

Raventones' 'Odd Birds' a must for folk listeners

Lead singer TR Kelley's vocals help carry the album, despite lyrics that are sometimes indecipherable

By **Natasha Chilingierian**
Pulse Reporter

In an Emerald interview two weeks ago, TR Kelley and Randy Hamme of The Raventones stressed that the strength of their band is "making a lot of noise for just two

people." Based on their 12-track debut album, "Odd Birds," the

biggest part of their sound is clearly Kelley's voice. Her versatile vocals provide the backbone for four distinctive styles of music apparent on the recording: soulful ballads, simple folk tunes, trippy psychedelia and hick-ville country twang.

In the trance-like "I Surrender," Kelley sings of giving in to what is, with lots of passionate "la de da-ing" against a backdrop of Hawaiian strumming and deep-toned drum beats. It makes me picture her draped in velvet while performing at Luna Jazz Club.

"Do You Want Me to Go," a song about encountering a past love, is awash with sad guitar and piano notes and is almost reminiscent of gazing at someone through a shower of rain.

Yet, the focus of "Odd Birds" is upbeat folk music with a variety of lyrical themes. Often this employs minimal instruments, mostly Kelley on guitar and Hamme on percussion. "Two-Tone Touring Car," the album's opener, tells an intricate story about going to Hollywood. "Yellow Moon," which is about an embrace under the sky at midnight, is catchy yet contemplative, as the name suggests. "Yellow" refers to the happiness of midnight love while



Courtesy

TR Kelley's voice provides the backbone for The Raventones' album "Odd Birds."

"Moon" indicates the calm, stillness of the night. "Unfolding," a tune about opening up to a new love, uses fast, rolling beats and is accompanied by Kelley, who wails and practically yodels for joy. It made me think of skipping down the street on a warm summer day.

The only downfall of the folksier tunes are their lack of instrumental variation. It makes the songs sound like demos. Although the album sounds finished, it was vaguely reminiscent of The Beatles' demo tapes from the late 1950s/early 1960s on Anthology 1. The most intriguing track is "Hush," a melange of strings, percussion and a low twang sound with lyrics about being left with nothing to say. The music and vocals are mostly slow, but they speed up once in a while to evoke a desperate feeling. "Odd Birds" includes one instru-

mental jam and one interlude — both mix up the album and provide a well-planned, artistic quality. The jam, "Dynamix," is an articulated, baritone guitar/drum duo which starts out steady and slowly grows, making you want to bounce your head and eventually jump up and down. "Blue Interlude" gets creative with a harmonica, banjo, wailing voices, sounds of a train passing and frogs croaking.

Despite a few flaws, "Odd Birds" is a winner for folk fans everywhere. The only other noticeable problem is that most of the album's lyrics are indecipherable because Kelley often tapers off into extensive ad-libs. Luckily, they are printed inside the CD cover. Regardless, this album is worth picking up for its variety, evident talent and songs to get lost in.

Contact the Pulse reporter at natashachilingierian@dailyemerald.com.

PULSE BRIEF

Battle of the Bands field narrowed to final five

The Eugene Battle of the Bands competition, presented by the UO Cultural Forum, is entering its final stretch. After the preliminary rounds at the EMU this past Friday, student

judges narrowed a pool of 30 local bands down to five that will play at an all-ages final show this Friday at the Eugene Vet's Club for the championship title.

Fivesouth, Grynch, alterEGO, OPIE and Rhetoric Tuesday are the finalists, along with Gel, which will be acting as an alternate band. Bands were scored in the prelimi-

nary rounds on professionalism, audience favor, stage presence and musicianship. The winning band will be chosen at the Vet's Club by the judging panel and concertgoers.

The Eugene Vet's Club is located at 1626 Willamette St. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. and tickets are \$5 and T-shirts are on sale for \$10.

— Steven Neuman

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WRITTEN COMMENTS will be accepted by the Office of Resource Management Room 1, Johnson Hall until 5:00 p.m. on March 5th

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Questions: Donna Chittenden, 346-3044, Office of Resource Management

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