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New Champagne album makes simple statement with feeling

CD review

Aaron Shakra
Pulse Reporter

My first exposure to The Champagne Syndicate was when the band opened one of the poetry slam playoff rounds at Foolsap Books. Guitar player and vocalist Sam Hahn had broken two guitar strings, interrupting the flow of the set. How wonderful it is to hear their recording "Apple Feet" — a full band recording, minus interruptions to re-string a guitar.

Four people contribute to "Apple Feet," but the band is apparently portable. Their Foolsap show had two members — Hahn and bassist/guitarist/vocalist Joey Spilberg — performing. Four musicians play on the album, including Jason Bradley on drums and Moe on electric guitar. The band's photograph shows eight members.

Lyrical and musically, this record-

ing is a breezy spring day, absolutely fitting for the season. The songs are neither short nor long, and the musical arrangements are tight, with slick guitar licks and wicked drums. The songs are simple statements, but there seems to be a glimmer of something new in each of the 10 tracks.

Hahn's voice alternately scats, wails and whistles, and is always interjected with feeling. On the self-explanatory "Spendin' Time With My Girl," he sings: "There ain't nothing more than, nothing like, spending time with my girl, there ain't nothing like it, nothing like it in the world." The refrain throughout is the feel-good vocal harmonization: "Do wa do wa / do wa do wa."

Occasionally, tracks will segue into little jam segments for each of the musicians. One example is the reggae/funk-infused "I Don't Want to See You Cry," which momentarily branches into inspired, funky guitar and drum solo sections, with the bass



Courtesy

providing a solid bottom. Then, just as soon, the lyrics return.

Local bands can certainly hit and miss, but "The Champagne Syndicate" is, without a doubt, a keeper. With any luck this is only the beginning. The band plays Friday at Sam Bond's Garage at 407 Blair Blvd. The show starts at 9:30 p.m. and tickets are \$4.

Contact the Pulse reporter at aaronshakra@dailymerald.com.

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Three Lives

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content. He added that viewers can come away with a new perspective of the male image — which is not often discussed in mass media or pop culture.

"I think people have really connected with it," he said.

Luu recounted the story of an audience member who was particularly touched.

"This guy literally rushed the stage ... and he totally grabbed me and hugged me and just started weeping," Luu said. "It was amazing."

"Three Lives" is presented by the University's ethnic studies department. The performance begins at 7 p.m. in the Fir Room inside the EMU. Admission is free and seating is limited.

Contact the Pulse editor at jaquelynlewis@dailymerald.com.

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