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Pulse Listen

On Tuesday
The naked truth:
nudist recreation

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'Stone' local music rating misses mark, this new list rocks

It has been almost three months since Rolling Stone magazine named Eugene number eight on the list of America's "10 best music meccas for stalling an education" in a piece called "Campus Scenes That Rock." I'm still trying to figure out what the hell it's all supposed to mean.

Supposedly, the story's reporters rated various college towns "by venue, talent on the rise and total party volume." I think it's a bunch of hooey.

Despite brief mentions of folk, hip-hop, funk, trip-hop, jazz and world beat in other parts of the country, the authors' choices of iconic bands for almost all the cities focus on industrial rock, punk and the like. I can enjoy the Courtesy Clerks, the Rock and Roll Soldiers and the High Violets in moderation, but the article affirms the crazy notion that this is the most popular brand of music today.

This is why other types of music don't get much respect in Eugene.

Jazz is suffering. It's too pretentious these days. For some reason, most college students don't dig jazz clubs. Instead, it's typically a much older and subdued crowd. Most nights at Luna or Jo Federigo's involve inflated drink prices and predictable covers of jazz standards. But somewhere out there, I know there are people who like to push the boundaries. Give me some good acid jazz and trip-hop.

Hip-hop seems to get a little more attention around town these days. With regular shows in many local clubs, its surprising local hip-hop artists didn't get a little of Rolling Stone's esteemed acclaim.

Of course, Eugene, being the kooky island that it is, also gets a few funk and jam bands. Some of them follow the same played-out style of bands such as the Grateful Dead, Phish and The String Cheese Incident, but the others can really play.

However, it's hard to doubt Rolling Stone. They're so smart.

But there are people who do. The Register-Guard quoted Taylor's Bar & Grill booking agent Bjorn Estlund, saying, "If there was a happening college scene, Taylor's would be doing a ton of music."

Maybe Estlund has a point. It appears the authors put as much thought into picking the city's hot spots as they put into picking their noses.

The WOW Hall is a good choice. The venue makes an honest attempt to showcase a variety of interesting acts. The writers also chose Sam Bond's Garage. While I've had many a memorable moment sitting at those picnic tables, listening to bluegrass and drinking microbrew from jars, this place can't embody what the writers imagined — "head trips and hootenannies" my ninnies. The last selection, The Annex, is ridiculous, given that the club hadn't been open long before the article's release.

A few more obvious candidates were left out of this most distinguished honor. John Henry's was a shoe-in. With a new, snazzier location and a taste for the same music as the article's authors, it was surprising to see this place left out. If the McDonald Theater were not afraid to charge less than \$20, it could be a much better and more popular venue. What about the Samurai Duck? Sure, the building is far too small and so awkwardly shaped that it can't attract too many people, but you have to respect the effort. The bar offers good, cheap local music in a relatively respectable atmosphere. Someone ought to give it some credit. And we shouldn't yet forget the formerly great Wild Duck.

As if all that weren't enough, the story then reminds readers that the Cherry Poppin' Daddies are a product of Eugene. We should be trying to erase this deleterious connection, not celebrate it.

Shame on the Rolling Stone! Shame! I want to hold its nose over the little mess it has created.

If there's anything we should learn from this, especially when it comes to local culture, don't believe the stupid Rolling Stone. Listen to trusty Joe.

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Joseph Bechard
Cultural
Obstetrician

Waking up to music

Musician Vienna Teng quit a career as a software engineer to embark on a journey through song writing and performing

Jacquelyn Lewis
Pulse Editor

If substantial record sales, several highly praised media appearances, including "The Late Show with David Letterman," and a sold-out House of Blues crowd are any indication, singer/songwriter Vienna Teng is on the fast track to stardom. However, you won't find her touring celebrity-style. Instead, travelers might catch a glimpse of the San Francisco-based 24-year-old stumbling through the airport alone — lugging her huge Yamaha keyboard, instrument stand and boxes of CDs on her own.

Teng, who released her debut album, "Waking Hour" on Virt Records in November, has embarked on a true solo tour. The songbird will alight on Eugene tonight, where she will play an intimate concert at Cafe Paradiso.

Teng began playing the piano, an instrument she said she was "in love with" at age five, and wrote her first song when she was just six years old. She graduated from Stanford with a degree in computer science, worked full-time as a software engineer in Silicon Valley and recently quit to focus solely on her music — a transition Teng said she was planning all along. She wrote and performed music through college, garnering a small following, and rough recordings of her creations began to circulate around campus.

"Waking Hour" reflects Teng's full musical focus. The tracks on the album are soft and melancholy, with a sound Teng calls folk-pop, though she adds, "I always have trouble characterizing my own music."

Perhaps Teng's difficulty describing her songs comes from the fact that almost all of her lyrics are about other people's experiences. However, the album is anything but detached. Teng somehow takes others' trials and deftly transforms them into her own, singing with heartwrenching sincerity.



Courtesy

Vienna Teng released her debut album, 'Waking Hour' in November and now tours solo.

ty. She said she is able to perform this feat largely due to her passion for storytelling.

"I tend to think of my own life as boring," she said, laughing. "I'm sort of a failed fiction writer."

But Teng's musical "fiction" is anything but a failure. The lyrics are pure poetry, expertly infused with melancholy. The track "The Tower" tells the tale of a woman who "survives by making

the lives of others worthwhile" but crumbles under self-neglect. "Drought" laments, "And the taste of dried-up hopes in my mouth / and the landscape of mercy and desperate drought."

Teng said her songs often take on lives of their own.

"They become like people that sort of live with me," she said, adding that she

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Mr. Lif brings underground hip-hop flavor to Eugene

Musician Mr. Lif takes pride in his positive, politically slanted lyrics and brings his unique brand of hip-hop to the WOW Hall

Ryan Bornheimer
Senior Pulse Reporter

Hip-hop is in a state of flux these days. Recording artists are seeking to redefine the elements of the genre, and critics have hailed Boston-reared Mr. Lif as a true cutting-edge performer. Lif will bring his own flavor to Eugene when he appears tonight at WOW Hall, located at 291 W. Eighth Ave.

Lif emerged as one of Bean Town's most successful underground musicians, and is currently touring after the success of his first full-length solo al-

bum, "I Phantom."

In a 2001 interview with HipHop-Elements.com, Lif derided the state of popular hip-hop.

"All these people are talking about straight-up nonsense," Mr. Lif said in the interview. "They have no respect for women or themselves. I don't see how it can be constructive."

But his take on current state of the industry has shifted somewhat.

"A lot of great things are happening in hip-hop. Things have changed drastically," Lif said. Some of his current favorites include Nas, Outkast and Gangstar. But he is equally enthusiastic about artists such as Beck and old school rappers including Rakim.

The Village Voice called "I Phantom" a "well-layered concept album about isolation through capitalism and redemption through art that is almost seamless in execution."

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Courtesy