

WOW Hall concert sports typical college vibes

Yeltsin meets expectations, while Irving and the Wrens prove less than captivating

By Ryan Nyburg
Senior Pulse Reporter

On my way to the WOW Hall on Wednesday night to see performances by Yeltsin, Irving and the Wrens, I blasted my ears out with the gut-scraping gutter punk of the Misfits (Glenn Danzig version, of course), as well as the intense aural assault of the Blood Brothers.

Thus having scrubbed my brain free of all coherent thought, I felt prepared to experience a calmer side of good ol' rock 'n' roll. My fellow attendees were about what I expected: nice, sensitive looking high school kids and pop-rock lovin' college folk. Most of the girls had short hair and wore glasses and cardigans. Most of the boys had long hair and wore glasses and cardigans. No deeper meaning in that comparison, just an observation.

The show started up with minimal fanfare. First on the docket was Eugene's own Yeltsin. Having reviewed their sole recorded work, they were the only band for which I had any expectations. They certainly lived up to them. Playing arrangements that sound as much like the Ventures as any modern indie-rock stalwart, Yeltsin is ready-made for college radio success outside of Eugene. I'll bet folks as far away as Salem — maybe even Portland — might dig them.

Until then, we here in Eugene should enjoy them while they're around. Because this band is tight. Tight sound, tight arrangements and tight playing. The songs leave no room for air, not to mention instrumental solos.

The audience, for their part, had the



Lauren Wimer Photographer

At Wednesday night's concert, the Wrens displayed songwriting talent, but sounded sloppy.

usual Eugene crowd thing down cold. In other words, they stood around like a bunch of bong-toking sheep until it was time to applaud. Nice work, folks.

Next up was Irving. This band put me off in the beginning when they played a song that consisted of them singing tunefully, then making as much chaotic noise as possible, then singing tunefully again — rinse and repeat for about four minutes. A cheap tactic, not to mention boring, but they picked up a bit after that.

The rest of the set consisted of engaging pop-rock with feedback-drenched rough edges. Irving has some good tunes and the vocalists were able to pull off some simple three-part harmonies. There was a lack of cohesiveness in the group, however, something that more experience might remedy. The band promised to come back in spring; maybe by then they'll have tightened up a bit.

Last up was the main event, the Wrens. These guys are making a fair amount of noise on the college radio circuit at the moment and audience

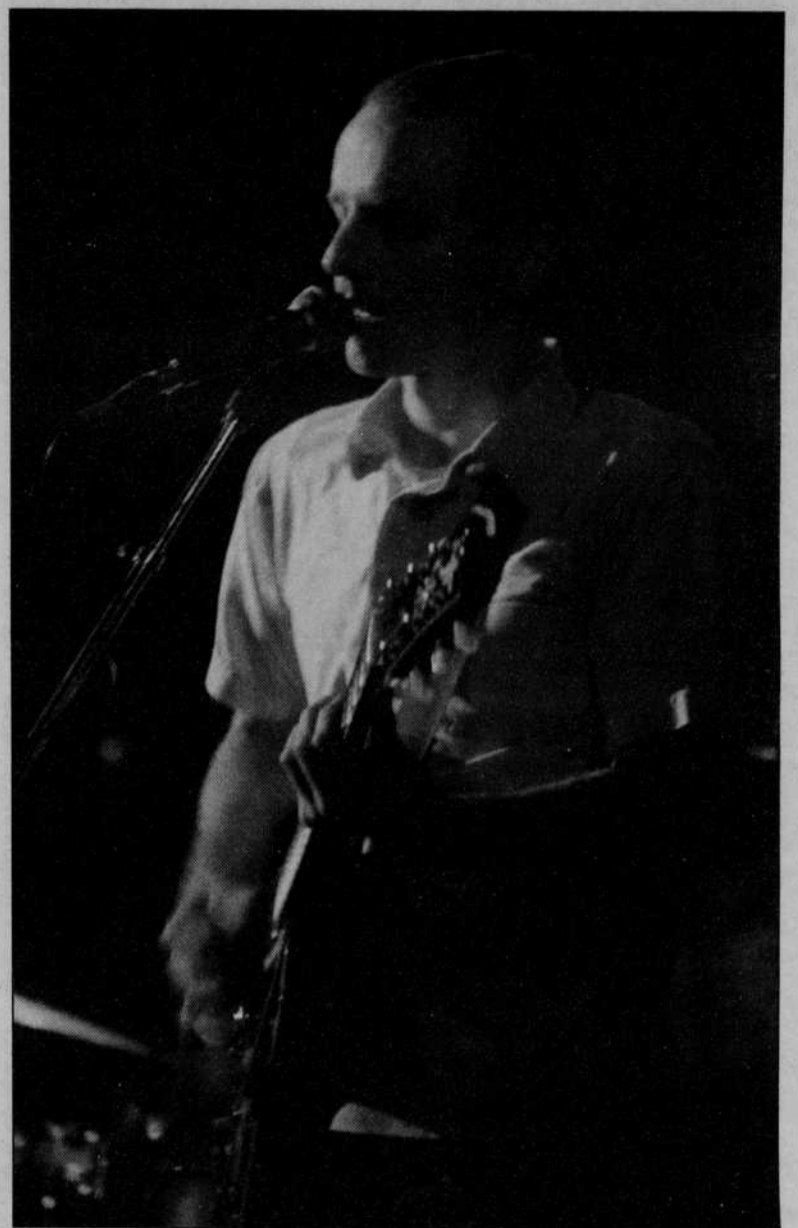
expectations were running high.

But the music was a bit less invigorating than the reputation. It was partly because nothing they did got my blood boiling. Also, they were working with a sit-in drummer who had had minimal rehearsal time. This translated to a set that often felt sloppy. I can't blame the band for that, though. For what it's worth, they can play, but their songs were mostly failed-relationship laments with some mournful guitar parts. In the end, it just bored the hell out of me.

What bugs me the most is that they're a good band with obvious songwriting talent, but they are wasting it on a sound that has been done before (and done better, at that). Though they would occasionally get things moving, it was mostly a letdown.

So the lights went up and the audience filed out. Looking around the hall, one would never know that three hours of music had just ended. That might be poignant, but I doubt it.

Contact the senior Pulse reporter at ryannyburg@dailymerald.com.



Courtesy

Eugene-based band Yeltsin sounds ready-made for the college radio circuit.

Having A Cultural Breakdown?

We Got the Solution

Vietnamese Culture Night
February 22, 2004

EMU Ballroom

Dinner 5:45PM and Show 6:15PM

Suggested \$5 Donation per Person