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Thievery Corporation waxes smooth, ethnic blend in new album

CD review

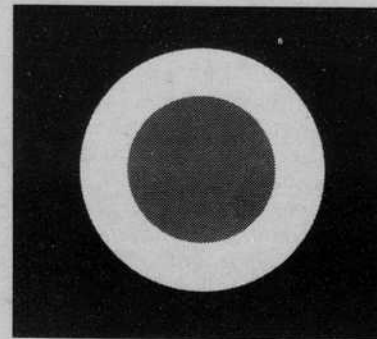
Joseph Bechard
Edge Culture Columnist

The sixth release from Washington, D.C.-based DJ-duo -extraordinaire Thievery Corporation came out Oct. 1, proving that these hawk-eyed master crafters of fine music moods have staying power.

Down-tempo, chill-out pioneers Rob Garza and Eric Hilton deliver another earthy, meditative blend of trip-hop, trance, dub, jazz and world-beat on "The Richest Man in Babylon." This music will make you wish you were covered in ears like some crazy lab rat.

Thievery Corporation — known for seamlessly melding musical elements from around the globe in a gripping soundscape of mood and emotion — has hit another home run. Lyrics in five languages, along with musical flavors from India, Jamaica, Cuba, the Middle East, Europe and somewhere south of Galaxy M51, come together in heady auditory cocktails of momentary bliss.

High points of the album include: "Heaven's Gonna Burn Your Eyes" and "Until the Morning," with ultra-hip, mellow beats and entrancing vocals by Emiliana Torrini. "All That We Perceive," the album's best tune, features the steamy, sultry voice of Pam Bricker over a grooving backbeat with exotic tabla riffs and a powerful bass line. "Omid (Hope)" and "Un Simple Histoire (A Simple Story)" with vocals by French vocalist LouLou stand out as textbook examples of "down-tempo" with their heady, pensive lyrics and smooth blend of various ethnic musical elements. The tracks "Exilio (Exile)," "The State of the Union," and the title track illustrate the thematic shift in the group's work. Its message is evolving from one of introspection



and spirituality in their first album, "Sounds From the Thievery Hi-Fi," to one of political and social activism.

Unfortunately, the group — as it did with its fourth album "The Mirror Conspiracy" — chooses to follow the same wearing path of artists like Air, Nightmares on Wax and Kruder and Dorfmeister instead of challenging itself to stay ahead of them. The formula still works, but it may soon wear itself out.

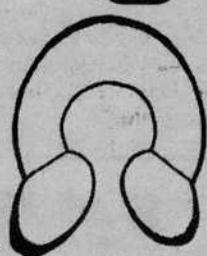
Garza and Hilton pull off something special with this album, but the creativity and attention for detail that made the first album such a big hit take a back seat to catchiness, universal appeal and simplicity. "The Richest Man in Babylon" is Thievery Corporation's glossiest, poppiest endeavor yet, which may scare away some longtime fans.

This group is often criticized as a being a trendy accessory for neophytes and D.C. sophisticates, but those critics and listeners miss the intention of the music. This music, created to make people think, is the perfect complement to a relaxed evening with a fine Cabernet Sauvignon, a strong whiskey or some of that medical marijuana. And it's a long way from trendiness in a city that's going to need another 50 years just to get over the Grateful Dead.

Contact the Pulse columnist at josephbechard@dailyemerald.com.

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Mac Court

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arena from East Eighth Avenue to Broadway and Ferry to Hilyard streets. Some speculated the property, located within close proximity to where the new federal courthouse will be, could better link the University and downtown Eugene.

In July, Associate Athletic Director of Internal Operations Steve McBride said the location was "intriguing," and the University even went so far as to request — to no avail — that the city hold the land for possible development.

The new arena could also be built on University-owned land near campus or near Autzen Stadium, on non University-owned land, on land in the Glenwood area, on land in the Gateway area or, perhaps, at a centrally located downtown area.

More than anything, however, the key component of the decision will likely be accessibility.

"Students need to be close enough to the building so it's not a burden to get there," McBride said.

While a Gateway location would prove beneficial for freeway traffic, campus dwellers might find the journey tiresome. Glenwood, too, could be too far away from campus. Nearby locations could also prove troublesome, where complex building and zoning requirements can limit construction.

Funding for such a project would probably come from both the University and through substantial do-

nations. There has been some talk that the new arena could be built in a mixed-use building that would accommodate retail shops and non-University events. Currently, however, University officials don't seem to be leaning in that direction.

"I think on the surface of it, we would not seek out the construction of a multi-use facility," McBride said.

Without any contributions, which McBride said wouldn't necessarily include funding, it is unlikely such a facility would be considered.

Ward 3 City Councilor David Kelly, who represents the University area, said it would be beneficial for the University to build an arena that could showcase more than sporting events. But without a surplus of money, Kelly said it would be difficult for the city to partake financially.

"In the current times, when the city budget is being cut each year ... I'd be hard pressed to imagine how the city could contribute any significant sum," Kelly said.

Until the project is completed, Mac Court will continue to house all men's and women's basketball games, volleyball games and wrestling matches. Each sport could move to the new arena in 2006, but it's also possible that volleyball and wrestling could remain in Mac Court, with only basketball games being played at the new venue.

"The final answer on that really can't come until we know what it can accommodate," McBride said.

Contact the news editor at bradschmidt@dailyemerald.com.