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# Eugene guitar wiz plays on

■ A youthful Justin King has just finished his third album and is planning his fourth

By Mason West  
Oregon Daily Emerald

After four years of playing the acoustic guitar, Justin King has put one priority on his music: "It's more important to be moving than impressive."

At the age of 22, the local guitar wizard has already released two albums and traveled the world pursuing his craft and finding new ways to affect people with his music. His skill has earned him a regular spot at Café Paradiso on Wednesday nights at 8:30 p.m. and taken him to England to record material for a third release.

King started playing music with a drum set but quickly found the electric guitar at the age of 14. However, it wasn't long until he grew restless.

"I was playing a lot of stuff that was angsty, like every teenager goes through, and I realized, like probably every teenager realizes eventually, I didn't like feeling like shit all the time," he said. "Part of my movement away from that kind of sound was a longing to be a little bit more creative and a little bit less down on everything."

King made the switch to acoustic guitar at 18 and since then said he has viewed the electric guitar as purely a melodic instrument that "feels like jelly."

King fuels his progress on the acoustic guitar with passion and motivation but not with teachers and books. He has studied with other musicians, but never in a strict teacher/student relationship. King defines them as "interactive relationships." King also briefly attended both Lane Community College and the University — but never to study music.

"What I've seen happen is if you remove the mystery completely from music and make it just math and formulas, you remove some emotional aspect to it," he said.

Despite King's lack of formal training, he said he fears that many



Justin King (right) works with Billy Barnett, owner of Gung-Ho Studio, to edit the rough recordings for King's third release, due out early in 2002.

people limit his music to its more formal aspects.

"A lot of people see me as a technical guitar player, and that's OK I guess, but I really wouldn't like to be thought of that way. You can't cuddle up to technical," he said.

King learns through experience and collaboration. He spent a week in France at the home of guitarist Pierre Bensusan gathering new ideas. He also traveled around Spain learning about flamenco guitar by hanging out in traditional flamenco bars. There he found a guitarist named Carlos who played nightly at a bar called El Cabaret.

"He didn't speak a word of English, and my Spanish is like, total caveman, but I would sit there and watch him, and afterward he'd come over and we'd just fuck around on

the guitars. I would just try and figure out what he was doing, and he was trying to figure out what the hell I was trying to do," King said.

King doesn't claim to play in any traditional guitar style because he adds his own flavor to everything he learns. He is influenced by other musicians, such as Michael Hedges and "a bunch of artists who you would have no idea who they were." King is also inspired by ideas, as was the case with a song called "Locomotive," which was born simply by his thinking about how to represent the sound of a train with a guitar.

Sometimes, King's ideas surpass physical capabilities. A year ago, he began toying with the idea of using a guitar technique called tapping. Turn to King, page 8

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