



Courtesy

Dark Star channels the Dead

The Dark Star Orchestra performs Grateful Dead covers that sound 'eerily like the band'

Aaron Shakra
Pulse Reporter

When is a cover band not simply a cover band? When it attempts to channel, or actually become, the living embodiment of the past. Dark Star Orchestra — who will play this Saturday at the McDonald Theatre — revives Grateful Dead performances from the band's long, languorous history and plays them in their entirety. You might as well call it "Grateful Dead Redux."

Dark Star's performances are culled from the book "Deadbases," which in its 11th iteration features information on 2,314 concerts the Grateful Dead played together from 1965 until 1995. The band has also performed Jerry Garcia Band sets. It doesn't do carbon copy covers of performances, but rather improvises in the same parts of the songs that the Grateful Dead did. The audience isn't privy to which set or era the band is drawing from for its perform-

ances. This information is announced afterwards, but the band said keen fans will probably be able to pick up on clues.

"We don't do a note for note thing, but we stay in character," John Kadlecik, guitarist and "Jerry Garcia" of the band said. He has played

"We all have a mutual love for the arrangements that the Dead used to play their own music."

John Kadlecik
guitarist

guitar since 1985, and is also a classically trained violin player. He said he found the violin to be a limited instrument for improvisation whereas in picking up the guitar, he found improvisation "a given."

"Once you get into the band thing, any way you want to go is the right way," Kadlecik said.

Dark Star Orchestra and its six other members have played 800

shows since its inception in late summer of 1997. Kadlecik said he and the other band members have "deeply explored every area" of the Grateful Dead's music, both collectively and on each of their own time.

"By listening, we've acquired these personal databases," he said. "Individually, we've all listened to enormous amounts of the recordings — just of out fun."

The band's history is rooted in the Chicago Grateful Dead scene. Kadlecik previously played in the band Hairball Willie, who performed both originals and Dead covers. He noted a distinction between Dead cover bands and "dead-head" bands and said Dark Star originated from networking in the dead-head band scene.

"We all have a mutual love for the arrangements that the Dead used to play their own music," he said, adding that the band pays attention to the smallest detail for its Dead sets, including their musical equipment and sound palette at the time.

Band publicist Dave Weissman mentioned one "hair-raising factor" Dark Star Orchestra has the potential to elicit for Grateful Dead fans.

"Essentially, you can kinda tap

into the spirit of why they're doing what they're doing," Weissman said. "I'm not saying Dark Star channels the Dead, but they try."

"Essentially, you can kinda tap into the spirit of why they're doing what they're doing."

Dave Weissman
band publicist

Downtown Deb, host of the long running "Dead Air" which airs every Saturday night on KLCC, said she finds the Dead's music "very powerful and healing" and called Dark Star Orchestra "very professional."

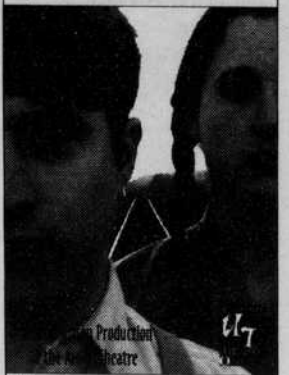
"They sound remarkably, eerily like the band," she said. "It's an emotional thing hearing the music you love."

The show starts at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$18 in advance, available at both Fastixx outlets and the McDonald Theatre box office.

Contact the Pulse reporter at aaronshakra@dailymerald.com.

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By Naomi Wallace



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