the assorted schemes flow smoothly together for the duration of the album.

Having been a band in various forms for more than 10 years, The Sugar Beets hope to expand their fan base and move into new territory with their new album. To help them achieve this goal, the band employed established recording artist and producer Billy Oskay.

"Eight people in the recording studio can be like too many cooks

in the kitchen. Billy helped us fine-tune things and put it all together," Chilla said.

The result of the Oskay/Sugar Beets union is the band's fifth recording, a dynamic, professionally produced collection of inspirational tunes. The album is also an attempt to capture the essence of a Sugar Beets live performance in a recording studio.

Dave Burham, who plays violin and electric violin in the band, describes a typical live performance.

"Anyone who comes to see us can expect to hear extremely danceable, high-energy, joyful music," Burham said.

Tickets are \$8 at the door, and doors open at 9 p.m.

J.J. Burkart is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

News brief

MADD opens kickoff to general public

Mothers Against Drunk Driving is kicking off its annual "Tie One on for Safety" campaign Saturday from 12 to 2 p.m. at the Kendall Honda dealership on Coburg Road.

This is the 15th annual event hosted by the Lane County chapter, but this is the first year that the general public has been invited to participate in the kickoff, said Charlie Durrant, office manager for the

Lane County chapter.

Almost 17,000 people die each year in alcohol-related crashes, she said. The group is hoping to cut down on the number of crashes that occur, especially during the Holiday season.

Durrant said the combined deaths from Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve exceeds 500. This year, MADD of Lane County hopes to distribute 100,000 ribbons for people to tie on their vehicles as a pledge to not drink and drive.

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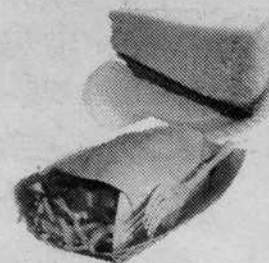
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